Preface

IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS ON EDUCATION AND THE NEXT-GENERATION WORKFORCE

In its Commission Work Programme 2013, the European Commission (2012) states that:

*Education and training systems are not keeping up with changing labour market needs – resulting in shortages in key areas like science, mathematics and e-skills. Higher education is not sufficiently connected to research and innovation activities and is slow to build capacity in areas like ICT – which both reflects and contributes to a lack of internationalization. Life-long learning is still developing, and public policy and business practices do not reflect the need for older workers to extend their working careers (p.7).*

The evolution of information technologies, mobile devices and social media as well as the needs of students, workers and academics has experienced rapid changes in the last years. This complex and dynamic reality requires new forms of delivery of learning contents to students, the building of special learning environments and new teaching methodologies for academics. Old teaching practices (from the building of teaching material to the evaluation processes and tutorial services) need to be adapted to provide customized and context adapted learning opportunities. There are drivers, barriers and success factors of distance and mobile learning that need to be explored, such as widespread availability or the lack of policy support.

European Commission has funded a number of successful R&D projects focused on mobile learning and several EU countries (such as Denmark, The Netherlands and UK) have supported the used of mobile learning in schools and universities (Ordóñez de Pablos and Tennyson, 2013; Ordóñez de Pablos et al., 2014).

The European Commission makes special mention of the strategic role played by the knowledge triangle—education, research, and innovation—in regional economic and social development. Universities and research centres are an essential pillar of the knowledge society. According to OECD (2008), tertiary education policy is increasingly important on national agendas as it is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy. Countries must raise higher-level employment skills to sustain a globally competitive research base and to improve knowledge dissemination in societies. Education contributes both to social and economic development through four major missions: The formation of human capital (primarily through teaching); the building of knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development); the dissemination and use of knowledge (primarily through interactions with knowledge users); and the maintenance of knowledge (inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge).
OBJECTIVE OF THE BOOK

The purpose of this book is to analyze the challenges of the new labour market, policies for the new educational challenges, future roles of academic staff, and challenges of distance and mobile learning in higher education today. The book will reveal real experiences of higher education institutions and academics implementing distance and mobile education courses. It will provide comprehensive coverage and understanding of the learning processes, its complexities and challenges in the context of higher education and the role of information technologies for mobile and distance learning.

Readers of the book will find a rich collection of chapters that bring together researchers in the field of education, pedagogy and technology, both theoretical and practical contributions, that will help to understand the evolution and needs of new labour markets.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Professors in academia, deans, heads of departments, director of masters, students (undergraduate and postgraduate level), politicians, policy makers, corporate heads of firms, senior general managers, managing directors, information technology directors and managers, libraries, etc.

TOPICS DISCUSSED IN THE BOOK

Among other topics, the chapters of the book address key topics related to education and new labour markets, such as

- Challenges for education in the new labour market;
- Higher education and reforms;
- IT and education;
- Long life learning;
- Mobile and distance learning in higher education;
- New labour market;
- Problems of the current labour market;
- Role of faculty and new labour markets;
- Virtual universities.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 16 chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows,

Chapter 1 “Higher Education-Workforce relationship and Higher Education Job Satisfaction” discusses three major ideas. The major part consists of the relationships between higher education and the job market. Challenges, benefits, advantages and disadvantages of various higher education-workforce schemes to close the gap between courses and degrees offered by higher education institutions and employer demands are explained along with examples such as the current programs offered in the USA
and by the National Health Service in the UK. Job satisfaction in higher education is then discussed including examples from around the world. Factors that cause job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are explained from various leading researches and conclusions from relevant researchers are presented. The difference that gender makes in the workplace is also a subject inducing many researches. Higher education influence on marital status is briefly discussed also with the aid of various researches as the closing paragraphs of this chapter. Finally, the conclusion is presented taking into account the main subjects discussed throughout the chapter.

Chapter 2, “A New Third Sector Intellectual Capital Model”, proposes that the intellectual capital (IC) report has become a fundamental tool in the disclosure of non-profit activities, since it is necessary to use a correct framework to represent IC. To achieve the aim of the paper the work is developed as follows: the existing literature on non-profit organizations (NPOs) and IC is examined and relevant aspects to be measured by IC indicators and disclosed by an IC report in the above context are brought into focus. Then extant frameworks for IC reporting are outlined in order to verify whether they fit the aspects qualified as relevant in NPOs and it is pointed out what they lack with reference to the NPOs context. The aim of the paper is to propose an original framework containing a new set of indicators. The proposed framework is tested in an Italian NPO. The result is to disclose new aspects of activity carried out by NPOs involving knowledge, skill and their relationship with the surrounding community”.

