



25 Years of EDEN

A Special Collection of the
President's Blog Anniversary Posts



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President's Blog Anniversary Posts

Edited by

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on behalf of the European Distance and E-Learning Network

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Foreword

António Moreira Teixeira - November 16, 2016

The field of research and practice in open, distance and eLearning has been one of the fastest growing in Europe over the last two decades. From just a small number of institutions in the early nineties, spearheaded by the European open universities, the field has transformed into a large community involving all sectors of education and training and most of its institutional and individual players.

This astonishing evolution can be best represented by the successful development and important legacy of the European Distance and E-learning Network (EDEN). The association, originally designed to contribute to the eradication of the remaining boundaries of a divided Europe with the input of distance education, gradually evolved to become one of the world's leading, largest and most powerful networks in the field of open education and technology-enhanced learning.

In this publication, EDEN looks back into its past. Based on the testimonials of its former Presidents, we can follow how the association faced and overcame the different challenges and contexts of the field, as well as how it developed its original visions and successful strategies. Above all, we can recall and understand how a continuous and consistent action in favour of the development of the academic and professional community was built out of a multitude of brilliant but dispersed individual contributions.

António



Welcome to the Next 25 Years: EDEN Celebrates its Past, Present and Future

Alan Tait - June 16, 2015

I'm sure most of us are still recovering after such an intense and truly memorable week in Barcelona at the #EDEN15, the [2015 EDEN Annual Conference](#). The conference was a great success, indeed. The topics chosen, all innovations introduced in the format and the networking opportunities provided were fully embraced by the EDEN community. A wonderful feeling of happiness, fulfilment and engagement was noticeable amongst the four hundred conference delegates. Next week, I will publish a special post fully dedicated to the detailed analysis of the Barcelona event.

As I've noted, the annual conferences are always a particularly intense time for the EDEN governance structure and staff. As you can imagine, this is particular the case for the presidents. Fortunately, we have a special guardian angel who help us through smoothly in these hectic days. Our guardian angel is Anna Wagner, who in addition to her more visible and widely appreciated role accumulates this task as well.

Although still catching our breath from the #EDEN15 experience, we are already focusing on the preparation of the future. In fact, 2016 marks the celebrations of our association's 25th Anniversary. As it has been announced, a special honorary committee has been appointed with a past EDEN President, Alan Tait chairing it. The underlying idea for the celebrations is to honour the past of the Association as a dynamic history of the future. As such, EDEN will bridge the legacy of the men and women who so bravely established our field of practice and the new generations that will give it a new meaning.

In today's guest post I invited Alan Tait to share with us a brief account of the preparations of the EDEN's 25th Anniversary Year. More information on Alan's extensive and impressive body of work and current interests can be found [here](#). I do hope you'll enjoy reading Alan's guest post and feel inspired by his plans.

See you next year in Budapest for #EDEN16!

António

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I am very excited about EDEN's 25th anniversary in 2016! And very proud to be asked by President Antonio Teixeira to chair the Honorary Committee to help prepare celebrate the anniversary. This means a lot for me, as in 1991 I worked on the project to establish EDEN at its founding conference in Prague, under the leadership of Gottfried Leibbrandt of OU Netherlands, Erling Ljoså of NKI Norway, who became EDEN's first President, Taddeus Diem, then Minister in the Polish government, Sir John Daniel of the Open University, UK, Professor Tamas Lajos of the Technical University, Budapest and Professor Armando Trindade of the Universidade Aberta of Portugal, amongst others.

I have found a report of the establishment conference that I wrote in 1991 which records the issues and themes of that memorable meeting and at that memorable time for what was very



much thought of as the new Europe (Tait 1991). The impetus for EDEN was born out of a number of main ideas. The first was that open and distance learning (the e-learning came later!) was going to be the province of activity of not just the open universities, important though they were, but of many and even in due course the majority of universities. The second was that ODL was not just a field of activity for universities but also for colleges, companies, and schools, in other words all sectors of education and training. Lastly, EDEN was created to lead the formation of a professional network that served the whole of Europe, that had been reunited from 1989 onwards after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

All of these were innovative and indeed courageous insights at that time, and all have not only survived the test of time but thrived as ideas made real by EDEN over this last quarter century.

Many professional associations do not achieve sustainability. EDEN has done so, and this derives first and foremost from both the power of its founding vision, and the ways that EDEN has as a network responded to the needs of its audience and flexed as the environment has changed. The ways in which digital technologies are now driving change on campus as well as in e-learning is the most powerful recent wave of change that our domain has to understand and respond to. Centrally important too is that EDEN has been very well served for many years by a permanent Secretariat, led wisely by Dr Andras Szucs, EDEN's Secretary-General.

So what could we do to celebrate the first 25 years and welcome the next 25? That is the task which this Honorary Committee will turn its mind to. I will ask a number of former EDEN Presidents, Fellows and Senior Fellows to join the committee, and to find ways to celebrate the past, present and future.

My initial thoughts, to be tested in the crucible of the Committee for their attractiveness and appropriateness, would include:

- a special issue of EURODL
- podcasts about EDEN from EDEN seniors
- a special keynote at the EDEN 2016 conference
- together with a roundtable with other ODEL associations

Ideas from colleagues would be very welcome and this serves as an invitation for colleagues to email me at alan.tait@open.ac.uk

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Professor Alan Tait is a former EDEN President and NAP SC Chair, as well as EDEN Senior Fellow. Alan is currently Director, International Development and Teacher Education at The Open University in the United Kingdom.

*Prior to his current position, he was Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) responsible for the strategic and operational oversight of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate courses, packs, programmes and qualifications, together with acting as Planning and Resource Officer for the seven faculties. His academic career has been in practitioner and scholarly support of distance and e-learning. He was Editor of the journal *Open Learning* from 1989-1998, joint Series Editor of the Routledge*

Series Studies in Distance Education and Co-Director of the Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning.

Looking Ahead To The 25th Anniversary Year

António Moreira Teixeira - December 23, 2015

As I predicted in the EDEN President's Blog one year ago (see [here](#)) 2015 proved to be a very good and successful year for EDEN. The European open, distance and e-learning community is scaling up and so is EDEN.

Throughout the year our Association continued to widen its outreach. We've increased the number and impact of our events, as well as redesigned their formats in order to enhance networking and interactivity. We've boosted our web presence and online communication, highlighting our message and values, parallel with reaching for new target groups. We've enriched our portfolio of services and introduced innovative features, like the series of NAP webinars, the new training opportunities and the new recognition schemes. A clear effort has been taken to bring the Association closer to the millennial generation. Last but not least, we've established new alliances and upscaled old collaborations with major fellow organizations in the field. With all these efforts we have not only assured an expanded global representation of our academic and professional community, but also contributed to open up exciting possibilities for our members to cooperate and network across all regions and continents.

In this period EDEN has also managed to further improve what was already a remarkably strong public image amongst members, partners, followers and the community in general. As the recent stakeholders' survey shows, the community we are proud to serve seems to be very satisfied with the way we've been developing and are confident in our ability to improve even further in the future. This has naturally increased our responsibilities as an organization along with the challenges and opportunities we face.

As we look ahead into the new year, it becomes clear that we should prepare for exciting times. Our Association will celebrate its 25th anniversary. But as never before, EDEN looks fresh, bold, energetic and full of ambitious ideas and plans. As such, in the coming months we will be engaged in many new interesting projects and activities. Please, make sure to get involved.

To be continued...



View of the 25th of April bridge over the Tagus River. Lisbon. Photo by Eduard Gordeev

EDEN Across Generations: the Importance of Young Researchers

Fabio Nascimbeni - March 9, 2016

The future of any community depends on how its members are able to understand it, by anticipating possibilities, preparing for its challenges and realising its opportunities today. The same principle applies to academic and professional communities as well. As the largest European organisation representing the open, distance and eLearning community, EDEN has always dedicated much attention to the preparation of the future in our field. One of the ways in which we conduct that effort is by supporting younger researchers and practitioners. We don't focus only on offering them visibility. We try to provide them a broader and more significant experience, integrating them in the community. In fact, we reward their achievements, assure them opportunities to network, to share results and experiences and also to be part of the European legacy of expertise in our field.

