Chapter 1

(Re)Defining Smart Education:
Towards Dynamic Education and Information Systems for Innovation Networks

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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly interconnected world, the relationship among learning and teaching, innovation and innovativeness, entrepreneurship, business development, as well as sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth and development, requires a multidimensional interdisciplinary analysis. Importantly, information systems and advancements in sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICTs) are consequential for the potential inherent in education to be exploited. This edited volume opens discussion on ways and strategies of exploiting opportunities and synergies, which the maturing relationship between smart education and information systems offers. In this context, the objective of this chapter is to suggest how to (re)define smart education and how to reap its benefits in view of promoting dynamic education and information systems conducive to the emergence of innovation networks in socially, politically and economically trying times.

INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly interconnected world, the relationship among learning and teaching, innovation and innovativeness, entrepreneurship, business development, as well as sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth and development, requires a multidimensional interdisciplinary analysis. Education stands at the heart of this multifaceted relationship and so is the key to understand and explain the chal-

lenges contemporary societies are confronted with and how to address them. Considering the plethora of social, political, economic and environmental problems that define the reality today, effective ways of anticipating, precepting and navigating those problems are needed. To this end, the development of enabling infrastructures, processes and systems, capable of transforming knowledge, creativity, skills and competencies of individuals and groups into meaningful services, products, effective policies, strategies, and finally cultural artefacts must be the priority of all stakeholders involved. Education plays a critical role in this context. Importantly, information systems and advancements in sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICTs) are consequential for the potential inherent in education to be exploited. This edited volume opens discussion on ways and strategies of exploiting opportunities and synergies, which the maturing relationship between smart education and information systems offers. In this context, the objective of this chapter is to suggest how to (re)define smart education and how to reap its benefits in view of promoting dynamic education and information systems conducive to the emergence of innovation networks in socially, politically and economically trying times. The discussion is structured as follows: First, the linkage between innovation and education is outlined. In the next two parts, the relationship between open information and innovation and teaching and learning and innovation is examined. In the following section of this chapter, the concepts of smart education and innovation networks are brought together in a discussion on a vision of open, inclusive, sustainable society of tomorrow. Conclusions follow.

THE INNOVATION-EDUCATION NEXUS

In 2010 Gassman et al. (2010) stated that an era of open innovations had just began. By 2017, an array of concepts converging around the promise of innovation, i.e. innovative businesses, innovative education, innovative medicine etc. populated the debate across diverse disciplines of social and natural sciences. This chapter offers a brief insight into the concept of innovation as seen from the perspective of education. In this sense, arguments introduced here represent a prequel of a larger research project devoted to the intrinsic relationship among education, innovation, growth and development and policy-making. From the perspective of education and education systems the key questions that need to be posed in this context are: What are the challenges related to innovation and how to employ innovation in view of building and exploiting innovation networks?

Some researchers state that there is no place for innovation if innovative education is not provided to everyone. Others insist that political decisions are prior to any discussion on innovation in education as it is the political decision that will eventually provide space for innovation. In this context, it is argued that influencing S (structural) theory parameters might require policy interventions, whereas F (functional) theory conditions often require managerial action (Jenson et al, 2016). From a different angle, innovation and the capacity to innovate are associated with technologies and smart solutions. From a different vantage point, in the burgeoning literature on innovation, the concept of *social innovation* (Sabato, Vanhercke & Verschraegen, 2017; Pohoryles, 2017) has also been employed, even if little consensus about its precise meaning exists. As Visvizi (2013: 77) argues, "social innovation is about changing the way things are done and social needs are conceptualised"; therefore, social innovation is about stimulating new approaches and promoting new responses to problems and challenges our societies face. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the rich debate on social innovation and innovation as they unfold in social sciences today. The key lesson to be drawn from those debates is as follows.

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