Chapter 3, “I Have a Story to Tell You. Engaging Learners & Issues in Distance Learning of Yasar University” describes study was conducted to learn the factors affecting students’ satisfaction in distance learning (DL) and to understand students’ perceptions of the barriers to their studies. “The study has two parts: qualitative and quantitative. In the quantitative part, survey was used, and in the qualitative part, case study was used. The research covers the academic year of 2012-13. The results reveal students’ perspectives, expectations, experiences, and satisfaction about the newly established distance learning program and based on these give important notes and suggest to redesign and rethink teaching methodologies in distance education especially in high uncertainty avoidance cultures like Turkey”.

Chapter 4, “The Roles of Lifelong Learning and Knowledge Management in Global Higher Education”, examines the roles of lifelong learning and knowledge management in global higher education, thus explaining the theoretical and practical concepts of lifelong learning and KM; the application of KM; and finally the significance of lifelong learning and KM in global higher education. “The utilization of lifelong learning and KM is necessary for higher education institutions (HEIs) that seek to serve suppliers and customers, increase business performance, strengthen competitiveness, and achieve continuous success in global higher education. Therefore, it is essential for HEIs to examine their lifelong learning applications, develop a strategic plan to regularly check their practical advancements, and immediately respond to lifelong learning and KM needs of customers in modern HEIs. Applying lifelong learning and KM in global higher education will significantly enhance organizational performance and reach strategic goals in the digital age”.

Chapter 5, “Academic Assessment of Critical Thinking in Distance Education Information Technology Programs”, studies the process of assessment in higher education with a focus on distance learning and information technology programs. “Its mission is to bring awareness of academic assessment concepts and best practices in the use of standard assessment tools and direct measures to evaluate student learning. The chapter provides definitions of academic assessment and presents the application of signature assignments and rubrics in the Computer Science and Information Technology Management programs to demonstrate student learning results”.
Chapter 6, “Economic Crisis and Higher Education in Greece”, states that “higher education (HE) in Greece has always been problematic and dysfunctional in the post-dictatorship era (1974-2008). This is evident from the fact that Greek governments have failed to reform HE according to the EU standards despite the public demand and industry needs. Additionally the existence of a large number of state universities and technological institutes (TEIs) in combination with the phenomena of: nepotism, favouritism, trade unionism, political involvement, and the creation of unnecessary departments in rural areas in order to satisfy the local voters support this argument. This chapter describes the current situation of HE in Greece. It discusses the challenges that staff, students and the government face from the impact of the economic crisis. In addition, it provides an overview of the effects of the changes in HE on the society. Finally, it explores the prospects and opportunities that exist for HE policy makers, staff and students; especially in terms of their future employability”.

Chapter 7, “IT in Higher Education-Possibilities and Prospects in an Era of Economic Crisis”, states that “a 21st Century Classroom is a learning environment that incorporates current critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration skills into traditional core knowledge instruction. Fostering this space will enable students to integrate core subjects and lead to a deeper understanding of global awareness and greater economic, civic, health and environmental literacy. Sceptics have argued that transforming higher education, especially to attenuate its cost is something, which we know, but we cannot get it. However, information technology is a way to achieve this required transformation. This chapter explores explore how information technology might help achieve this transformation to advance higher education, and its prospects for success”.

Chapter 8, “Giving Painkillers to a Dying Patient. Educational & Training Policies as Treatment for Youth Unemployment during the Greek Economic Crisis”, argues that “the issue of unemployment and especially youth unemployment is one of the most urgent and gloomy issues in the European Union. In the case of Greece, in particular, this phenomenon is closely linked to the financial, fiscal and debt crisis creating extremely negative conditions and prospects for the Greek economy and society This chapter highlights key issues of the current situation in the field of unemployment and especially youth unemployment in Greece, drawing the image of reality on vocational education and training (initial and continuing). It also shows the diachronic ineffectiveness of policies concerning educational and vocational training in Greece. Finally, the chapter proposes the context of a critical and institutional framework for the development of a realistic policy for vocational training and education and social cohesion in times of crisis”.

Chapter 9, “Ontology based Intelligent System for Online Employer Demand Analysis”, states that “identifying employer demand is crucial for a nation to ensure it develops accurate and reliable education, workforce development and immigration policies. Skills shortages globally pose a real and urgent need for proper investigation and workforce development planning into the future. Analysing workforce development and employer demand needs through online job market allows much deeper and wider research into skill shortages. Current methods do not provide the level of depth required to address such important economic implications. In this chapter, the authors present an intelligent system aiming to gather and analyse current employer demand information from online job advertisements. An Employer Demand Ontology has been developed and to further the ontology functionality, the Employer Demand Identification Tool has been developed as a semi-automated means to gather and analyse current employer demand information on a regular basis”.

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Chapter 10, “A Comparative Study of Teacher and Student Use of Social Media for Interaction With Other People”, Economic crisis strongly influences teaching. In order to promote effectiveness and competitiveness of teaching in higher education, “teachers’ and students’ use of social media for interaction with other people has to be analysed. The research question is as following: are there any similarities and differences between teachers’ and students’ use of social media for interaction with other people? The purpose of the research is to compare teachers’ and students’ use of social media for interaction with other people. The meaning of the key concepts of “social media” and “web technologies” is studied. Exploratory research has been used. The empirical study was based on teachers’ and students’ case studies. Descriptive statistics was implemented for primary data analysis. The findings allow drawing the conclusions on the teachers’ and students’ use of social media for interaction with other people”.