In the year EDEN celebrates its 25th anniversary, a new exciting and powerful generation of researchers and practitioners is emerging. As a consequence, the future of the field of open, distance and eLearning in Europe never seemed so brighter and promising.

In today's post, I've invited EDEN Fellow, Executive Committee member and friend Fabio Nascimbeni to share with us his views on this important topic. Fabio has been leading a number of EDEN initiatives aimed at supporting young researchers in our field.

In his post, Fabio shares his own personal experience as a young researcher and how it was welcomed in the EDEN community highlighting the importance of the dialogue and cooperation across generations.

António

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When I attended my first EDEN Conference - that was back in 2001 and the conference was the never-forgotten Stockholm one - I was 26 years old and, despite the fact that I had been working on European projects for a couple of years already, joining an EDEN event was somehow a life-changing moment for the young researcher that I was at the time.

The context in 2001 was much different than today: web-based learning was still largely in an experimental phase, social media were far to come, the words MOOCs and OER had never been spelled out, and those working in European projects in the field of learning and ICT were sharing a pioneering feeling (I remember my mum trying to understand what my job was, obviously without success...).

When I joined my first EDEN Conference, I realised that an established community in the field of ODL and eLearning was thriving and was meeting periodically to advance on several issues, and - importantly - to solve problems together. Since then, I have missed just a couple of EDEN Conferences and I have been following the development of EDEN throughout my career as a researcher and as an enthusiast supporter of European collaboration in the field of open and eLearning.

One thing I always liked about EDEN was the genuine knowledge exchange between different generations of researchers and practitioners: during the EDEN events - and more recently through the online work of the Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP) - I have experience on my

skin of how important it is for young researchers to be able to get feedback by peers who are working in the area since many more years. This is particularly important in a rapidly-changing field like the one of ICT for learning, where the temptation exists to think that previous generations of researchers have an obsolete view on things because they are not “born with the last technology”. Nothing is more erroneous: I have seen senior researchers commenting and helping younger fellows many times in fine-tuning their approaches and findings by providing deeper views on the status quo and by quoting the mistakes that the ODL community has been making along the way.

In the last few years the EDEN Executive Committee has taken a number of initiatives targeted to the young researchers’ population of the association, culminating with the first edition, last year during the Barcelona conference, of the Young Researchers Award. Thanks to this, being a young researcher in EDEN today can be even more profitable than back when I joined the association: through EDEN, PhD researchers and less-experienced participants can enjoy summer schools, training courses, twitter-debates and other capacity building opportunity. Nevertheless, we need to admit that the road ahead if we want to properly engage younger generations of researchers within EDEN is still long: work needs to be done to increase the number of student members of the association and to encourage EDEN institutional members in engaging with EDEN their younger generations of researchers.

If we achieve this, apart from fostering intergenerational research debates and increasing the capacities of young researchers, we will be able to provide an important contribution to the generalised problematic situation that many young researchers in Europe are facing today, in the south as well as in the north, due to research budget cuts and to the increased competitiveness of European funding schemes. By participating in EDEN activities, young generations of researchers are in fact exposed to the way colleagues are working in other EU countries, and can build long-lasting ties with peers that can represent in the long run an important richness for the European learning innovation area, and for the European Research Area as a whole.

And of course, as visible in the post picture taken at the EDEN 2005 Conference in Helsinki, working with colleagues from other generations can be extremely fun!





Fabio Nascimbeni has a degree in Economics with an international management specialisation and a PhD on Networking for Development. He works as assistant professor in the International [University of La Rioja](#), and a postdoctoral fellow at the [University of Sao Paulo \(USP\)](#), where he collaborates with the [CEST – Centro de Estudos sobre Tecnologia e Sociedade](#). He has been active in the field of innovation and ICT for learning since 1998, by designing and coordinating more than 40 research and innovation projects and promoting European collaboration in different learning areas, from school education to higher education to lifelong learning. Further, he has coordinated a number of international collaboration actions. Fabio has also been working on assignments by the European Commission (DG Education and Culture, DG INFSO, Europeaid, DG Research, DG Employment), as well as collaborating with international organisations such as UNESCO, CEPAL or ITU. Read [more here](#).

All that Glitters is not Gold: Current Trends and Future Challenges for Quality Assurance in the Fields of Open Learning and eLearning

Ebba Ossiannilsson - March 29, 2016

As open education and eLearning mature and become mainstream across the world, the discussion on quality assurance emerges with a renewed importance, strength and impact in our field of practice. Although there are significant variations in how this topic is addressed in each regional context, there's an underlying feeling which is shared by all stakeholders. It relates to the urgency of establishing effective processes that positively discriminate appropriate practices in online learning, as not all that glitters is gold, to use the famous Shakespearian quote.

EDEN has always paid close attention to this discussion and has contributed throughout the years to the development of an European expertise in this topic. Most notably, the EDEN [2003 annual conference](#), held in Rhodes, and the [EDEN RW6](#), which took place in Budapest, in 2010, both focusing specifically on the topic of quality assurance in open, distance and eLearning, were major milestones in the consolidation process of a European quality culture in open, distance and digital education.

In the current context and given the strategic importance of this discussion, EDEN has been called by the professional community to play an even more active and leading role in this discussion. We recognise the relevance of this movement and as a consequence, new significant initiatives related to the topic of quality will be announced in the coming months.

In today's post, I've invited my good friend Ebba Ossiannilsson, who is also a member of the Executive Committee and an EDEN Fellow to share with us her views on this very important discussion. Ebba is a well-known expert in the topic of quality assurance in open education and eLearning and has a large experience world-wide.

In her post, Ebba identifies the current trends and future challenges for quality assurance in our field and presents a brief conclusion of the study on quality models conducted in the framework of an initiative lead by our partner ICDE.

António

Quality is in the eye of the beholder

By 2030, approximately 414.2 million students will be enrolled in higher education worldwide, which is a substantial increase from the 99.4 million in 2000. Moreover, because online, open, and flexible education is becoming mainstream, the importance of quality learning outcomes for learners cannot be overestimated. The demand for open and online learning will increase due to several factors, including globalization, demography, democracy, digitization, technological development, mobility, inclusion, sustainability, and employment. Furthermore, students will seek education that accommodates personal learning and personalization, as well as equity, accessibility, and lifelong learning.



Quality, however, is in the eye of the beholder and often depends on whose voice is heard and in which context. Many stakeholders have an interest in the quality of open online learning, including learners, academics, institutions, and the national bodies that oversee quality assurance. It is well known that quality is measured according to the nature of quality interventions and their level of maturity.

The Qingdao Declaration, China, the first global declaration on the use of ICT in education, in 2015, states the right of every individual to education. Education for all is on UNESCO's agenda from 2015 to 2030. Open education is also an integral part of the European Commission's initiative to boost innovation in the labor market to ensure the global competitiveness of Europe.

On behalf of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), a research study on quality models in online and open education was conducted by Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri, and Brown (2015). According to the Secretary General of ICDE, Gard Titlestad, the report on this research was widely distributed and in time for Global Education 2030. Regarding this report, he stated:

"The report paints with a broad brush the landscape of quality in online and open education—and its challenges. Illustrating quality in online learning is as complex as the reality of online learning itself. It addresses new needs, such as quality in MOOCs and Open Education Resources. It shows that one size does not fit all, that more than ever, improving the quality of student experiences is extremely important, and it warns against the implementation of quality models that restrict innovation and change. These are all important issues to reflect on and discuss.

The research provided insight into the quality concept, the aspects of quality, and the report describes a selected number of models in relation to certification, benchmarking, accreditation, and advisory frameworks. It can therefore serve as a guide and inspiration for building quality frameworks."

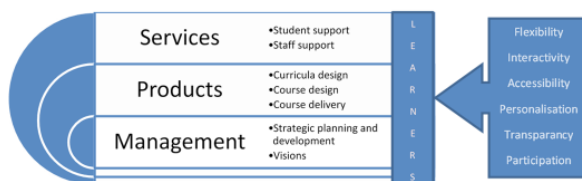
On one hand, the findings showed that no single model fits every educational context, and there is no international model of quality. On the other hand, the findings also showed that there is no need for new schemes to ensure and evaluate quality. However, the findings revealed a huge need for knowledge building, knowledge sharing, and capacity building for quality in open online learning and education, as well as coordination among stakeholders.

