

Lifelong learning as a Third Mission key activity: UPV's best practices, latest trends, and nearest future of continuing education

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Abstract: World Class Universities (WCU) concept is a controversial issue among the academic community. This paper is intended to address especially WCU conceptual aspects related to the relations among Universities “missions” development and the WCU considerations. The main purpose of this presentation is to expose the role **Lifelong Learning** is having in the **third mission dimension** deployment. It’s commonly accepted that a World Class organisation is “considered the best developing its main activities”. Which are the main University activities that can be classified in order to determine “who are the best”? At least 3 fields should be pointed out. It is considered teaching, research and all the activities which are “beyond teaching and research”. Humboldt defined, in the XIX century, the University as an entity that could develop “intellectual erudition” –that is - and “personal development through learning”, that is teaching from the academy point of view. Both activities has been considered essential and substantial to University “**main reason to exist**”, that is, the University **missions**.

Henry Etzkowitz defined these two main activities as the “University first and second Missions” (Etzkowitz, 2000). According Etzkowitz proposal, the Universities are able to develop “3rd mission” activities, activities which cannot be considered teaching neither research. Independently of the predominant character of teaching and research, most WCU have undertaken other tasks that, although they have a relationship, they are separate in terms of context, processes and results. These actions are included in a group that has different definitions like Etzkowitz third mission, outreach or “Mode Two” Universities (Gibbons, 2000) or the Russell Group defines Universities third stream, as it. All these habitual terms do not have the same meaning and coincide only in the aggregation of the activities that are extra to the teaching and learning. Does it affect to the University World Class consideration to have third stream activities? Is it possible to define a world class “rankings on third mission development”? Which kind of Units are used for developing the 3rd mission functions? How are these units organised in WCU? Which indicators are used to measure their level of “binding” functions? Which role has the Science Parks to develop the 3rd mission framework? This presentation will cover how our University gave answers to those challenges, our perception on tendencies and future for university continuing education activities.

The model designed by Wilhelm van Humboldt for the University of Berlin has been traditionally the foundations of most higher education universities around the world. This university, founded in 1810, reflected the ideas of creating an environment where “teaching” and “research” were effective, singular and possible. Traditionally WCU consideration has been focussed on how second mission activities are developed in the Universities, with no consideration on the University “binding activities”. And it is matter of fact that the Humboldt model has been the basic criteria used to finance and develop Universities. There have been no major changes or innovations in the structure and functioning of universities during the last 200 years. The coexistence of teaching and research has been the arrangement that formed the university world. These two tasks have marked the evolution of the higher education system and all other aspects have been carved around them. The systems of organization, management, funding, curriculum, staff development and recruiting, academic career, infrastructures, non academic staff profiles and quality evaluation have been moulded taking into consideration these two components of the academic life, without considering

other possibilities for funding and establish links with the society. The traditional academia community prosecutes the concept “customer of services” in the Universities. Customers and services are frequently confused with “trivializing” the “**knowledge production**” or to “drive the University to commercial interests”. Of course, the relative weight of teaching and learning varies between the universities but these activities have been inseparable and fundamental in the definition of WCU all around the world.

Examples of activities of third mission have an enormous diversity and comprise several degrees of funding and of human resources. Continuing education and professional development courses, workshops and seminars are the most common projects that denote the intention of extending the service of universities to the public sector. **Technology Transfer Units**, **Science Parks**, Employment Bureau and Entrepreneur Programmes for Students “start ups”, **Internationalisation** of the University are part of this set of activities. It is a natural evolution of the teaching role with the enlargement of the target population and diversification of curricula to establish non traditional relations with the industry and the national and international institutions through this way. It is embedded in the idea of **lifelong learning** and **regional development** and also should integrate some developments of the research outputs. Other activities of the third stream have social, cultural and political motivations.

Lifelong Learning (LLL) are the formal learning experiences (in our case, organised from the University perspective) that allows postgraduates and professionals actualise their cv after technological, organisational or legal change. These changes influence not only their organisations but also their personal positions. LLL is an organisational revolution. Universities are traditionally oriented to generate basic background or specialisation. Regular graduate or postgraduate offer is not oriented to professionals or organisations. Actualise competences and knowledge about new tools, methodologies or systems is a huge challenge to all the Universities stakeholders.

Organise and deliver LLL has at least 3 dimensional challenges. How to design, how to organise and how to deliver are the main spaces where UPV has practise and discover good and bad practises. LLL is an opportunity to change but also force Universities to overcome weaknesses in areas that are critical for industry competitiveness and for addressing individual challenges. The presentation covers blended learning approaches, actions, strategies to cover Latin-American and China markets, and centralised services to articulate institutional offer. UPV will share the needed new logical framework for Institutional interactions.

In sum, the objectives of this presentation are to develop a “state of the art” revision on the University 3rd mission development thought LLL. For UPV, World Class Universities definition should be **expanded** to consider not only the excellence on the teaching and research activities, but also on all these 3rd stand activities related to LLL that allow Universities to cover social, entrepreneur and innovation objectives. LLL must also help and encourage the regional development of our local environments, the social cohesion and the competitiveness of our nations.

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