



Building ICT Innovation Capacity

WSIS Forum 2017

Thursday 15th June (14h30-16h15, ITU Montbrillant Room M2)

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2017/Agenda/Session/324#intro>

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Universities and innovation: liberating or constraining?

Prof. Dr. Tim Unwin CMG
UNESCO Chair in ICT4D, Emeritus
Professor of Geography, Royal Holloway,
University of London
Honorary Professor, Lanzhou University





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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ITU WTDC
BUENOS AIRES 2017
9-20 October

Universities and innovation: liberating or constraining?

Note the credentialism – I must be important, so you had better listen!

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The university sector?

Does it promote innovation?

Does it stifle innovation?

What are the interests underlying the practice of universities?

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H.G. Wells, *The World Brain*, 1937

“We are living in 1937, and our universities... are not halfway out of the fifteenth century. We have made hardly any changes in our conception of university organization, education, graduation ... for several centuries. The three or four year course of lectures, the bachelor who knows some, the master who knows most, the doctor who knows all, are ideas that have come down unimpaired from the Middle Ages. Nowadays, no one should end his learning while he lives and these university degrees are preposterous.”





What percentage of the population is capable of outstanding creative innovation?

And what percentage go to university?

How many true innovators have never been to university?

Innovation for whom, and why?

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THE BOY WHO HARNESSSED THE WIND

Kid's Book Book Pix/Vid Press Donate Links Bryan Elizabeth Documentary

October 06, 2014

Updates from the past two years

Through Moving Windmills Project foundation, I have worked extensively in Kasungu district, particularly my own home village, Wimbe. We have been able to build three classroom blocks with two classes each for the local primary school, Wimbe primary school. These new classrooms have solar panel installations that allow the students to study late into the night. We have also introduced a one-laptop-per-child initiative, which enables us to expose these youngsters on how to use computers at an early age. Our local high school too has been a beneficiary of your generous support. We have also installed solar panels and systems in Kachokolo high school, which allow the students to use computers for their studies. In fact, we have created a local network through the use of egranary, a box that stores academic information within a local network. It is like a digital library. This means that students don't need to be online to access academic material. They simply need to access the local network using a router!

Apart from working in schools, we have also sought ways to improve the livelihoods of the residents of Kasungu district. Last summer I piloted a biogas digester project in Masitala village. This digester uses cow dung to generate gas for cooking, thus providing an alternative energy source to firewood. Additionally,

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Most “universities”, as they are presently constructed are not designed to enhance and encourage innovation

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What are universities?

Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana



Peking University



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Universities and higher education

- Universities
 - Communities of scholars learning together to enhance knowledge and create new ideas
 - And by definition, innovate
- Higher education
 - Institutions designed to teach existing knowledge so that students regurgitate accepted truths
 - And by definition, create replicants, many of whom cannot gain employment
 - Heavily influenced by ICT-based learning





