E-Learning for Development in a Developing Context: Reflections on the Impact of Globalisation on Higher Education in the Caribbean

Dianne Thurab-Nkhosi
Distance Education Centre
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine Campus
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies
dthurab@dec.uwi.edu

Abstract

"Globalisation" has become a much debated topic in academia as well as a "buzz" word in discussions on development. Within developing countries, however, it is recognised that the influence of the richer, more developed countries impacts on our social and economic lives. As we in the developed world strive to establish our identities through education and other means, we are constantly faced with new forms of colonialism and social exclusion, which emerge in various subtle ways. In higher education, in particular, with the emergence of online learning or e-learning, there is a real danger of exclusion. This descriptive, qualitative paper is an examination of the concept of globalisation and the rise of e-learning in a developed country setting, as an option to increase higher education offerings. My experiences as a member of staff of one Caribbean institution, the University of the West Indies, will be discussed in an effort to reflect on the implications of e-learning for development in the region.

Abstrak

"Globalisasi" telah menjadi tajuk yang sering diperdebatkan dalam akademia dan merupakan satu perkataan yang selalu dibincangkan apabila merujuk kepada pembangunan. Walau bagaimanapun untuk negara-negara membangun ianya dikenal pasti bahawa pengaruh negara kaya dan maju memberi kesan terhadap kehidupan sosial dan ekonomi. Dalam usaha kami mewujudkan identiti sendiri menerusi pendidikan dan cara lain, kami di negara membangun sentiasa menghadapi satu bentuk kolonialisme yang baru dan pengecualian sosial yang menjelma dalam cara yang tersendiri. Secara khusus dalam pendidikan tinggi dengan kemunculan pembelajaran atas talian atau e-pembelajaran, terdapat bahaya sebenar terhadap pengecualian. Kertas kerja berbentuk deskriptif dan kualitatif memeriksa konsep globalisasi dan

peningkatan e-pembelajaran dalam konteks negara membangun sebagai satu pilihan untuk meningkatkan penawaran pendidikan tinggi. Pengalaman saya sebagai kakitangan University of West Indies akan membincangkan satu usaha untuk menggambarkan implikasi e-pembelajaran terhadap pembangunan serantau ini.

Introduction

There has been a great amount of debate on the concept of "globalisation" over the years, with some theorists claiming that globalisation is a real historical development and others saying it is primarily a social construct. Whether we accept one side of the argument or the other, it is clear that the concept will remain a part of any discussion on development. In this paper, a reflection on the impact of globalisation on e-learning in higher education and the implications for development in the Caribbean is given. The paper begins with a review of the concept "globalisation" and examines the growth of e-learning as an option to increase higher education offerings. My experiences as a member of staff of one Caribbean institution, the University of the West Indies (UWI), will be discussed in an effort to assess the implications of e-learning for development in the region.

Globalisation

Held and McGrew (2004) traced the origin of the concept of globalisation to the work of Saint Simon and Karl Marx who recognised that "modernity" was changing and integrating the world. While the concept was identified many years ago, the actual term "globalisation" was not used however, until the late 1960s, at a time when there was a great deal of discussion on the inadequacy of the separation between internal and external affairs and domestic and external relations. In attempting to arrive at a definition of globalisation, Lauder et al. (2006) identify the inclusion of the following ideas as important:

- The transition of national "walled" and regional economies towards global "free" trade and markets.
- The declining importance of geographical, national and cultural borders and boundaries leading to greater interdependence of people and countries worldwide.
- Greater connection and interconnectedness through information

technologies such as the internet, and cheaper transportation including shipping and air travel.

- More extensive global networks of companies, universities, students, migrants, faith groups, etc.
- An exponential increase in global flows of goods, money, services, music, film, knowledge, people, information, ideas, tourists, etc.
- More extensive and rapid diffusion of technologies, knowledge and ideas.
- The compression of time and space across the planet.

As Held and McGrew (2004:4) stated,

> "simply put, globalisation denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human social organisation that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's major regions and continents" (p. 4).