More and more learners are taking the lead in open learning, particularly in making their own choices, especially now that ICT has made it possible to learn at home through the self-paced, flexible schedules offered by OERs and MOOCs, which are led by researchers and universities. Furthermore, the trend is towards quality enhancement rather than quality assurance, that is, the emphasis is on process-based quality enhancement rather than on norm-based accreditation. Accreditation is achieved through a formal process of recognition or licensing operated by or on behalf of a regulating agency, whereas certification is acquired through recognition by a non-statutory organization, such as a group of universities or member organizations. On the national level, accreditation has value and can be necessary. However, in open online learning, certification by a prestigious association has high value, and it can be integrated into quality assurance. Through certification, the institution conducts a self-evaluation to start the benchmarking process on either institutional or program levels. This process requires high commitment to fulfilling an action plan. Any self-evaluation should follow the quality enhancement model, which consists of planning, doing, checking, and taking action.



The quality enhancement model

Before implementing the model, it is important not only to know the nature of quality interventions but also to understand the holistic conceptual approach. To ensure quality in open online learning, three areas should be considered: management; the course (i.e., curriculum design, course design, and course delivery); and support for students and staff. Crucial indicators of quality are possibilities for learners' self-directed learning, taking ownership, and orchestrating their own learning. Examples are flexibility, interactivity, accessibility, personalization, transparency, and participation.



Quality areas in open online learning (Ossiannilsson, in press)

Most international models today are implemented from the learner's perspective as the center of the learning process. Not only current trends but also future challenges in education will have a learner-centered approach to quality. The research study conducted for ICDE included the characteristics of quality systems: multifaceted, dynamic, mainstream, representative, and multifunctional. Moreover, the principles on which quality systems are based should include whether the course and program content are contestable, debatable, context-bound, generic, or subject-based. Open learning should promote both personalization and openness to cultural diversity.

Finally, everyone working in the field of learning and education is responsible to ensure and enhance quality. At the end of the day, quality depends on not only knowledge and skills but also values and attitudes in daily actions and contexts.

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Ebba Ossiannilsson is the Vice-President of the Swedish Association for Distance Education (SADE) and is a staff member at the Lund University in Sweden. Ebba has served in the EDEN NAP Steering Committee and is a member of EURODL's Editorial Board. Ebba has been involved in international and national projects and networks in the areas of open and distance learning, OER, MOOC, social media, learning analytics, mobile learning and open education in general, with a special focus on quality. Read more [here](#).

Taking the Hype out of the Hype Cycle

Mark Brown - April 20, 2016

The history of educational technology has been mostly dominated by an overconfident optimism and sometimes even blind faith in the future. In our circles, the majority of speakers and opinion-makers still try to show educational technology development as a coherent narrative of sequential dialectical oppositions in which the new replaces the old, to use Manuel Castells' characterization of the Information and Knowledge society. However, our real history is not a straightforward succession of cumulative achievements. It has been a complex itinerary, a difficult navigation through many exciting possibilities, different promising scenarios and contradictory inspiring dreams, but also surprising failures and unanticipated obstacles, unavoidable errors and powerful fears.

The deconstruction of the progressive narrative in educational technology shouldn't lead us though to a cynical position. By the contrary, we should try to understand the phenomena on a wider and more holistic perspective. Innovation in education cannot be seen as just a simple application of a new method or the use of a new tool. It is usually the result of a cultural transformation process. This has also been the traditional understanding of EDEN and its community. In fact, we have never tried to play the role of the uncritical advocate of every each new educational technology development emerging. No, we don't see ourselves as preachers. But, as experts. In this way, we fulfil our mission by focusing on building a shared analytical understanding on the adoption and use of the different emergent approaches to educational technology, based on solid research and proven successful practice within specific cultural contexts.

In today's guest post, I've invited my good friend and colleague Mark Brown to reflect precisely on this topic. Mark is a much experienced and very well-known global expert in our field. I'm very proud that he's just joined EDEN's Executive Committee as I'm sure he'll make a great contribution to our Association.

In his critical analysis, Mark discusses the deterministic narrative used in educational technology discourse and suggests an alternative new ecological perspective which builds up on the metaphor of digital resilience. His point being the importance of focusing innovation on the internal transformation of organizational culture instead of imposing it to educational institutions from the outside.

António

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The reality is that our field is full of hype. Neil Selwyn (2015) puts this even more bluntly by claiming that much of our 'Ed-Tech Speak' is full of B.S. Currently there is a lot of hypebole surrounding the potential of digital badges, flipped classrooms, learning analytics and of course MOOCs. The overselling of Ed-Tech is not new as there has been a long history of 'talking up' the transformative potential of successive waves of technological innovation (Selwyn, 2015). The language of predictions, promises and latest panaceas for the problems of education is an uncomfortable truth of our field. Despite best intentions we are still prone to the 'fickle' and 'faddish' at the expense of more serious critique. This is the untold story or often underbelly of Ed-Tech. Thus, more often than not there is an ongoing cycle of hype, hope and disappointment (Gouseti, 2010).

Over the years I have been guilty like many others of uncritically borrowing the [Gartner Hype Cycle](#) to help explain this repeating pattern. I usually illustrate the cycle by starting with the following quote from 1894 referring to the invention of the Wax Phonograph Cylinder:

"With the coming of the New Media, the need for print on paper will rapidly diminish. The day will soon arrive when the world's literature will be available from The Automatic Library at the mere pressing of a button" (Uzanne, 1894; cited in McFarlane, 1997, p.173).

I often follow this claim up with a frequently cited quote from Thomas Edison (cited in Smith, 1913, p.24) referring to the evolution of the Vitascope:

"Books will soon be obsolete in public schools. Scholars will be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture".



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Available from <http://www.freelimages.com/photo/old-sound-1423005>

To further establish this pattern of bold and typically failed predictions I draw on a lesser-known quote from Benjamin Darrow (1932; cited in Horrigan, 2016, p. 9-10) referring to the potential of radio:

"The central and dominant aim of education by radio is to bring the world to the classroom, to make universally available the services of the finest teachers, the inspiration of the greatest leaders... and unfolding world events which through the radio may come as a vibrant and challenging textbook of the air."

Of course the story would not be complete without sharing early claims related to the invention of television:

"We will undoubtedly have lectures of every conceivable kind presented to us right in our homes, when practical television arrives, possibly a year or two off" (Short Wave Craft, 1935; cited in Horrigan, 2016, p.10).



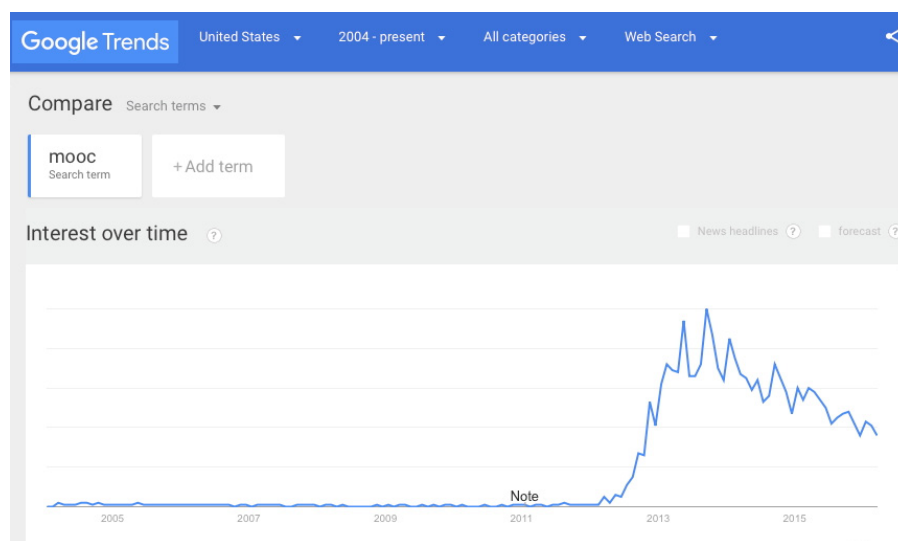
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At this point in the story I typically remind people of Larry Cuban's (1986) book on the history of the classroom use of technology since 1920. Cuban claims that each technology goes through a successive cycle of bold predictions, initial enthusiasm and early implementation pilots followed by declining interest as more people question the technology and research findings fail to live up to the promises. Lastly, there is a period of rebukes and blame as teachers and traditional institutional systems are accused of failing to embrace change and transformation.

