# HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: NETWORKING, PROMISES & CHALLENGES

Roberto Escalante Semerena

Secretary General

# UDUAL'S BRIEF HISTORY

- The Union of Latin-American and the Caribbean Universities (UDUAL) was founded in 1949 at the San Carlos University in Guatemala during the First Congress of Latin American Universities. 24 universities from 13 countries attended.

- Its mission is to engage universities as instruments for promoting social development, cooperation between its members, and defend universities' autonomy to guarantee academic and research freedom.

# UDUAL'S SOCIAL CONTEXT IN 1949

- A reduced number of universities and students.
- Higher education was elitist.
- Higher education was mostly offered by public institutions.
- Various governments in LA were authoritarian and had a difficult relationship with universities.

# UDUAL IN THE ERA OF KNOWLEDGE

- 190 universities are affiliated according to academic criteria
- Incorporates national and sub regional HE networks.
- Is an information and consultation organism for UNESCO
- Counts on 10 networks of disciplinary areas that promote the harmonization of academic programs, accreditation
- Operates an students international mobility program (PAME)
- Promotes a program to certify the quality of education

# HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT IN LA

- A great number of higher education institutions (HEI).16,000 (Brunner 2011)

- Multiple types of HEI, (technological, polythechnical, teaching oriented, research oriented, open universities, transnational. 93% only teach do not do research.

- Increasing number of private education institutions.

- A number of national and sub-regional HEI networks.

# IMPORTANT TOPICS IN HEI IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

- Need to increase the registration of students. At present is 40%
- Quality assurance of programs, institutions and individuals.
- Curricular flexibilization.
- The use Communication and Information Technologies (CIT) to support academic life.
- Internationalization of HE.
- HE conceived as a merchandise.
- Education for life access.

# UDUAL 2011-2013 FIVE STRATEGIC TOPICS

1. Global climatic change
2. Information technologies and the knowledge society.
3. Demographics dynamics.
4. Equity of rights in LA
5. The HEI autonomy challenges in contemporary world.

# THE NETWORK MODEL AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO HANDLE COMPLEXITY

Different forums have proposed the creation of the "network of networks" to integrate and get coherence in the HE area in the region.

- Iberoamerican space of HE (Universia 2010)

- Agreement of Latin-American and Caribbean Higher Education Institutions (ENLACES) for cooperation (UNESCO 2009)

# THE NETWORK MODEL AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO HANDLE COMPLEXITY

- Can define general goals and strategies to work together.

- The network model permits to articulate in a coherent way the action of multiple actors.

- Promotes horizontal cooperation

- Each node of the network contributes with its strengths, and can get support form other members.

# THE NETWORK MODEL AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO HANDLE COMPLEXITY

Demands from the HEI:

* Move from a closed system model of communication to an open one.

* There is an increase of complexity an volume of information to be handled.

* Adjustments in its structure and organization model.

* Institutional learning, to participate in the new collaborative and cooperating communities.

# THE ROLE OF ICT'S IN THE NETWORKED WORLD

- The ICT's provide a powerful tool to handle and organize information.

- Organized information can support and develop new ways of knowledge.

- The learning process can be transformed to support a more active role in the students and the design of new teaching materials.

- Can provide meaningful ways to interact with the other institutions in the network in the cyberspace.

# THE ROLE OF ICT'S IN THE NETWORKED WORLD

- Supports open net dialogue, embedding other forms of communication.
- Promotes the importance of long-lasting cohesive systems and cooperating communities.
- Creates new tools for internationalization activities in virtual space.
- Facilitates sharing library services, data bases, and AV materials.

# FINAL REMARKS

➢ Cooperation between HEI en the Latin-America and the Caribbean area is indispensable to support a consolidation of efforts.

➢ The complexity and diversity of HE systems demand a network approach .

➢ The ITC constitutes a strategic tool  for this task.

➢ We need to move in a new schema of cooperation and horizontal relationships, with efficient communication processes.

- The collaboration between networks like Virtual Educa in these processes can play a facilitating role an can provide technical support.

- The multilateral organisms like AEO (OEA), can facilitate the changes and the network collaboration.

- This effort requires support from the different stake holders.