Perspectives on Globalisation

While Lauder et al. (2006) acknowledged specific ideas central to the concept of globalisation, they also acknowledged the fact that various individuals view the concept differently. Held and McGrew (2004) categorised opposing perspectives on globalisation as *globalists* and *sceptics*. According to the writers, globalists consider globalisation a real, historical development, while sceptics see globalisation as an ideological or social construct with marginal explanatory value.

Globalists emphasise that globalisation reflects real changes in the world such as the growth of multinational corporations (MNCs), financial markets, telecommunications and popular culture, to name a few. Globalists acknowledge that the impact of globalisation may take place at a different pace in different geographical areas. Sceptics, on the other hand, question what is global about globalisation when one cannot clearly differentiate between international, transnational and regional processes. The sceptics claim that the term is so broad and vague that it is impossible to operationalise empirically and therefore, it is misleading as a tool for understanding contemporary society (Held & McGrew, 2004). In

summarising the debate on globalisation between the globalists and the sceptics, Held and McGrew (2004) identified six areas of comparison, namely, concepts, power, culture, economy, inequality and order. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1   The Great Globalisation Debate (Held & McGrew, 2004, p. 38)

	Sceptics	**Globalists**
1. Concepts	Internalisation not globalisation Regionalisation	One world, shaped by highly extensive, intensive and rapid flows, movements and networks across regions and continents
2. Power	The nation-state rules Intergovernmentalism	Erosion of state sovereignty, Autonomy and legitimacy Decline of nation-state Rise of multilateralism
3. Culture	Resurgence of nationalism and national identity	Emergence of global popular culture. Erosion of fixed political identities. Hybridisation.
4. Economy	Development of regional blocs Triadisation New imperialism	Global informational capitalism. The transnational economy. A new global division of labour.
5. Inequality	Growing North-South divide Irreconcilable conflicts of interest	Growing inequality within and across societies. Erosion of old hierarchies.
6. Order	International society of states Political conflict between states inevitably persists International governance and geopolitics. Primacy of the ethically bounded community	Multilayered global governance. Global civil society. Global polity. Cosmopolitan orientations.

Rizvi and Lingard (2006) interpreted globalisation from three perspectives. Firstly, it is to describe ways in which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected. According to this perspective, globalisation is widely associated with technological innovations in transport,

communication and data processing and the transformation of the nature of economic activity as a result (p. 251). Secondly, globalisation is perceived in some cases as a subjective awareness of people of the recent changes in the global economy. There is the concept of a need for collective action to solve global problems. This requires interconnectivity and interdependence. The third perspective identified by Rizvi and Lingard (2006:252) is that of a "…deliberate, ideological project of economic liberalisation that subjects states and individuals to more intense market forces…" (p. 252).

According to this perspective, globalisation designates certain power relations and technologies playing a role in understanding the nature of world relations.

Globalisation of Social Exclusion and Social Justice

While some theorists focus on differing perspectives of globalisation, others focus on the dangers of exclusion for those less privileged, as societies focus on the process and not the outcomes of globalisation.

Sen (1999) saw development as a process of expanding the real freedoms in which people are engaged in. Economic measures such as the Gross National Product (GNP) and individual incomes, are means to expand freedoms; however, freedoms depend on social and economic arrangements. In order to enjoy freedoms, Sen (1999) felt society must remove "un-freedoms" for developments such as poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, neglect of public facilities and social deprivation. Sen's point suggests that even with globalisation, if issues of social justice are not considered, societies cannot be considered developed.

Like Sen (1999), Tikly (2001:161) also considered issues of social justice when she critiqued popular discourses on globalisation which do not "allow for a consideration of economic crisis and the highly differentiated and inequitable impact of economic globalisation on the education of the poor nor do they allow for a consideration of education's role in legitimising the emerging global division of labour and the 'new world' order". This is a sentiment shared by Appaduri (2000) who said that within the debates on globalisation "…is the sense that social exclusion is

ever more tied to epistemological exclusion and concern that the discourses of expertise that are setting the rules for global transactions, even in the progressive parts of the international system, have left ordinary people outside and behind…" (p. 2).