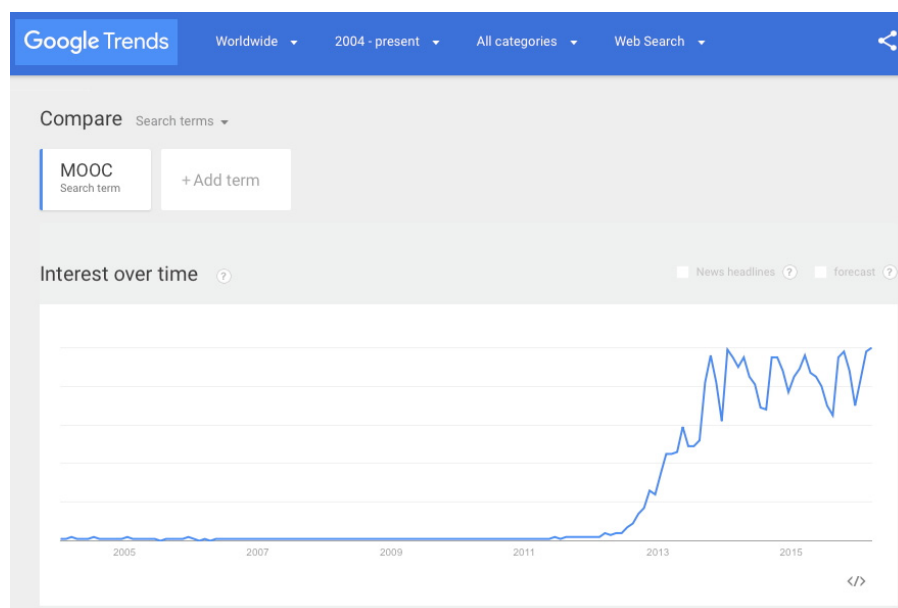
In a contemporary sense, this pattern of hype and hope is illustrated by the cover story in the March 2012 issue of Wired where Sebastian Thrun made the bold prediction:

"In 50 years... there will be only 10 institutions in the world delivering higher education and Udacity has a shot at being one of them" (cited in Krause, 2014, p.223).

While the MOOC story has yet to fully evolve according to the Gartner Hype Cycle they should now be entering the 'trough of disillusionment' before eventually reaching the period of 'enlightenment' as second-generation applications leave a legacy or lay the foundation for the next technological wave.



In the case of MOOCs, Google Trends data presented in the above figure for the United States tends to support the validity of the Hype Cycle. However, this depiction of the MOOC movement is overly simplistic and is not supported by a Worldwide analysis of Google Trends data, which presents a lumpier picture of the current level of interest, as illustrated in the figure below.



Putting aside the question of whether Google Trends provides a valid measure of the current state of the actual, my intention is to take some of the hype out of the Hype Cycle. When crudely applied to the adoption of Ed-Tech, in my view this model is overly linear, inherently techno-centric and fails to encapsulate the complexity of the change process, especially in large organisations. For example, when applied to MOOCs the model treats the innovation as a single entity, with limited appreciation of the wide diversity of approaches and crucial influence contextual factors play in the successful implementation.

The key point is that uncritical use of the Gartner Hype Cycle does a great disservice to our field. Instead I believe we need more nuanced, sophisticated and multi-directional models of institutional change and technological diffusion, such as the resilience metaphor taken from ecology. Martin Weller and Terry Anderson (2013), the latter an EDEN Fellow, illustrate through two insightful case studies the value of an ecological perspective on digital resilience. They point out that resilience confers a benefit to an ecosystem through adaptation and evolution to new environmental conditions whilst retaining core identity.



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Available from <http://www.freeimages.com/photo/brazilian-savannah-1250580>

In complex ecosystems the characteristic of resilience, which arguably differs from the dominant metaphor of 'resistance' implicit in the Gartner Hype Cycle, means the species persists although it adapts and often gets better and better. However, it should also be noted that the failure to adapt and evolve might eventually lead to extinction.

In summary, I started this guest post by confronting the hype that still infuses much of our Ed-Tech Speak and briefly outlining the long history of oversold promises. In mapping the pattern of hype, hope and disappointment to the Gartner Hype Cycle my intention was to challenge many of our taken-for-granted assumptions about the validity and usefulness of such overly deterministic models of technology adoption. An ecological perspective building on the metaphor of digital resilience reminds us of the importance of innovating from the inside rather than sitting on the sideline, especially if we wish to foster an adaptive, innovative and sustainable culture of transformation. This is a perspective and ethos that very much underpins our work in thinking about shaping new education futures in the [National Institute of Digital Learning \(NIDL\)](#) at Dublin City University (DCU).

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Professor Mark Brown is Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) based at Dublin City University (DCU). Before taking up this position and Ireland's first Chair in Digital Learning in February of 2014, he was previously Director of the National Centre for Teaching and Learning at Massey University in New Zealand. At Massey he was also Director of the Distance Education and Learning Futures Alliance (DELFA). He has played key leadership roles in the implementation of several major university-wide digital learning and teaching initiatives, including the enterprise-wide deployment of Moodle, the original design and development of the Mahara e-portfolio system, and the university-wide implementation of the Open2Study MOOC platform. Read more [here](#).

Reinventing Universities: The Critical Role of Leadership

Belinda Tynan - April 27, 2016

At the start of my academic career, some 25 years ago, I had the chance of working closely with Professor José Enes (1924-2013), then the Vice-rector of the Portuguese open university, Universidade Aberta (UAb). José Enes was one of the most important Portuguese philosophers of the 20th century and I had the honour of being his «last» assistant. Although very intense, our collaboration at UAb lasted only for three years. However, soon after his retirement we continued working together for several years. He invited me to help him organize the accreditation process of the University degrees in Philosophy in our country and we've assured it for the initial two full cycles. Professor Enes presided the evaluation committee and I was its Secretary and rapporteur. Afterwards, we remained very close friends until his death. Roberto Carneiro, EDEN Senior Fellow, was another of his great friends and admirers.

José Enes was a great philosopher and a gentle and kind human being. But, he was also an outstanding academic and an inspiring leader with an acute strategic vision. Enes masterminded the creation of the University of the Azores, of which he was the founding Rector, and was involved in the launch of the Portuguese Catholic University, where he was the first Vice-rector, amongst other initiatives. However, the most important feature I would like to evoke in this post is that Professor Enes combined as an academic leader a set of features and experiences which allowed him to build a holistic but also deep understanding of what universities are and how they should be governed.

In fact, he was a researcher who also did research about education and the historical role of universities, at the same time as a teacher who continuously reflected upon his teaching methods and how students learn, and a leader who never stopped questioning the deep meaning and social purpose of the university institution. On top of that, Enes was passionate about technology and its potential uses. He managed to articulate all of these different dimensions in an integrated philosophically-grounded vision.

We all know that leadership plays a critical role in modernising Universities for the digital age. However, inspirational leadership alone is not enough. As the example of José Enes demonstrates, in order to be effective, truly transformational leadership has to include a combination of strategic thinking, a deep understanding of what the essence, purpose, values and dynamics of these institutions are and the knowledge of their social and cultural context. To these should be added a touch of warmth and care as well.

In order to share a personal insight on these complex processes, I've invited today my dear friend Belinda Tynan to contribute to the EDEN President's Blog. Belinda is a widely-known expert and a much experienced institutional leader. She is just completing her task as Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, where she has lead an important transformation process. As you most surely know, Belinda was until very recently a member of EDEN's Executive Committee too. She will be returning now to her native Australia, but I'm proud to share with you that she will stay in our professional EDEN circle as an individual member.

In her beautiful reflection, Belinda reviews the different styles of leadership, shares insights on her rich personal experiences as follower and leader and analyses the impact executive officers can have today in complex organisations such as a University in the midst of the current challenges

of our field. Finally, she reminds us of the importance of context in institutional transformational processes. I hope you'll enjoy reading this wonderful and moving personal account.

