

19th EAN Annual Conference, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden
14th -16th June 2010

From Access to Success: Closing the Knowledge Divide
(Higher education for under-represented groups in the market economy)

Call for Proposals

Deadline for submission: 31st March 2010

In the last decade or so globalisation and emphasis on the market economy has put enormous pressure on higher education institutions. They are expected to change their traditional role as dispensers of knowledge and cultivators of minds to producers of highly skilled labour to meet market needs. The catch-phrase is, 'an educated workforce', and the keyword, 'employability'. It is true that globalisation, along with the revolutions in ICT have broken down many barriers – to quote President Barack Obama, "What matters, then, isn't what you do or where you live, but what you know." But at the same time, the knowledge divide has widened not just between individuals but also between countries. Who then are the 'educated' in the digital age, who will be 'employable' in the competitive market economy? How do we close the gap between those who have access to knowledge, and the form of knowledge, who learn it, master it and use it to compete, and those who do not?

Is an access mission commensurate with a free market ideology? How will access be funded in the market economy with its emphasis on profit and privatisation? Is a competency-based curriculum with transferable skills for employment appropriate for a culturally and socially diverse student body? Is an enterprise culture a threat to greater equity in higher education for under-represented groups? Are enterprise and equity compatible? What are the benefits of the market economy and what are its limitations for equity and access? How do we reconcile equity with market-oriented systems of higher education? If student success is measured by competency and employability, then how do we measure the intrinsic value of higher education?

All proposals must address at least one under-represented group in higher education. Under-representation can be for reasons of gender, ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, employment status, income level, family background, geographical location, or earlier educational disadvantage.

International proposals are invited on the following themes:

1. Higher education policy

What is the role of higher education institutions in the knowledge economy? Is an access mission commensurate with a free market ideology?

2. Admissions

When students are 'customers' or 'clients', who participate in a market-oriented higher education?

3. The curriculum

Is a competency-based curriculum with transferable skills for employment appropriate for a culturally and socially diverse student body?

4. Funding mechanisms

How will access be funded in the entrepreneurial university? Is it a choice between reliance on direct state funding and reliance on the market driven forces or is there a middle way?

5. The influence of new technology

How can technology be harnessed to widen access and increase learning opportunities for under-represented groups in the digital age? What is the impact and potential of the application of new technologies to lifelong learning?

Presenters are requested to:

- Highlight the relevance and transferability of their proposal to participants from other countries.
- Provide copies of at least an outline of their presentation for participants.
- Note that there is no reduction or waiver of fees for presenters.

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