Whatever the perspective of globalisation one chooses to adopt, there is agreement that however controversial the concept, it continues to be part of the discussions on development and continues to be driven by the growth of technology, Western financial power and MNCs (Lauder et al., 2006). Theorists focusing on issues of exclusion and social justice help remind us in the developing countries that in paying attention to globalisation as a driver of development, we need to consider our unique situations and the factors which may impede rather than impel development. An examination of the impact of globalisation on education in general and the experiences of one Caribbean university in particular, can perhaps assist us in interrogating the implications of globalisation for development in the region.

Globalisation, Higher Education and the Move to e-Learning

A key concept in discussions on globalisation is the knowledge-based economy. The knowledge-based economy sees education as central to a country's development and wealth. It is based on the belief that a well-educated population equipped with relevant skills for the dynamic global workplace will help ensure a country's economic progress. Rizvi and Lingard (2006) stated that the OECD has been influential in promoting the concept of the knowledge economy through the organisation's publications of the *Knowledge-Based Economy* and *Lifelong Learning for All*. These documents project education as necessary to promote the value of on-going learning across the life cycle. They also project the idea that citizens need to become flexible learners who are able to deal with innovation and change. In looking at the impact of globalisation on education, Kerr (1990) quoted in Louisy (2001) wrote, "a new period of internalisation of learning appears to be developing" (p. 426).

This internationalisation of education has led to competition and the "massification" of higher education in particular. Referring to the experiences of many Western European countries, Trow (1984) talked about the growth of higher education manifesting itself in three ways: the

rate of growth in the number of students, the absolute size of educational institutions and the changes in the proportion of the age grade enrolled in higher education. Trow (1984) also identified some of the manifestations of mass education. These include:

> Changes in the form of higher education to accommodate expansion and greater development of access. The increasing view that entry to higher education is a right for those who have the qualifications, rather than a privilege. Attendance/participation in higher education is seen more and more as an obligation. In mass education institutions, focus is on training the population to adapt to rapid social and technology changes in the society. Forms of instruction are moving away from traditional synchronous modes of teaching and learning. More open systems of learning are being introduced and more responsibility is being placed on the student to take charge of his/her learning.

Accordingly, in discussing the changes in higher education brought about by globalisation which points to e-learning, Trow (1984) suggested a movement to asynchronous methods of teaching and learning.

In describing what he called "the globalisation of the university", Atkinson (2001) identified three challenges that globalisation, and e-learning in particular, creates for universities. These are accreditation, intellectual property and maintaining the university as a community.

Atkinson (2001) noted that there are no global accreditation bodies and this is one reason why critics of online learning view it as a threat to academic quality. He pointed out that people tend to have confidence in the things they know and the growth of online universities to meet the demand for higher education in globalisation is threatened by the lack of global accreditation.

With regard to intellectual property, Atkinson (2001) pointed out that web-based learning is creating new avenues to knowledge and generating new constraints. Control of scholarly work is becoming more and more commercialised and monopolised by a few large companies and publishers. There is also a growth in the sale of intellectual property via consultancies and sale of university courses for profit. Atkinson described this trend as the "privatisation of knowledge". He noted that while this is

happening, some universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are moving to disseminate knowledge. MIT, through its open courseware project, makes course materials available on the web for free as a statement about preserving the basic mission of the university in an increasingly commercialised environment.

The third challenge identified by Atkinson (2001) is that challenge to build a university community. Building a university community requires commitment from the staff of the university as well as current and prospective students. It relies on confidence and trust in the institution. Competition from other universities due to globalisation, as well as competition between faculties for global resources in the form of grants, can impact negatively on a sense of community.

While Trow (1984) and Atkinson (2001) both looked at the effects of globalisation on higher education in developed countries, the issues are also relevant to developing countries as well and additional issues are also apparent.

Louisy (2001) stated that while globalisation creates opportunities, it deepens existing inequalities, especially in the world's small states. Examining the challenges to higher education in the English speaking Caribbean, Howe (2003) stated:

> "the complex set of processes known as globalisation not only pulls upwards, but also pushes downwards creating new pressures for local autonomy, including the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world" (p. 27).

Howe (2003) noted that the economic agenda has become the most significant feature of higher education. Less emphasis is placed on the social and cultural dimensions of the educational process.