António

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As I write this in the twilight of my departure from the Open University I am reflective of what has been achieved and the impact one can have as an executive officer of a University. I have been fortunate to have worked in three universities now which have as their focus distance, open and online higher education. Each has had their peculiarities, challenges and opportunities. In each - in a variety of senior roles - I have learned many lessons over the ten years or so from the perspective of being both a follower and leader and gained a very deep appreciation of the importance of context. I also remain concerned that our field has failed to come together in a way that can solve the big problems that we all encounter. Particularly retention and progression.

Across my career I have observed and experienced tyrannical, inspirational and lacklustre leadership. There are many stories that I could tell - we all have them. They are stories which are linked to personal values, aspirations, disappointments and moments best forgotten - the embarrassments. These stories, of course, are one view, my view, of what often is a complex multi-stakeholder set of narratives. On the whole, I reflect that whether you are a follower or are the leader that these labels are just that. I would caution that authority, power and 'show-bagging' are to be handled with care. On the one hand, as a leader, you can do great good. Harnessing the energy of others, being persuasive and an advocate for example. On the other hand, you can equally do great damage by limiting others' potential, being autocratic and not providing a clear inspirational message and direction of travel. In leadership roles you can also spend a lot of time telling others how good you are, how good other things are, skirting across the big themes, being provocative etc. all resulting in no impact at all - this is what I call 'show-bagging'. It rarely gets you anywhere other than a reputation for being shallow, without substance and somewhat of a 'tip' without the 'iceberg'!

It has been a personal quest of mine, as glib as it might sound, to do no harm with either authority or power. And, to hear - not listen but actually hear. Have I been successful? That will be the judgement of my peers. Can I sleep at night? Yes - although I have some cringe worthy moments that remind me that I am human. Have I been a 'show-bagger'? Sometimes, we probably all have been at times - it can come with the territory of leading but I aspire to be sincere and to keep it simple. Now, as a follower, I was in my early career looking for inspiration, passion and commitment - not too much to ask for really.

Working within the field of distance, online and open education has sat very strongly with my own value sets, particularly its contribution to the Millennium Development Goals and past policies around education for all. We all know that there are more learners than there are bricks and that our field offers an opportunity - but it isn't an opportunity if learners continue to drop out or fail in the numbers which they currently do. This is the moment for us all to step up to the challenge and ensure that distance, online and open learners are successful in achieving their aspirations. That is why I have been working in distance, open and online education for the past 15 years. It is important work.

We are all followers and leaders, we are all different and our journeys will be unique. What we can do though is work together to address the challenges that face us all. We need to support each other's journeys and support the field within complex times in new ways. There is a need for us to be even more robust than we are in our education research and evaluation endeavours.

Large scale or meta-analysis of teaching practices that bring our scholarship to light are critical. For example, what do we 'actually' know as a field of retention and progression or the impact of learning design on students learning gain in distance, open and online education? Just two examples. We skip quickly to new shiny areas such as MOOCs or analytics - starting afresh. Of course this is fine too as there is room for all interests. However, it is important that we pull through our knowledge and become better advocates for our field.

As I move on from the Open University I won't be moving on from my passion of the field - rather I will be taking a new perspective - from the other side per se in a mainstream University which is in partnership with other Universities to deliver online education through Open Universities Australia. The problems will be the same though - so working together is the only way in which I can see we can solve issues that cut across contexts - whether you are open, online, by distance, commercial or private. Oh, and I'll keep working on learning the errors of my ways from those cringe worthy moments that I continue to have!



Belinda Tynan with @Phoenix_USQ (Phoenix the cat) on her last day as PVC at the USQ (<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/BFYHvMHC-UAAeKJH.jpg>)

Professor Belinda Tynan holds the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor PVC Learning and Teaching at the Open University. Her previous roles have included, Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Quality at the University of Southern Queensland, and Director of the research centre DEHub at the University of New England. Professor Tynan leads the sub-units of Learning and Teaching, the Open Media Unit, Learning and Teaching Solutions and the University Library which provide leadership and support for the University strategic objectives for the creation of exciting and innovative learning experiences. She is an active researcher and supervisor of doctoral students. Her research interests are concentrated in the field of distance education and sub-topics of academic workload, student voices and academic professional development. She has more than thirty years of experience in the education sector in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK. She was awarded her PFHEA. Read more [here](#).

Sustainable 'Fishing' in the EU

Ildikó Mázár - May 11, 2016

The call for papers of the EDEN RW9, to be held this year in Oldenburg next 4-7 October, has just been announced. Following up on the success of the RW8, held in Oxford, two years ago, the theme is once again very exciting and thought-provoking - "forging new pathways of research and innovation in open and distance learning: reaching from the roots". The EDEN RW9 will be organised in collaboration with the Institute of Education and the Center for Lifelong Learning at Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, in Germany.

The announced selection of invited speakers is impressive and much diversified, including such names as Olaf Zawacki-Richter, Paul Prinsloo, Inge de Waard, George Veletsianos, Adnan Qayyum, Isa Jahnke and Som Naidu. This diversity and richness represents the current wide outreach and impact of EDEN in the research community worldwide. As you know and I've been pointing out in many of my blog posts, one of the focal points of EDEN's strategy and one of the major aspects of our Association's 25th years legacy in the field has been the support to the promotion, dissemination and recognition of quality research in open and digital learning. The organisation of the very successful biannual research workshops (the EDEN RWs) is only a part of that comprehensive activity, which has no parallel with any other association in the world in our field of practice. At the upcoming EDEN16 in Budapest, our 25th anniversary annual conference, we'll be introducing a number of new innovative services to our research community, especially focused on supporting young scholars. Amongst these initiatives, I would point out the Young Scholars pre-conference workshop which will include a special strand dedicated to the best methods and techniques to write good quality research journal articles. This activity will be lead by some of the most experienced editors of the best journals in open and distance learning.

Meanwhile, an additional important role of our organisation is to participate in international research initiatives. To speak about EDEN's extensive support to research and its involvement in EU-funded projects, I've invited today my colleague and good friend Ildikó Mázár. She is the young Deputy Secretary General of EDEN and is a very talented and experienced project manager.

In her contribution, Ildikó presents a personal and moving account of her long experience as project manager at EDEN, highlighting the social and personal impact of the initiatives carried out.

António

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Athens, October 2009. I remember that warm sunny day well for we had a guest teacher presenting at the final partner meeting of our FP6 project creatively entitled Rural Wings. His name escapes me, but I'll never forget the passion and enthusiasm he brought to the room. He talked about how the satellite technologies provided by the project and the (until then unattainable) high quality wireless broadband connection helped his remote island get rejuvenated. Before Rural Wings virtually connected this tiny landmass with mainland Greece, the inhabitants' usual life pattern was growing up, leaving to find a job and possibly returning when they retired. That's the gist of the story anyway. Being a small island, there weren't many children living there, and you can imagine the enormous challenge their teacher faced, with a class full of multi-graders. He was expected to engage them all. He had to cover every subject with every age group. ...until Rural Wings provided

the opportunity to connect his rural classroom with others in similarly disadvantaged places. In doing so the multi-grade teachers could divide the labour amongst themselves with, for example, one preparing classes in maths and the other in history, etc. Whilst one was presenting to all the classes from one location, the others would supervise their own classes receiving the lesson via Skype. The beautiful thing was that it wasn't just the youngsters and their teacher whose lives had changed for the better. Parents and grandparents, often taught by their own children how to use IT, learned how they could use e-mail and Skype to stay in touch with their family members working in far off cities. And so they all lived happily ever after.



Image courtesy of [Woodleywonderworks](#)

By the time we had that inspirational meeting in Athens, I had been working at EDEN for 10 years, but it was really only after this project meeting that could I describe to people outside the field what my job was all about. I mean, people struggle to grasp what European Union Programmes actually do (apart from the notion that the EU is utilising their tax money). But now I had a personal story that people could connect with, and that helped them understand how EU projects, contrary to popular belief, don't just equip schools with technology and equipment. That would be just like 'giving fish', but these initiatives actually more often 'teach fishing' to their stakeholders. Once I raise the interest of my audience I can go on to tell them how the EU programmes EDEN is involved with help children, youths, adults and even [the elderly](#), get a more fun and engaging, better quality education. Education for life, that is, because the one thing people usually agree with is that lifelong learning is a reality whether you accept or ignore it. I tell them that there are [children with long term illnesses, whom we can help stay connected](#) with their peers and participate in their classes from their home or the hospital. I tell them that some of these EU funded projects [help students develop invaluable soft skills](#) that are more and more often required by their prospective employers (yes, I know that if you got your degree at Harvard or Oxford you're still guaranteed to nail a job in no time, but wherever you got your degree from, you will need those soft skills to keep that job and make your career develop) and how [open badges](#) (designed and issued properly) have such great potential and prospect in evidencing these skills. And if I still have their attention I may even explain how some of these EU projects [foster open and international professional collaboration](#) and equip educators with the necessary competences and know-how to [decipher and safely use educational big data](#).