The myth of higher education, economic growth and innovation

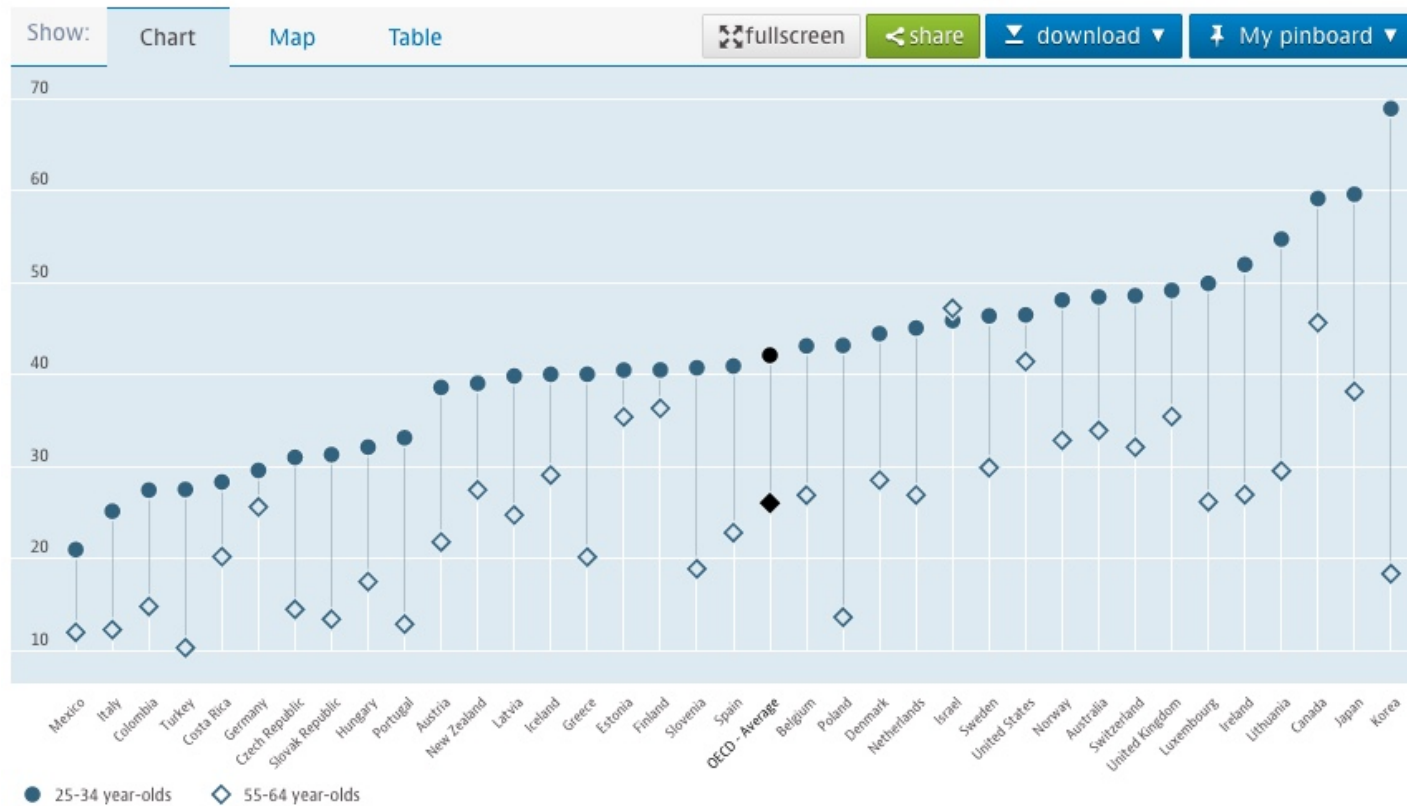
- Widely accepted that increasing the percentage of students in higher education contributes significantly to GDP growth
- But this is merely a correlation – it can equally be argued that high GDP enables more people to enter higher education
- Expenditure on higher education is not strongly related to innovation
- Yet global “conspiracy” to have c. 50% of people in “universities”
 - In reality, in “Higher Education”
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Tertiary education and innovation

Population with tertiary education 25-34 year-olds / 55-64 year-olds, % in same age group, 2015

Source: Education at a glance: Educational attainment and labour-force status



<https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm>

<https://unwin.wordpress.com/>



Tertiary education and innovation

- Top ranked tertiary education 2015 (OECD)

1. Korea
2. Japan
3. Canada
4. Lithuania
5. Ireland
6. Luxembourg
7. UK
8. Switzerland
9. Australia
10. Norway

- Global Innovation Index 2016 ranking (WIPO)

1. Switzerland (8th OECD Tertiary)
2. Sweden (12th)
3. UK (7th)
4. USA (11th)
5. Finland (20th)
6. Singapore (non-OECD)
7. Ireland (5th)
8. Denmark (15th)
9. Netherlands (14th)
10. Germany (31st)

<https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm>

http://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_gii_2016.pdf

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Are graduates employable? Can they innovate?

- Numerous employer surveys show that graduates do not have the “right skills”
- Large numbers of graduates pay for degrees in the hope of good employment
 - But fail to gain expected jobs, thus fueling dissent
- Even the more highly qualified are not sufficiently trained in creativity and innovation



https://southernafrican.news/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/sad-grad_new_large.jpg


Why has this happened?

- Most “universities” are now “higher education” businesses
 - Focused on maximising income and thus students
- The original remit of a “university” has been lost
 - Not everyone is suited to “university”
 - This is not “elitist”, but in pursuit of excellence, creativity and innovation
- A desire for immediate gratification
 - Credentialism
 - Mass plagiarism and corruption in higher education
- ICTs have substantially influenced this trend towards regurgitation and replication of knowledge





Higher education as imperialism



“Isn’t it wonderful that African students can now use MOOCs to learn from the best universities in the world such as MIT and Harvard”

“Well, no actually! It would be wonderful if US students could learn something about the world by studying courses designed and built by Africans”





And solutions?

- Reclaim universities from the mire of mediocrity
- Focus on excellence, creative knowledge and innovation in universities
 - Not everyone can innovate, but we can help develop creative, open and innovative minds.
- Place much greater emphasis on technical training institutes to give most people valuable employment skills
- Use ICTs to encourage creativity, not mass replication
 - Towards a free university (<http://thefreeuniversity.eu/>)

<https://unwin.wordpress.com/>





Is this the future?



Communication Breakdown by Giles Walker
<https://unwin.wordpress.com/>