Howe (2009) saw the most "sinister" challenge of globalisation in the way trade liberalisation and the policies of the WTO "have been compounding the vulnerability and literally undermining the capacity of the small states of the region to channel adequate resources to such areas as health and education." (p. 29).

In describing further the challenges posed to education in the region by

globalisation Edwin Carrington (2002) quoted in Howe (2003) said:

> "The Caribbean has prided itself on the excellent results of its
> education system. In fact we advertise this factor as one of the
> attractions of the region. Our educational standards allow our work
> force to be easily trained to adapt to the changing global
> environment. The challenge which we currently face however is
> the drain of our skilled resources especially in the health and
> education sectors through active recruitment drives, especially
> from certain developed countries. This is occurring at the same
> time that these countries are making it more difficult and costly for
> our students to enter their educational facilities as well as at the
> same time as countries are forced to receive criminals elements
> with minimum links to the region who are being deported from
> these countries. The double negative social and economic impact
> of these policies are currently being seen in many of our Member
> states as critical institutions – hospitals, schools – are inadequately
> manned and crime surges." (p.30).

According to Howe (2003), another challenge to tertiary education in the
region is the impact of HIV/AIDS on resources and the young population.
Howe (2003) called for multiple perceptual shifts to address the challenges
of access, quality of education, relevance, management and governance of
institutions and national systems, lifelong education, financial sustain
ability, innovations and reforms, international cooperation and future
development plans.

In looking at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in particular, Howe
(2003) quoted the UWI chancellor's commission on the Governance of the
UWI (1994) as follows:

> "The challenge of facing the university is necessarily a formidable
> one. Simply put, given the urgency attaching to the region's need
> to remain competitive in a world of increasing liberalisation and
> globalisation, the UWI is already finding itself being called upon
> by governments and peoples of the region to deliver quality
> education to progressively larger enrolments, and to do so in the
> context of tight budgetary constraints and often in deteriorating
> financial situations." (p. 145).

One of the strategies for addressing the challenges faced by the UWI was

a move for greater utilisation of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). This move to the use of new ICTs has been referred to as e-learning and, in some instances, blended learning.

E-Learning and Blended Learning

E-Learning and blended learning have been used interchangeably in some cases and have been defined in a number of ways. The following are some common definitions derived from a simple search using Google.com:

> "E-Learning is any virtual act or process used to acquire data, information, skills or knowledge. In the context of our research, e-Learning is enabled learning, learning in a virtual world where technology merges with human creativity to accelerate and leverage the rapid development and application of deep knowledge." www.mountainquestinstitute.com/definitions.htm

> "The delivery of learning, training or education program by electronic means. E-learning involves the use of a computer or electronic device to provide training, educational or learning material." www.intelera.com/glossary.htm

> "Covers a wide set of applications and processes such as web based learning, computer based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM." www.cybermediacreations.com/elearning/glossary.htm

> "E-Learning most often means an approach to facilitate and enhance learning through the use of devices based on computer and communications technology. Such devices would include personal computers, CD-ROMs, Digital Television, PDAs and Mobile Phones. Communications technology enables the use of the internet, email, discussion forums, and collaborative software." www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elearning

E-learning has also been used interchangeably with online learning, which has been defined as "…the use of the internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience…" (Anderson & Elloumi, 2004, p. 5).
All these definitions recognise the importance of student interaction in the

process of education as well as highlight the use of ICTs in teaching and learning. While the UWI has embraced ICTs as one of the ways to increase access to education, one of the arguments with the increased use of ICTs has been the issue of whether the region is ready.

Readiness for Use of e-Learning and ICTs in the Region

The report "evaluation e-readiness indices in Latin America and the Caribbean" by Minges (2005) used indices of e-readiness to quantify a specific country's preparedness for the information society. The e-readiness indices compared specific indicators, which allow countries to be ranked as more or less advanced on their way towards the information society. Assessing the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as a whole, the report stated:

> "The Anglophone Caribbean countries have a high level of infrastructure compared to other sub-regions…nor does it perform well on indices that measure knowledge." (Minges, 2005, p. 33).