And this is still just a superficial overview as there is so much more going on in EU projects, often with either subtler and/or more political impacts, that are difficult to explain in a brief synopsis. And of course there are project giants like [Open Discovery Space](#), that are so extensive and diverse, I wouldn't know where to start explaining its importance to school innovation and teachers' professional development.

EDEN has been actively involved with [over 60 EU co-funded projects](#) since 1999 and supported many more of its members' and partners' initiatives by sharing their news and results on our [online bulletin board](#) and in our monthly [NewsFlashes](#). We also provide a face-to-face platform at our conferences' Synergy Strands for practice exchange and intellectual cross-fertilisation, and it is a whole different conversation topic how these face-to-face networking opportunities give birth to so many creative and innovative project ideas and new valuable partnerships. I suggest that you don't take my word for it. Apply that 'critical thinking' soft skill of yours and come and see for yourself at our [25th Anniversary Conference](#) on 14-17 June 2016 in Budapest.

To complete my EU project account, I'd like to add that for every successful project we have tenfold more applications that didn't hit the bar (you can imagine that some of these programmes are incredibly competitive). And despite the disappointment we feel over lost efforts poured into these applications, we don't lose heart or our dedication. After all it is in our collective interest to have lots of innovative ideas elaborated with great clarity and precision, with solid work plans and with visions of sustainability. Let the best ones win and let us learn from their examples! I, for one at least, believe that European collaboration means genuine openness to and support of others' ingenuity, and will and commitment to make our continent, and the wider world, a better place for All.



Ms. Ildikó Mázár is Deputy Secretary General at EDEN since 2013. She graduated at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME) in 2002 as bio-engineer where she also received training in course development and learning management. She worked as a part-time assistant since 1999 but in the year of her graduation she received a full-time contract from EDEN as a project manager and collaborated with the Association ever since, contributing to the successful completion of nearly 60 EU projects and assisting to an additional 130+ applications' composition. Her roles within the organisation have focused in particular on the dissemination, networking, project evaluation and management/administration activities. More recently, she has spearheaded a number of innovative developments in the Association, associated with the widening of its outreach to the new generations of researchers and practitioners. Read more [here](#).

Reflections about Collective and Independent Study

Michael G. Moore - May 18, 2016

The upcoming EDEN16 in Budapest will be a very special conference and a milestone in our Association's long history. The European Distance and E-learning Network is celebrating its 25th anniversary and several significant related initiatives are being prepared. The underlying idea for this programme of activities is to celebrate our European legacy of know-how and expertise in open, distance and digital education by projecting it into the future. In accordance, we've invited the different generations of researchers and practitioners in our field to engage in a joint reflection on the digital learning futures based on an analysis of the experience and know-how accumulated by our community in the past 25 years.

One major example of this is the panel discussion on the topic of the personalisation of learning, which we've designed in a most engaging way. In fact, imagine a confrontation between two perspectives and theoretical approaches on this theme as different as the ones of Michael G. Moore and of Cristóbal Cobo. It sounds quite exciting, don't you agree? But, just think that we have also invited Steve Wheeler to instigate and moderate the discussion and try to find a synthesis of both sides. Well, I'm sure that you'll be expecting a memorable debate. We are too! So please make sure to mark the date on your agendas: 17th June, at the closing session of EDEN16 in Budapest.

To introduce you to this exciting event, what better way than to give the floor to the keynote speakers themselves? That's why I've invited my dear friend and EDEN Senior Fellow, Michael G. Moore, to contribute to today's guest blog post. It is an honour and a privilege for me to be able to share with you a wonderful and thought-provoking reflection on the topic of the personalisation of learning by one the greatest scholars in our field and one of its pioneers.

I do hope you'll enjoy reading Michael's excellent contribution and feel encouraged to come to Budapest and attend his live debate with Cristóbal Cobo and Steve Wheeler.

António



Michael G. Moore receiving his EDEN Senior Fellowship in 2010 with past President Alan Tait

Most histories of our field begin with an account of the evolution of the communication technologies used to link learners and teachers, beginning with a century of correspondence teaching, followed by educational radio, then television, the 1980's teleconferencing technologies, leading us to today's mobile world online. With the arrival of each of these technologies and their many variants, distance educators have responded with changes in their pedagogy, i.e. the ways they structured their content and managed the dialogue with their distant students.

Today is no different. Every day, instructional designers, teachers and students and their institutions are experimenting to take advantage of the latest technologies. These are the network technologies and online applications that make it possible to link students into virtual classes. Indeed, the growing acceptance of distance learning in academia is surely because in the online form it makes possible most of the attributes of the conventional classroom. This reassures academics, most of whom still believe that the face-to-face class is the ideal learning environment, but now, online – as contrasted with all previous technologies -- it is possible for them to approximate “the real thing”. This aspiration, to imitate the conventional class, has influenced researchers too, who take a particular interest in studying the “social presence” of teachers and co-learners in the virtual class. Further, this idea that distance learning online should mirror the conventional class is reinforced by popular trends in educational theory, most notably the theories of constructivism and connectivism, -- what I think of as “collectivist” theories because they assume an inherent value in learning in groups, inter-student interaction, collaborative learning, and the formation of learning communities.

I need not draw too slavishly on metaphors about pendulums swinging, before suggesting that the success of the movement to conceptualizing distance education as an emulation of the traditional classroom has not been without cost, or proposing that some correction is needed. Without giving up any of the progress made in the application of collectivist pedagogical theory and the development of virtual classrooms, I want to suggest the time has come to balance this with a fresh attention to an older (and complementary) view.

This, older view about the optimum environment for distance learning is what was described during the middle of the last century as “independent study, sometimes “independent learning”.

This is a model with roots, not in the class but in the tutorial. The ideal tutorial was (many would say still is) the one-on-one relationship of the student with a tutor as exemplified in the practice in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. From the earliest years of distance education, this one-on-one relationship was held up as a model that might be emulated by means of correspondence through the mail.

Charles Wedemeyer, considered by many, (including me) as the founding father of modern distance education, defined independent study as follows: “Independent study consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways for the purpose of freeing internal learners from inappropriate class paces or patterns, of providing external learners with opportunities to continue learning in their own environments, and of developing in all learners the capacity to carry on self directed learning”. (Wedemeyer, 1971)

In the USA there developed a common practice of allowing college students to complement class attendance with courses of independent study, but for our purposes what is more significant is that independent study was developed as a method of providing learning experiences for students who were not able to be in a class or group or did not want to be even if they could. In contrast to current collectivist theories, the pedagogy employed in “independent study” was focused on understanding and treating the student as an individual person. As Wedemeyer explained, the term

“independent study” incorporated both the characteristics of separation of learner from teacher that defines distance education, but also a recognition that under such conditions students are empowered – or required - to undertake a larger degree of self-direction and responsibility for their learning than is usual in face-to-face class-rooms.

In the early 1970's when I first tackled the challenge of distance education theory, or rather the absence of it, I was attracted by this idea that physical distance could actually benefit the learner. In researching this, I was influenced by the (then) revolutionary writings of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and other so called “Humanistic” psychologists. What emerged from my research -- what in 1980 I called a theory of transactional distance -- included the Humanists' perspective of what Rogers called “Freedom to Learn”, and led me to focus on the different degrees in which learners might exercise autonomy in a dialogic relationship with a distant tutor. As I wrote in 1972, a differentiating characteristic of distance education programs is the extent to which they allow the learner to exercise autonomy, meaning how far it is the learner rather than the teacher who determines the objectives, the study resources and experiences, and the evaluation decisions of the learning program.