Chapter 11, “Learning to Work, Working to Learn. New Vocationalism and the Economic Crisis”, proposes that “the Great Recession of 2008 focused minds on many issues in the economy and in society. It also focused attention on higher education. Students were faced with spiralling tuition costs; graduates with burgeoning debt and the diminishing financial life-long return on their degree investment. This ignited a reconsideration of the economic value of the college degree and of graduate employability. This chapter examines employability from a perspective of vocationalism. New vocationalism is discussed against a backdrop of business schools and of students who wish to enter employment, and believe that it is in their best interests and in the best interest of their institutions, future employers, and society, to be better equipped and prepared for the transition. The chapter argues for a renewed emphasis on vocationalism, and suggests ways in which a closer and more authentic connection can be made between what is learned in the academy and what is needed to empower the new graduate in the work-world”.

Chapter 12, “Life Long Learning in Knowledge Society Life Long Learning in Knowledge Society”, argues that “education focus is shifting from “teaching” to “learning” today. Faculty roles are changing from lecturing to primarily “designers of learning methods and environments” (Fink 2003). Brookfield (1985) argues that teachers’ role is to “facilitate” the acquisition of knowledge, not “transmit” it. NRC (2000) recommends that the goal of education shift from an emphasis on comprehensive coverage of subject matter to helping students develop their own intellectual tools and learning strategies. If you ask most teachers what is the greatest gift that they could give their students, today, most will answer “the desire and skills for lifelong learning.” It’s not that it isn’t important to learn some facts while in college; these will likely be necessary for future employment, but more important though is having the skill to learn on one’s own after leaving college. The chapter revolves around this single, most-important skill which will empower for a lifetime. So, how it should be one of highest priorities especially in knowledge society forms the core of this chapter”.

Chapter 13, “Cloud Computing in Higher Education”, states that “the cloud links thousands of computers and servers together where users are not limited to one device but are able to access their documents and other contents through any computer device, provided it has the ability to connect to the Internet. This allows for better storage capacity, lower costs, scalability and on-demand access. Higher education institutions are opting to reap the same benefits of cloud computing. Students, academics, administrators, and other users will be able to access computing resources through university applications, e-mail, databases and other cloud hosting services. This book chapter provides a general understanding of cloud computing systems and what benefits and challenges of cloud computing in higher education. It is followed by the trends of cloud computing usage and considerations needed for adopting cloud computing. The chapter will end with recommendations needed for adopting cloud computing”. 
Chapter 14, “Identifying the Determinates of Entrepreneurial Intention”, develops a study to explore “the determinants of entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students at university level. This study employs attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control as predictors and entrepreneurial intention as a dependent variable. The data were gathered through structured questionnaire. Respondents of this study were picked through convenience sampling technique. A total of 400 sets of questionnaire were distributed to the targeted respondents while 384 individuals were participated in the study. This study was a descriptive in nature. Most of the respondents showed their intention to be entrepreneur. This study will be a milestone for potential researchers. In future, researchers can conduct empirical studies on this topic”.

Chapter 15, “Relations of Career Plateau and Supervisory Support on Career Satisfaction”, considers that “career plateau is one of the major concepts that has been around any organization in last decades and also that was changing the handling with it in a recent years. This study addresses the factors that affect the job satisfaction and job plateau for instance challenging environment create positive attitude and more efficient outcome. It is doubtful to say that the employee will feel better and good or in another way that they are satisfied in their careers without any developing in their position and any action from the management in such organization. Managers would make efforts to minimize the chances of career plateau from occurring by supporting their employees’ career development within the organization. By doing so, career plateau chances can be reduced, which will positively affect career satisfaction. When employees have an ongoing development in their careers they tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than those who have reached a plateau in their careers”.

And finally, Chapter 16, “Quality Assurance to Value Management to improve training and increase all actors’ competencies”, proposes that “the construction of European Higher Education Area had urged the Higher Education providers to improve their operations for readability, trade and mutual recognition. The recent socio-economical phenomena had raised difficulties: a new and more constraint frame (funds reduction, greater profitability, autonomy of universities in France); evolution of the public’s expectations symbolized by the “digital natives” (entirely connected urging instant satisfaction) and change of paradigm for actors facing complexity. These issues enhance the necessity of Quality Management for sustainability; by obligation or voluntary initiative, it is an opportunity to develop innovative trainings relying on the collective and intercultural skilled workforce. This chapter shows how HE providers implement Quality Assurance; mainly focusing on organization”.

In sum this collection of chapters will definitely help readers to understand some challenges of the new labour markets.

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REFERENCES


