Chapter II

Distance Education in the Online World: Implications for Higher Education

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In this chapter, the authors identify forces leading to change in industries in the online world, including increasing global competition, increasingly powerful consumers and rapid changes in technology. In the higher education industry, outcomes are evolving, but include the formation of alliances, outsourcing and re-engineering of systems and work practices. The communication and information technologies that created the online world also link lecturers, tutors, and teaching resources to create the possibility of networked education. The authors outline a "glocal" networked education paradigm that separates out global and local resource development and global and local learning facilitation. By embracing this separation, it is possible to develop ways of working that allow the creation of a flexible model of education delivery that is scalable and hence globally competitive. In this model, the work of the university academic is changed considerably. The functions traditionally performed by a single university academic are differentiated and are performed by a network of learning facilitators. In this scenario, university academics may find themselves responsible for the learning of hundreds of students, but they may never find themselves face-to-face with a single student.

INTRODUCTION

As the world moves online, pressure increases on industries and organizations to change the way they do business. According to Turban, McLean and Wetherbe (1999), pressures acting on industries and organizations result from: the market, technology, and society. *Market pressures* include global competition and consumers who are becoming more demanding; *technological pressures* include the use of e-commerce to lower the costs of production and transaction costs; and s*ocietal pressures* include government regulations and economic conditions (for example, through the use of subsidies, tax policies, and import/export regulations).

The higher education industry and universities are subject to the same pressures as other industries and organizations in the online world. For example, in Australia, enrollment of foreign students was the country's eighth largest export earner during 1997/8 earning A$3.1 billion [the larger ones being: coal (A$9.5b), tourism (A$8.0b), transport (A$6.7b), gold (A$6.2b), iron (A$3.7b), wheat (A$3.6b) and aluminium (A$3.2) (AVCC, 2000)]. Because of the Internet, Australian universities must now *compete* with universities from other countries offering online programs to those students in their own countries. So universities must change the way they do business.

Those institutions that can step up to this process of change will thrive. Those that bury their heads in the sand, that rigidly defend the status quo - or even worse - some idyllic vision of a past that never existed, are at very great risk.…The real question is not whether higher education will be transformed but rather how and by whom?

(Duderstadt, 1999, p.1)

To understand how universities need to be transformed, it is necessary to look at the impact of distance education in the online world on higher education organizational structures and work groups, including organizational roles, workgroup dynamics, and communication. It is also necessary to examine which structures and processes are needed to allow a university to exist and prosper in an age of globalization and rapid changes in the information technology underlying remote education and work. This chapter tackles these issues using a model based on Giddens' (1977) theory of structuration in which process (activity) and structure are reciprocally constitutive, and the application of this theory to information technology by Orlikowski and Robey (1991). Central to this model is the view that change is not solely "technology led" or solely "organizational/agency driven." Instead, change arises from a complex interaction between technology, people and the organization.

The authors then consider, as a case study, Central Queensland University (CQU), which is a university in Australia that is responding to the

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