There is much more that could be said about the philosophy, psychology and methodology of independent study, but for now, I can only draw attention to what appears to be a new interest, perhaps for many, a new discovery, and it is being referred to as ‘personalized learning’. Indeed it is the same new technologies that have facilitated the growth of the collectivist pedagogy and virtual classrooms, that is now also offering opportunities for educators to develop new methods and tools to facilitate personalized learning, that is, more individualized, more independent, learning. Notable among these current developments are the development of tools for competency-based education, assessment of prior learning, learner analytics, and adaptive learning.

In Europe, the last decade has seen a growing number of high level policy documents and increasing research interest in personalized learning, beginning with the OECD's 2006 document about Personalization in the School System and then the Grundtvig Project, LEADLAB – Leading Elderly and Adult Development Laboratory, which defined personalised learning as “learning that may be self-directed or may be facilitated by a tutor on a one-to-one basis and/or within a group setting.” Elsewhere, also in 2006, the G100 conference held at the National Academy of Education Administration in Beijing, China, with educators from 14 countries, singled out the value of personalization “ as a means of enabling every student to reach their potentials, to learn how to learn and to share the responsibility for their own education”. In the United States, the National Educational Technology Plan describes personalized learning as adjusting the pace (individualization), adjusting the approach (differentiation), and connecting to the learner's interests and experiences. (Examples cited from the Horizon Report, 2015).

In light of these and related developments I ask, might this be an opportune time for a review and perhaps a revival of study of the earlier foundation theory of Learner Autonomy in distance education? Is it conceivable that emerging technologies and teaching methods might fruitfully link independent, personalized learning with the currently more established collectivist tradition?

For that is the key point. There is no conflict of interest between pedagogical practice based on independent study and that of group learning, but on the contrary a good environment for learning must be one that provides optimum opportunity for both individual learning and social learning. The question is whether we have perhaps gone too far in promoting the latter and might do better with more attention to the former.

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Professor Michael Grahame Moore is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Education at The Pennsylvania State University and editor of the American Journal of Distance Education. In an article published in 1972 he first defined distance education, and introduced his theory of transactional distance. Since then, Professor Moore's career has been dedicated to the development of distance education as a field of scholarly endeavor. Milestones include founding The American Journal of Distance Education in 1987, and establishing an early type of professional network, a Listserv known as The Distance Education Online Symposium in 1988. A first textbook, Distance Education, a Systems View was published in 1996, translated into four languages and three editions. The Handbook of Distance Education, a compendium of research, was published in a third edition in 2012.

As a practitioner, his achievements include what were probably the world's first international e-learning courses, using audio, video and computer conferencing technologies, taught at Penn State University from 1987 to 1995. Many consulting assignments include work for Ministries of Education in several countries around the world. His success has been recognized by Penn State University with a Distinguished Professorship and a Lifetime Achievement Award, by a Fellowship at University of Cambridge, UK, Visiting Professorship at UK Open University, Honorary professorships in China and Argentina, an Honorary Doctorate at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, and Senior Fellowship of the European Distance and E-Learning Network, among others. Read more [here](#).

Celebrating EDEN's Silver Jubilee: A Reflection

by Sir John Daniel

Sir John Daniel - May 31, 2016

As I've mentioned in previous posts, EDEN is celebrating its silver jubilee (1991-2016). This is a most significant milestone not just for our Association, but for the whole European academic and professional community. In fact, the creation of EDEN opened a new social and political horizon in Europe for the development of a then still emerging field of practice, which proved to be critically relevant throughout the years. The early nineties of the 20th century were a time of great promises and expectations. An exciting moment marked by a great confidence in the future and an almost blind faith in how it would develop.

Looking back at how it all started a quarter of century ago and realizing how much EDEN has evolved and grown both in size, complexity and impact proves that the ambition of our pioneers was not overoptimistic. On the contrary, the progress has been astonishing. This success however expresses how EDEN has been capable of understanding the evolution of the European open, distance and online learning community and interpret correctly its needs and trends, smartly adjusting the Association's strategies and modes of operation to the different emerging scenarios.

Looking now into the future and to its difficult challenges, the European academic and professional community can rest assured that EDEN will always remain faithful to this close bond to the field.

As we approach the EDEN16 in Budapest, this is also the best time to revisit some of the most significant moments in the very rich history of EDEN's service to the European and global community of researchers and practitioners in open, distance and online learning. To help me in this complex task, I've asked all EDEN past Presidents to contribute to the President's Blog and share their personal recollections and retrospections on the development of the Association and the field. They've all graciously accepted. As a result, in the next two weeks you'll be able to find six different but very insightful reflections.

As an introduction to this exciting series of posts, I've invited my dear friend and EDEN Senior Fellow, Sir John Daniel to write a special guest blog post on the creation of the Association. In fact, EDEN owes much to John Daniel, who was more than instrumental to set and shape it. Even today, many of the principles, rules and procedures we use were directly inspired by him. It is therefore a great honour and a privilege to be able to share with you an inspiring account on what led to the foundation of the European Distance Education Network, as it was initially called. This reflection is also a wonderful homage to a certain vision of Europe, certainly much more open and generous than most of the current ones, and also to the colleagues who helped shape our field.

I hope you'll enjoy reading this great contribution. Sir John Daniel will be delivering the official 25th anniversary address at the gala dinner of the EDEN16 in Budapest where he will elaborate in full the ideas and topics presented in this reflection. Be sure not to miss it!

António

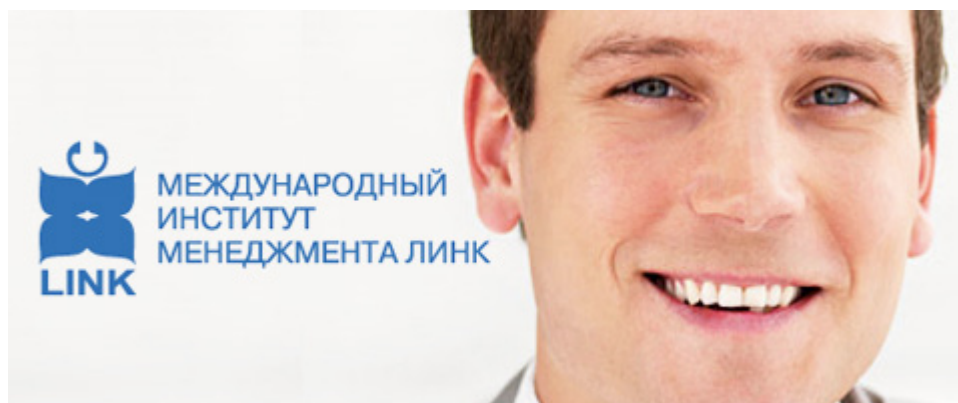
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I look forward to the honour of speaking at the EDEN Conference Dinner that will celebrate our Silver Jubilee - EDEN's 25-year contribution to open, distance and online learning (ODL) in Europe. I shall recall the early days of EDEN and what we hoped to achieve through its creation before

reflecting on the enormous changes that have occurred over the quarter-century since EDEN emerged.

The preliminary work that led to EDEN's creation took place around the time that the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the first meetings were called the Budapest Platform. It is very appropriate that we are holding this silver jubilee conference in Budapest and in Hungary. In 1990 I arrived from Canada to be Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University. David Sewart immediately told me about the Budapest Platform and briefed me about the important role that Hungary was playing. In the late 1980s Hungary was the first of the Central and Eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc to sense that major changes were imminent. Its leaders realised that their people would require massive and timely education and training to help them adjust successfully to the western world that they aspired to join. So Hungary sent a delegation on a tour of Western Europe to look for ways of tackling this challenge. It came back with the firm recommendation that open and distance learning (ODL) in general, and the UK Open University in particular, were the most promising avenues to explore. This had two sets of consequences.

First, over the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, new independent ODL organisations were established in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Russia and Slovakia in order to offer UKOU management courses in the national languages. These institutions have evolved over the years but, like LINK in Russia (image), all retain strong relationships with the UKOU.



Over two decades tens of thousands of students across Europe have benefited from the opportunities for study through ODL that have been created through the links between East and West that EDEN has nourished.

Over two decades tens of thousands of students across Europe have benefited from the opportunities for study through ODL that have been created through the links between East and West that EDEN has nourished.