A study conducted by the UWIDEC in 2002 (Kuboni et al., 2002) supported the idea that there are areas of weakness with regard to the use of ICTs. The study found that while the university had the technical infrastructure to support ICTs in higher education, there are nevertheless shortfalls in support/helpdesk services. There were also problems of access, with 42% of those students earning less than US500 owning computers at home. With regard to literacy, 53% surveyed deemed themselves very capable of creating and editing files and 51% rated themselves very capable in accessing and using the internet.

Although challenges are recognised, the push of globalisation and the increased demand for higher education have encouraged regional institutions such as the UWI to incorporate the use of ICTs in education as a means of expanding access. This has been manifested most clearly in a mandate from the principal of the UWI St Augustine campus for each faculty to have at least an online course and in the case of the UWIDEC, this has led to a blended learning project. The challenges faced in implementing these two initiatives highlight the readiness of the region for e-learning and also the implications for development of the "knowledge economy".

The UWI's E-Learning and Blended Learning Experiences

The UWI's desire to move rapidly into internet-based technologies to support teaching and learning has resulted in a mandate in the university's strategic plan for each campus to have online material to support a considerable percentage of its courses. The result of this mandate has been a virtual rush by many lecturers and the resulting uncoordinated offering of a number of online courses. This has resulted in courses of varying quality.

A study of the online courses at St. Augustine in 2005 indicates that between 2004 and 2005, there was an increase in online courses from 169 to 393 (Edwards-Henry et al., 2005). Of concern however, was the quality of these courses. Data from the study conducted by Edwards-Henry et al. (2005) indicated that of the 393 online courses at St. Augustine in 2005, 136 were inactive test courses or "shells" that were not populated or used by students.

Of the courses that were active, two-thirds made use of one or more of the pedagogical tools available in the Learning Management System, WebCT. Of the specific tools incorporated into the WebCT courses, the Calendar tool was the most popular. This was probably due to the ease of use of the Calendar and its usefulness to students and lecturers in terms of disseminating information such as schedules. The least used tool was the Chat and Assignment with 31% of the courses incorporating the Chat tool and 28% using the Assignment tool. One can therefore question the level of interaction in these courses and ultimately, the quality and effectiveness (Edwards-Henry et al., 2005). The UWI St. Augustine's experience with e-learning up to 2005, however, was one of lecturers trying to keep pace with what was seen as important to the development of the knowledge economy. This in turn led to an increase in the use of ICTs but a possible decrease in the quality of some courses.

The UWI St. Augustine's experience with online learning (at least in the period 2004–2005) tended to be an uncoordinated response to a perceived need to widen access. This pressure to widen access, which was part of the university's strategic plan, was touted as one aspect of the influences of globalisation.

While the UWI St. Augustine's face-to-face students were being

introduced to e-learning, in a relatively uncoordinated manner, students studying at a distance were involved in a blended learning project. The project was intended to prepare a set of pilot courses incorporating more asynchronous, computer-based technologies in time for delivery during the 2005/2006 academic year. The project was implemented by a team comprising a project coordinator, two curriculum specialists, two editors/course managers, two web administrators/multi-media specialists and five production assistants. Technical support was provided by the UWIDEC telecommunications unit.

Thirteen courses were selected as pilot courses based on the willingness and skills of lecturers/course developers at the Mona, Cave Hill and St. Augustine campuses of the UWI. The course developers were content specialists for the respective courses and each worked with a course development team comprising a curriculum specialist, editor, web designer/multi-media specialist and technician. The courses selected and the campuses where course development took place are depicted in Appendix 1.

Based on the time frame within which the pilot courses were to be ready for delivery, a minimal blended learning package was decided. It included the following:

• Printed resources that the UWIDEC traditionally provided.
• A website comprising course outline, course administration details, e-mail, discussion forums and links to resources.
• A CD-ROM comprising lectures (power point slides with audio and/or video), for 10 of the 13 pilot courses.

A decision was taken to utilise an open source Learning Management System (LMS) called MOODLE, for the development of the course websites, instead of WebCT which was being used by the St. Augustine campus. Production of the multi-media CDs was sponsored by a grant from the Organisation of American States (OAS).

