

# CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF OF EXPANDED EDUCATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS

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## Abstract

This research focuses on social and educational changes resulting from technological developments that have influenced directly the way people communicate and learn, favoring the gradual disappearance of boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education.

The model of "expanded education" is in a pre-theoretical state at present, so the primary aim of this research is to construct a theory of this educational model according to the current Network Society.

The second goal of this research is to provide guidance describing educational activities and management practices according to this educational model, thereby assessing the extent to which a higher education institution is aligned with such a model.

Keywords: Innovation, Higher education, grounded theory.

## 1 TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Globalization and technological expansion has served to extend the knowledge society (Drucker, 1969). We are living in a global village (MacLuhan, 1968) with less physical limits to promote mobility of goods, services and people.

Technology has radically transforming the economy, society and politics, and the way we see the world and ourselves. This is because the technology has been progressively integrated in all sectors of society. As Mari says "*the novelty lies in the totalizing character of the technological revolution: touches all dimensions of life and global society*" (1999:14). That has influenced directly the way people communicate and learn, favouring the gradual disappearance of boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education.

In educational industry, the use of technology has helped to facilitate access to education. In addition, they have set new ways of understanding teaching-learning process, in a less hierarchical way, and more focused on the knowledge's generation. However, even though the society, economy and technology have globalized, expanding its boundaries beyond the barriers, the fact is that universities have only partially implemented these advances in their functioning.

### 1.1 Higher Education in the Network Society

Export business of academic services in higher education is increasing, and technologies has been integrated into the classroom. In addition, the resources from Internet such as blogs or social networks have opened the possibility to be active to create their own knowledge. Some innovative teachers use technology to do participatory activities inside and outside the classroom.

However, this does not mean that universities have been transformed as society does. According to Schmidt (2010) there is a gap between the knowledge society, expanded thanks to technology, and the fragmented university model. Still survive rigid curriculum, limited in scope, that prepare students for the present, not for the future. But above all, the universities are still more focused on the training and certification of students in the overall development of society.

Is necessary to rethink the university and its social role. Universities must follow a comprehensive model of education to develop skills, to eliminate the obsolescence of its validity and adapt to social changes. It is also necessary that universities became, as a transformation's engine at social, technological, scientific and cultural level. Part of this transformation is to make visible the scope of higher education beyond the boundaries of formal education. So Bigum and Rowan (2010) argue that

universities have become places of serious knowledge production in the development initiatives of interest to the community, which would get more involved students or other external agents college and above all a real and close connection between the university and society.

Meanwhile, Pedreño said in the Expanded University Meeting organized by the International Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (UNIA), it is necessary that universities are institutions:

- *"Diligent with changes, its assimilation, its defense and education.*
- *Extremely innovative and competitive in the new global environment*
- *Enthusiastic, players and leaders in the progress and the configuration of this new culture "*(UNIA, 2009, Andres Pedreño paper, paragraph 4)

Continuing with the analysis of the necessary change of universities, the main conclusions of the Expanded University Meeting of UNIA were:

- *"The biggest problem facing the University to change is his bureaucracy*
- *It is more important to focus on openness and networking in digital tools*
- *Two of the changes to be undertaken by the University are conceived as an environment of active and collaborative learning and acquiring a strong commitment to society*
- *Some of the key elements for the introduction of digital culture at the university are: student-teacher relationships, how to create materials and mixed evaluation systems "*(UNIA, 2009, Report of the meeting, paragraph 35)

In this paper we claim the need for true global an open universities that can provide knowledge and investigations results they produce, and maintain an open dialogue with society.

## **2 THE EDUCATIONAL MODEL OF EXPANDED EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Description of the research**

With this research we want to build the educational and institutional model of expanded education as proposed to update the universities.

The leading research goals are:

- Build the expanded education model to evaluate its implementation in actual practice in higher education contexts
- Build an evaluation tool capable of assessing the adequacy of a university for the implementation of expanded education model
- Generate reflection and debate on the model of University Expanded from its understanding and definition

### **2.2 Methodological approach**

The research comprises two complementary study phases are clearly differentiated by the methodology:

#### **2.2.1 First Phase: Grounded theory**

Grounded theory *"proposes a process of qualitative analysis in order to generate theoretical propositions grounded in empirical data"* Requena, AT; Plans, VC; Miras, RMS (2006: 21). The reason we use this methodology is that we find a field of study that there is little theoretical knowledge. The essential purpose of the research is the exploration, understanding and theorizing.

