Chapter 9
Let the Learners Take the Lead for Their Lifelong Learning Journey

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ABSTRACT
This chapter is centered on the importance of letting learners take the lead in their lifelong educational journey, meeting the challenges that they encounter. Additionally, the chapter focuses on new modes of learning in the digital era. The role transfers and professional development of managers, leaders, and academics are discussed, as well as the need for the development of digital academic scholarship. The chapter also highlights the inappropriateness of the traditional top-down approach in the educational system in favor of rhizomatic pathways. Further discussion is needed about what open education means in terms of equity, inclusiveness, and access, with particular regard to letting learners take the lead and orchestrate their own learning.

INTRODUCTION
In The Future We Want for All, UNESCO (2015) proposed the overarching importance of the accessibility of education for all. According to this report, the core pillars for building inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous societies are the concepts and the implementation of access, equitable, quality education, and lifelong learning for all. UNESCO argued for a holistic perspective that embraces lifelong learning. In their recommendations to educational organizations, they emphasized the need to increase and implement these core pillars and to make them visible and explicit in educational settings, organizations, and offers. The European Commission reiterates the importance of opening up education to boost innovation and digital skills in schools and universities in order to ensure international competitiveness both in education and in the labor market worldwide. They stated that it is not possible any longer to educate today’s students by using methods from the past century for an unknown future. In addition to discussing the agenda for the future development of education, the international discourse has emphasized the
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three core pillars of the vision, shape, and scope of post-2015 education. According to the discourse, the post-2015 approach emphasizes entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and active learning, which is crucial to enhance meaningful student learning and teaching environments (Ossiannilsson, 2015). This chapter addresses the following main topics:

- New modes of learning in a digital era,
- Learners taking the lead,
- Role transfers: the role of teachers and students,
- The role of leadership in digital learning environments,
- Digital scholarship,
- Continuous digital professional development and quality requirements for academics,
- The end of linear top-down education.

BACKGROUND

The global landscape of higher education is undergoing dramatic changes. Specifically, a considerable proportion of the global changes in education caused by changing demographics, increased globalization, and rapid internalization, widening recruitment, and emerging demands for sustainability (Bruce, 2015). In addition are the increased access to and use of the Internet and digital technology in all sectors of society. The improved measures through which students are reached also have driven the transformation of the educational landscape. Moreover, according to Witthaus et al. (2016) there are increased demands for the validation and recognition of not only prior learning but also learning in both formal and informal settings, which increasingly have merged. Consequently, the boundaries between them have blurred and become unbundled. In this respect, the current global challenges concern how, where and when students learn, how institutions structure programs and services, and how these are structured.

In the past 15 years, digital technology has altered or completely transformed several businesses. Such changes may accelerate in the future with the continuous rise in automation. Extensive technological changes have given rise to increased challenges not only for the labor market and work environments but also for the education sector. The education sector’s uptake of these innovations until now has been somewhat slow and has not gained a strong foothold. However, the educational landscape and learning environments have begun to shift toward enhanced personalization and openness as well as increased global collaboration and networking. Increased digitalization accompanied by greater potentials for global collaboration and networking, and the demands for change are increasingly urgent (Uvalic-Trumbic & Daniel, 2014).

In 2015, on behalf of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), coordinated by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), a research study was conducted using quality models of open online learning around the globe (Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri, & Brown, 2015). The aim of the research was to obtain an overview of these quality models of open online learning around the globe, identify the state of the art, and provide recommendations to stakeholders and the UNESCO Policy Forum in 2015. Similar to other studies on quality in education, this research underlined the fact that although it cannot yet be determined whether this change would be disruptive, revolutionary, or merely evolutionary, it continues to sig-