Although the UWIDEC's move to blended learning was more organised than St. Augustine's experience with e-learning, various challenges were experienced by the UWIDEC. As a member of the blended learning team

with responsibility for five of the 13 pilot courses, I had first-hand experience with these challenges.

Video and online inputs were new to the UWIDEC and as a result, the staff required for this activity and the hardware and software were not catered for early on. The addition of only one staff member to each team required existing staff to function in multiple roles. For example, although my substantive position at the university was that of editor, in the online environment I functioned as instructional designer, web administrator and course manager.

There was also dependence on existing academic staff at the university to provide the core content and creative input. These members of staff were not trained in multi-media production, nor were they accustomed to creating visual productions or online activities for teaching and learning purposes. Most were full-time teaching staff engaged in face-to-face teaching and responsible for large classes. The production of the CDs and the development of the websites were seen as add-ons to their already burdensome schedule and it was difficult, in most cases, to hold and maintain their commitment to the completion of the project. The production process was constrained by the tight deadlines within which activities had to be completed, in this case between June to September 2005.

One of the major challenges of blended learning has been getting students to interact in the online environment through the discussions. As course manager for five courses, I observed that many students would log in and browse the site, reading and lurking online without posting a discussion. Efforts have been made to address this by awarding grades for participation and also using the e-tutors to motivate the students. This has not had much of an impact, however, and students complain they do not feel they have enough communication with tutors even though the introduction of blended learning has made e-mail a compulsory requirement for both students and tutors. This means that theoretically at least, both students and tutors must create e-mail accounts and therefore, should have access to an electronic means of communicating.

Another challenge has been remuneration for the e-tutors. Within the university system, there exists a clear policy on remuneration for face-to-face tutors; no such policy exists for e-tutors. The UWIDEC, therefore,

had to create a system of payment which many e-tutors argued did not adequately compensate them for the time and effort required in the online environment.

Overall therefore, from my experience, the introduction of e-learning at the UWI has been challenging. The challenges have brought into question the integrity of some of the courses offered. All of this has been as a result of the need to widen access to meet the perceived needs of globalisation.

Lessons Learnt and Implications for Development

In introducing e-learning as a means of keeping up with the rest of the world and widening access to higher education, the UWI adopted the perspective outlined by Rizvi and Lingard (2006). This perspective suggested that interconnectivity, technological innovation and the transformation of economic development can promote development. It is also focused on the importance of the creation of a knowledge economy. What the UWI's e-learning thrust ignores, however, is the existing reality that with regard to development, "size matters".

There are distinct disadvantages due to size faced by the Caribbean region, including limited access to rapidly evolving technology. Within the Caribbean, many "unfreedoms" (Sen, 1999) exist. Faced with poverty, neglect of public facilities, and high crime rates in some countries, it is difficult for countries in the region to access technology with the same ease as developed nations. The UWI's move to e-learning has been a response to globalisation. However, my experiences as a member of the e-learning team at the UWIDEC suggest that there are many challenges to overcome before we develop a high quality teaching and learning programme which is internationally competitive and accessible by all in the region.

At the micro level, certain elements need to be in place to enable institutions of higher education such as the UWI to be ready to successfully implement e-learning as part of the globalisation process. These include the following:

• Adequate technological and human resources must be available. In the

case of the latter, a team skilled in web-based and multi-media development and supported with the appropriate hardware and software is essential.

- An appropriate quality assurance framework should be developed prior to the start of online programme offerings and taking into account issues related to registration and entry, access, pedagogy, student support, assessment and certification.
- Realistic production schedules with contingency plans in the event of unforeseen circumstances should be put in place. Adequate incentives should be provided which encourage course developers to submit relevant materials on time and within the budget. Such incentives should sustain their interest throughout the process.
- Incentives for online tutors must be clearly articulated and sustainable and on-going training and development must be available.
- Student support in the form of adequate orientations and technical support as well as encouragement to participate in the online environment must be provided in good time.