It is important that grounded theory process does not start with the formulation of hypotheses or preconceived theories but in obtaining data directly in the field study, as well expressed Strauss and Corbin *"a researcher does not start a project with a preconceived theory (unless your purpose is to develop and expand an existing theory). Rather, it begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. "* (2002:13).

*Grounded theory requires a comprehensive and rigorous work, "implies not only conceiving or intuiting ideas (concepts), but also to formulate them in a logical, systematic and explanatory" (Strauss and Corbin, 2002:24 that deeply explain reality, in the case of this research, the model of expanded education. To build a rigorous theory will require a conceptual clarification and classification and systematic description and understanding of reality.*

### 2.2.2 Second Phase: Evaluative research, development and validation of an assessment tool for universities

The second phase of the research is to assess the favorable aspects of an institution of higher education to integrate expanded education model. For this we will design a tool for assessing the suitability of a university to implement the expanded education model.

Will conduct an evaluative research of the Universidad Europea de Madrid (UEM) in order to produce a consistent assessment tool not only theoretically but also to the actual practice of a university. Thus, we can understand the theoretical model by evaluating their application in a real context. In this way, the construction of the assessment tool serves also to other contexts.

However, in our research we do not want to generalize but in-depth knowledge of expanded education model and its application to a real context.

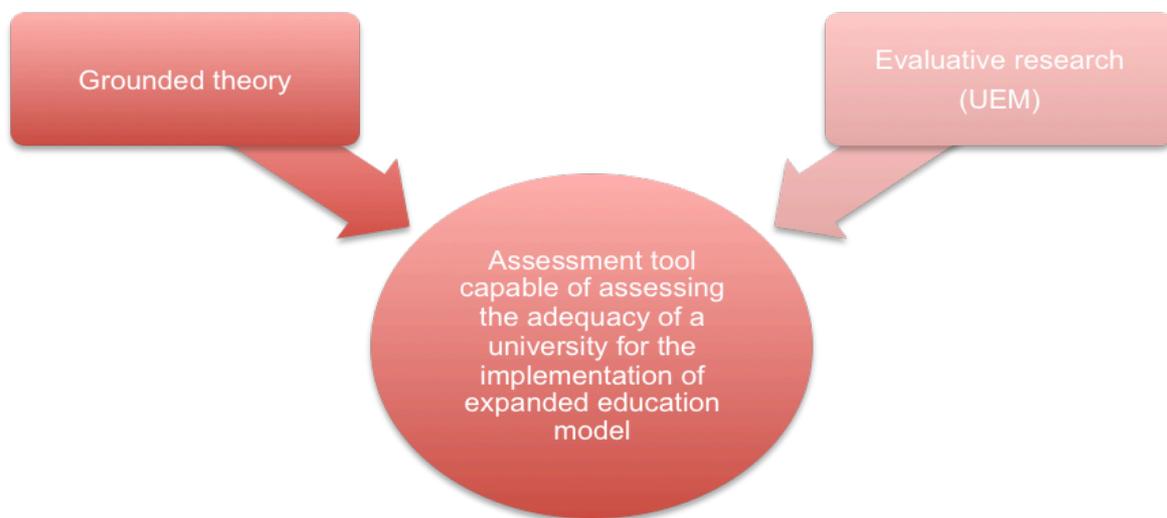


Figure 1. Prepared by Sonia Martínez

For the development of this assessment tool will take as reference; tools for evaluating universities created before, conclusions of the first phase of the research, and the conclusions from evaluative research process of Universidad Europea de Madrid (UEM). As well as specify the application of the tool, its purpose, the evaluation indicators adequately described, the scope and limitations of evaluation and assessment tools to be used and the process to follow.

## 2.3 Expanded Education as a model

The origin of the expanded education concept is at the meeting organized by the research group Zemos98 Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (UNIA) in 2009. The slogan of this meeting was "education can happen anytime, anywhere" because expanded education "exceeds the traditional close institutional boundaries, thematic or methodological." (Zemos 98, sf, Eduex Symposium, paragraph 3).

Expanded education brings freedom of the learning process that goes beyond institutional boundaries of formal education, which gets closer differentiated concepts far as formal education, non-formal and informal.

