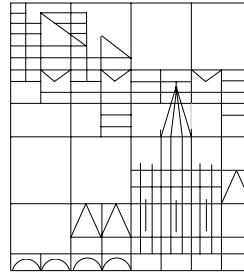University of Konstanz

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Prof. Alves
Prof. Annerstedt
Prof. Cenjor
Prof. Lafrance
Prof. Maicas
Prof. Miege

Date: 12.08.2005

Dear UNESCO CO-Chair in Communications, dear Prof. xyz

UNESCO is organizing a special event at WSIS II, the World Summit for the Information Society, Phase II, on Nov 18th 2005. There will be a round table on "The Role of UNESCO in the Construction of Knowledge Societies through UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme".

UNESCO has asked me to prepare a regional study on the role and contribution of UNESCO Chairs in the construction of knowledge societies in the West Europe and North America region. According to the ORBICOM website there are, besides me, 6 UNESCO Chairs in Communications. Yours is one of them, and I kindly ask for your assistance in carrying out this study.

Here are the basic questions that UNESCO has with respect to this study. Please try to answer them as explicitly as possible. As you can imagine the success of this round table depends crucially on your help. I know that some of these questions are rather general (there are not mine) but please try to answer them as best you can. Please refer to the numbers of the questions in your answer.

I At the beginning of the presentation in Tunis there will be a **general introduction** about the importance of the study, its organization, and significance. This is mainly my duty, but any comments from your side are welcome.

I I UNESCO would like to have AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TRENDS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES) in this region, or in your country respectively.

This part should provide an overall, but concise, assessment of the status of higher education in the region particularly the most recent trends, issues and challenges facing the development of the system and its role and contributions to the development of knowledge societies. This should give a value judgment on the efficiency of systems in responding to global changes and challenges. The ability of systems in knowledge generation, diffusion and application should be assessed.

III THE DISTINCTIVE ROLE OF UNESCO CHAIRS

UNESCO ICT chairs and networks have certain responsibilities in the construction of knowledge societies through their functions of teaching, training and research. Their role in strengthening national capacities in knowledge production, dissemination and utilization is highly important.

To what extent have the UNESCO ICT Chairs been able or unable to fulfill the previous functions and what are the factors which impede them from efficiently discharging them?

III.1 IN KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

To what extent research programmes, undertaken by the chair, have contributed to the generation and production of knowledge? What are some of the research activities are presently undertaken by the Chair? Are there any research partners? Who are they? Give an assessment of the quality of present research programmes and infrastructure. What are the main issues and challenges in this domain?

III.2 IN KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION AND EXCHANGE: THIS PART SHOULD PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

To what extent does the teaching function of the chair focus on dissemination and diffusion of knowledge? Is the content of curriculum based on new knowledge? How has teaching contributed to broadening access to new and innovative knowledge?

III.3 IN KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION AND UTILIZATION

Higher education institutions, through their service and consultancy function assume responsibilities in knowledge application and utilization. Private and public institutions call upon higher education to assist in the application of knowledge and know how in development for the welfare of society. To what extent has the UNESCO chair contributed to this process? Present one example of how the chair's research outcomes have been applied and utilized. What are the main impediments and challenges?

III.4 IN BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

The knowledge gap is created by inability of nations to generate, share and exchange knowledge. Presently knowledge and information is not equally distributed and widely accessible. How would the UNESCO chair, being an innovative modality for knowledge sharing and exchange, contribute to the bridging of the knowledge gap?

III.5 IN HARNESSING ICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

To what extent has the Chair been successful in harnessing the potential of ICTs in its teaching and research activities? What are the main hindrances and shortcomings? To what extent has the chair contributed to the development of ICT based teaching systems and innovative alternatives such as distance education, e-learning and virtual institutions? What are the obstacles and challenges?

IV POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REINFORCE THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRS

Based on identified challenges and shortcomings, what strategies can be proposed, on institutional and national levels, to strengthen the UNESCO ICT chairs enabling them to face the challenges and increase their efficiency in the construction of knowledge societies.

V CHALLENGES FOR UNESCO

The fact that the chairs are established under the auspices of UNESCO, what are the most important challenges which UNESCO should respond to, in its attempt to strengthen the functioning of the chairs enabling them to assume greater responsibilities in the construction of knowledge societies and bridging the knowledge gap?

VI FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This part should highlight the most important findings and conclusions of the study. This, again, will be my part, based on the information you have provided.

VII RECOMMENDATIONS

This part should make one or more action oriented recommendations. The recommendations can be addressed to governments, institutions of higher education, UNESCO, the private sector and the development agencies. This is probably my part, but any suggestions for recommendations form your side are more than welcome.

That´s it. There may be a second round of discussion on these topics and your answers in an electronic communication forum to achieve some additional results. We have had some good experience in organizing such collaborative communication forums in the past and may apply the technique for the purpose of this study as well.

But I first need your input (preferably via email/attached file, but, of course, you also can snailmail or fax it to me). Answering these questions may take some time and we are aware that you are a very busy person. But UNESCO in general tries to monitor and evaluate the importance of their UNESCO Chairs for its work. Therefore it may be in our own interest to show how the UNESCO Chairs in Communications in particular are of high value for UNESCO´s objective in building just, inclusive, and sustainable knowledge societies. Demonstrating this on the platform of WSIS may be not only a good idea but also a chance to inform others about our activities.

I hope to meet you in Tunis. I have heard, there are plans to invite all the ICT UNESCO Chairs to this round table.

Cordially

Prof. Dr. Rainer Kuhlen