At the macro or more general level, consideration needs to be given to Sen's argument about removing the barriers to freedom (Sen, 1999) and Appaduri (2000) call for an indigeneous research agenda. If the UWI is not careful, the haste to catch up may encourage the university to accept courses or programmes which are being mass produced in places such as India and the United States. This will ultimately have an impact on the relevance of the programmes and issues of regionalism, nationalism and cultural identity. Caribbean institutions of higher education cannot get caught up in the race to create a knowledge economy without ensuring that we are first ready. Being ready in this instance means putting systems and frameworks in place which address the specific human resource and infrastructural challenges of the region.

Online learning offered by a regional institution such as the UWI has the potential to create a regional and ultimately international learning community. It also has the potential for capacity building, particularly in skills that are globally marketable such as e-tutoring, instructional design, web design and web administration, to name a few. In order to capitalise on the possibilities, however, and ensure that the innovations lead to the successful attainment of goals, the organisation must be prepared to respond to the needs of not only its stakeholders, but also the vibrant,

global environment within which we are operating.

Summary

This paper explored various perspectives on globalisation and discussed the impact of globalisation on higher education. In particular, the influence of globalisation on the development of e-learning as an option to widen access to higher education was discussed in relation to the Caribbean region. The challenges faced by the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre in implementing e-learning initiatives were discussed. The point was made that for development of the knowledge economy, specific and general factors need to be considered by higher education institutions and efforts must be made to ensure that the region is ready to embrace e-learning before initiatives are taken.

References

Anderson T. & Elloumi, A. (eds) (2004). *Theory and Practice of Online Learning.* Canada: Athabasca University.

Atkinson, R. (2001). *The Globalisation of the University*. Paper presented at the Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies, Japan. May 26, 2001.

Edwards-Henry, A. Thurab-Nkhosi, D. & Wood-Jackson, A. (2006). Quality Assurance in Online Learning at The University of the West Indies: A Baseline Survey of Online Courses. Paper presented at the *Fourth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open and Distance learning*. Ocho Rios Jamaica, November 2006.

Howe, G. (2003). *Contending with Change: Reviewing Tertiary Education in the English-Speaking Caribbean.* Caracas, Venezuela: IESALC, UNESCO.

Kuboni, O., Thurab-Nkhosi, D. & Chen T. (2002). Incorporating Web-based Learning into a mixed mode distance education delivery format: Challenges and Possibilities. Paper presented at the *Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open and Distance Learning*, Durban South Africa, 29 July – 2 August.

Lauder, H., Brown, P., Dillabough, J. & Halsey, A. (eds) (2006). *Education, globalisation, and social change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Louisy, P. (2001). Globalisation and Comparative Education: A Caribbean perspective. *Comparative Education, 37*(4), pp. 425–438.

Minges, M. (2005). *Evaluation of e-Readiness Indices in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Chile: UNECLAC.

Rizvi, F. & Lingard, B. (2006). Globalisation and the changing nature of the OECD's

educational work. In Lauder, H., Brown, P., Dillabough, J. and Halsey, A. (eds) (2006)*, Education, Globalisation, and Social Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tikly, L. (2001). Globalisation and education in the post colonial world: Towards a conceptual framework. *Comparative Education, 37*(2), pp. 151–171.

Trow, M. (1984). *Problems in the Transition from Elite to Mass Higher Education*. Berkeley: University of California.

Appendix 1
Pilot Courses for Blended Learning Project

No.	Course ID	Course Title	Campus
1.	SY14G	Introduction to Sociology	St. Aug.
2.	FD11A	Caribbean Civilisation	St. Aug.
3.	MS23B	Caribbean Business Environment	St. Aug.
4.	EC14C	Mathematics for Social Sciences	St. Aug.
5.	FD12A	Science Medicine and Technology	St. Aug.
6.	MS33B	Business Strategy & Policy	Cave Hill
7.	MS34B	International Business Management	Cave Hill
8.	MS15A	Introduction to Financial Accounting	Mona
9.	MS31B	Management Information Systems II	Mona
10.	MS32A	Human Resource Management	Mona
11.	ED33A	Management Information Systems	Mona
12.	ED33N	Guidance & Counselling in Education	Mona
13.	MS15B	Intro to Cost & Management Accounting	Mona