In that meeting, Andrés Pedreño, Rector of the University of Alicante, argues that expanded education is an educational model according to the today's digital culture. This definition adds interesting variable in defining the expanded education: digital culture. Technological expansion has generated

social changes affecting the way we communicate and interact with knowledge. What Pedreño means is that the expanded education model is consistent with the current model of society.

We include now a more to define expanded education, related digital society: social learning. *"Education is an epistemological expanded generative and constructivist exploring new formats and mediations, languages and social learning experiences"* Fonseca (2010: p.2). The constructivist concept of social learning is an essential part of expanded education because it promotes freedom. Knowledge is not limited to communication between the educators and students. Learning is produced collaboratively, not just individual. This understanding of learning has a more global view and not just academic.

Continuing Education Expanded definitions, Tíscar Lara, associate dean of Digital Culture of the School of Industrial Organization (EOI) defines "expanded education" as follows:

*"Encompasses new forms of education that incorporate and adapt to the social processes that has brought internet, as the new digital culture, which is based on the network organization, teamwork, copyleft-licenses that allow any users use, modify and redistribute work, provided it meets the same conditions of use and dissemination. Processes that until now were beyond conventional education systems."* (Saez, 2011: p.36)

When we talk about expanded education, "expanded" essentially means "openness" and "interaction" with the rest of society. This means that the university develop collaborative activities with other actors such as companies, experts, associations and others to share and build knowledge together. The binomial "openness" and "interaction" makes it possible for universities to become engines of change, generating free knowledge.

Referencing the definition of expanded education now define what features must have a university to implement this model to qualify as an expanded university:

a) University as an institution

- Diligent to adapt to a changing society
- With internationally to meet the global society
- Innovative, enthusiastic and star of progress and shaping culture
- That uses free software and open standards, not only in teaching, also in management processes
- With a computer network open to the entire educative community; students, teachers and administrative staff - services
- Oriented inclusion of different groups in society in the teaching-learning process (disabled, ethnic minorities, adults, etc..)
- To work collaboratively with other universities, educational institutions and businesses: in research, meetings, seminars, conferences, or other projects, favoring an actual dialogic conversation between university and society.
- With a more flexible organization of time and space, less focused on meeting schedules and presence on campus.

b) The university as an educational and research center

Incorporating in its training and research activities:

- Open educational resources according to a coherent pedagogical model and matured. As mentioned referring to the project Geser Open e-Learning Content Observatory Services or OLCOS "before attempting useful open content, tools and licenses, consider teaching practices on which these resources can make a difference, that is, using them innovative ways of teaching and learning." (2007: p.6)
- Pedagogically and scientifically responsible use of digital technologies in teaching and research, with special preference to the use of free software.
- Integration of research activities as teaching strategy to encourage the development of critical and creative thinking in students.

- Development of basic skills for personal development and other specific job performance and critical thinking and constructive.
- Offer of training in different modalities: classroom, online and blended with the same level of quality, regardless of the mode in which they are entered.
- Breadth of its offerings. It covers various fields of knowledge, and facilitates the integration of new ones.
- Focus of their research, giving priority to those investigations that are based on real needs of society to promote improvement or development.
- Free access to research's findings for those who may be interested in them.

When we say expanded university we mean a university that applies the principles of the model of expanded education as; found according to the digital culture, promote freedom of access and knowledge creation and learning as conceived, a collaborative social process, based on practice, it happens everywhere, and integrated throughout the life of the motivation or desire to learn. This promotes an opening of educational institutions and promotes productive dialogical conversation with the society of which it forms part and which plays an important role for development.

The model of Expanded University has a social focus and seeks to build a *"world where every single person in the world can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge"* (Cape Town Open Education Declaration, 2007).

Returning to the interview done by Sáez to Tíscar Lara, the implications of applying the model of expanded education in universities and the changes brought to fit today's society are:

*"It means changing methodologies, the role of teachers and students, the activity, how you learn, how you learn, how to assess, and even the concept of traditional classroom stops working. It is essential to change the model of education, because we also need to modify the model community. We live in the information society, where the ways to build knowledge, to relate, to access information, to share experiences as a person, have changed, and we need to be trained differently in order to act on that new social"* (Saez, 2011: p.38).

The expanded education model applied to higher education has the flexibility and openness required by the society, in addition to cooperation with the environment that is needed to become an active sociocultural agent.

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