



UNESCO AT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
TUNIS, TUNISIA, 16-18 NOVEMBER 2005

ROUND TABLE ON
‘THE ROLE OF UNESCO IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES THROUGH
THE UNITWIN/UNESCO CHAIRS PROGRAMME, TUNIS, 18 NOVEMBER, 2005

ANNOTATED OUTLINE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES

THE ROLE OF UNESCO ICT CHAIRS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES:
A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

DEFINITION: *The study should be prepared based on commonly accepted definition of knowledge society as being “A SOCIETY WHERE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, DIFFUSION AND APPLICATION BECOME THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE IN ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES”.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The paper should include a general introduction about the importance of the study, its organization, and significance.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION (TRENDS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES)

This part provides 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 and 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 the teaching function of the chair focuses on dissemination and diffusion of knowledge. Is the content of curriculum based on new knowledge? How teaching has 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 the UNESCO chair has 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 nation 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 the Chair has been successful in harnessing the potential of ICTs in its teaching and research activities. What are the main hindrances and shortcomings? To what extent the chair has 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.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This part should propose few action oriented recommendations. The recommendations could be addressed to governments, institutions of higher education, UNESCO, the private sector and development agencies.