Second, the distance educators of Western Europe - and there were far fewer of us in those days than there are now - realised that they should help colleagues from the former Soviet bloc to acquire the skills necessary to design and deliver ODL in a modern way. The extensive Soviet correspondence course system did not offer an adequate model for the new era. The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) already existed and I was part of its executive committee as vice-chancellor of the UKOU. But EADTU had been set up for a small number of institutional members. In order to increase the number of ODL practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe we needed a network of individuals that would focus on multiplying contacts and professional exchanges between East and West. And so EDEN was born.

We were most fortunate to have some enormously able and dedicated individuals to build EDEN. I hope it will not be invidious to single out two for special mention. First, EDEN owes a great debt

to Alan Tait. I worked with Alan to set up EDEN as a legal entity in the 1990s and he has remained deeply involved in EDEN's development ever since. Second, we have been extraordinarily lucky that Andras Szucs has served as our devoted Secretary-General since the very start. There are many other great EDEN supporters that I could mention, but let Alan and Andras stand as examples of the longevity of commitment that has been such an important element in securing the remarkable impact that EDEN has achieved over the years.

And what tremendous years they have been for ODL! When EDEN began ODL was marginal to established school and university systems despite the large number of students it already attracted. Today ODL is mainstream. Most postsecondary institutions now offer some online courses and governments have seized on ODL as the route to modernising their educational and training systems in the era of the Internet. EDEN can be very proud of the catalytic role that it has played in creating the community of skilled ODL practitioners across the continent that will make these ambitions realities.



Sir John Daniel is a Research Associate at Contact North | Contact Nord and a former Vice-Chancellor of The Open University (1990-2001). He has held appointments at the Télé-université (Directeur des Études, 1973-77), Athabasca University (Vice-President for Learning Services, 1978-80), Concordia University (Vice-Rector, Academic, 1980-84), Laurentian University (President, 1984-90), the UNESCO (Assistant Director-General for Education, 2001-04) and the Commonwealth of Learning (President and C.E.O., 2004-12). His non-executive appointments have included the presidencies of the International Council for Open and Distance Education, the Canadian Association for Distance Education and the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education. He also served as Vice-President of the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

*The involvement of Sir John Daniel in the development of open and distance learning spans for 40 years. Knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1994 for services to higher education, he has received 32 honorary doctorates from universities in 17 countries. Best known as a scholar for his book *Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*, the most recent of his 330 publications include: *Making Sense of MOOCs: Musings in Maze of Myth, Paradox and Possibility* and *A Guide to Quality in Online Learning*. Read more [here](#).*

EDEN: 25 Years as a Learning Environment

Erling Ljosa - June 3, 2016

Some two years ago, at the occasion of the 100th meeting of the Executive Committee of EDEN, I had the chance of publishing a dedicated [blog post](#) entitled “They are looking at us”. In the post I argue the importance of our Association carrying on its rich legacy of values and expertise. Inspired by the venue of that memorable meeting - Oxford -, I've used a classical metaphor to express this idea: «as a river remains basically the same though the waters keep changing, our quest is not essentially different from the one our brave founders embarked on twenty years ago». In spite of the much different historical, cultural and technological contexts, we've shared with those colleagues a similar optimism and generosity, along with a shared dynamism and commitment, as well as the same sense of mission and care for our professional community. This is what makes EDEN such a strong organisation.

As we proudly celebrate EDEN's silver jubilee (1991-2016), I've invited all the past Presidents to share with us some of their personal recollections and retrospections on the development of the Association and the field. As announced in my last post, I'm proud to report that they've all graciously accepted.

We'll start today this special series of posts with the contribution from EDEN's founding President, Erling Ljosa. And what an inspirational way to initiate this journey. As early as 1992, Erling wrote these visionary words:

The future of EDEN will grow from our ability to create links across national and regional boundaries, and between people and institutions with either similar or quite different experience, but with common interests and aims in the field of distance learning. Europe is a fragile and complex mixture of societies and people. I hope that by creating new and stronger links in one of the growing fields of education and training, EDEN will contribute significantly to the development of educational opportunities within the whole of Europe

(EDEN Newsletter 1, November 1992). You'll be able to learn more about this [here](#).

Over two decades later, in his unique engaging and sensible style, Erling guides us through his personal memories of the exciting and complex days which lead to the creation of the Association. In his itinerary, you'll be able to identify many of the great pioneers who moulded our field in Europe and rediscover their wonderfully visionary ideas. At the end, Erling reminds us of the essential - that EDEN should always be a learning environment. Yes, Erling, we're still learning! This is, in fact, the secret of our enduring success. Thank you, dear friend for your vision and wise guidance. I'm sure you'll enjoy reading this excellent guest post.

António

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The privilege of old people is to be able to look back, to tell stories of the past and to some extent re-imagine the evolving environment which shaped your own view of the world and influenced your behaviour. EDEN has through its 25 years of existence been an important learning environment for all of us who participated. I am grateful to EDEN President António Teixeira for inviting me as a guest writer in his blog in connection with this anniversary of EDEN.

The birth of EDEN

In 1989 the Berlin Wall was torn down. Suddenly we had a new Europe.

The first pan-European meeting at the Technical University of Budapest in May 1990 gave all present a strong feeling of witnessing an historic event. I was particularly impressed by the openness and strength of the appeals from Professor Tamàs Lajos and the Polish Deputy Minister Tadeusz Diem, urging us to open all the bridges and channels of communication so long closed in Europe. This was a call not to be refused. The meeting accepted the invitation from Sir John Daniel to arrange a follow-up under the name of The Budapest Platform, with a Steering Committee to meet in Milton Keynes, UK, in the autumn.

The Budapest meeting had been initiated and organized by ICDE. When the Steering Committee discussed the new situation in Milton Keynes, it became clear that there were many bridges to build and channels to open up in Western Europe as well. The European Community had quite recently taken up "Open and Distance Learning" as a field of interest, and some programs had been established. Countries outside the EU itself were supposed gradually to become involved. However, we had no open and transparent frameworks, mechanisms or organizations in Western Europe which would cover the whole field. The contacts established in Budapest thus offered a golden opportunity not only for Central and Eastern Europe, but for all parts of Europe and for all sectors of distance education.

The Chair of the Budapest meeting and Platform was Dr. Gottfried Leibbrandt, founding President of the Dutch Open Universiteit. As a preparation for the next meeting in Prague 1991 he asked me, together with Armando Trindade, Rector of the Portuguese Universidade Aberta, to help drafting a constitution for a new "umbrella organization", a true pan-European Network. This constitution was adopted in Prague and EDEN was born. The new network aimed from the beginning towards being open to all types of institutions, networks, project participants and even individuals, membership driven with a democratic structure.



The picture shows the first meeting of the Interim Executive Committee of EDEN in Warszawa in the autumn 1991.

In the beginning EDEN could seem a rather weak construction. But the vision was strong – to include all kinds of species into the common garden. This proved to be a sound and sustainable strategy. Along the route the organization has developed important new activities and services, all of them strengthening its role as a main supporter of professional communication and sharing of experience.

My initial world – of correspondence education – has now disappeared. Or rather, its range of methods, insights and experience has become incorporated in a wider context. But we are still concerned with learning and the learning environments – with the individual, the learning groups, with communication, learning structures and organizations. And, I hope, we are still learning.



Erling Ljosa was a Head of Product/Market Unit at the NKS Ernst G Mortensens Foundation, in Norway. Founder of EDEN, he was its first President (1992-1995). Erling was a member of the Executive Committee for two terms (1992-1998). He is a Life Member of the Association and an EDEN Senior Fellow.

All about EDEN

Alan Tait - June 6, 2016

As part of the celebrations of the silver jubilee of EDEN (1991-2016), I've invited all the past Presidents to contribute to this blog, in order to share some of their personal recollections and retrospections on the development of the Association and the field. Last week, I published the first contribution of this special series of posts. This was a most inspiring account from EDEN's founding President, Erling Ljosa.

In today's post, we give continuation to the initiative, sharing the reflections of Alan Tait, who was President from 2007 to 2010. Alan was also a Vice-President, NAP Steering Committee Chair, and the editor in chief of EURODL. In fact, it was he who introduced the EDEN President's blog amongst other innovations. Alan's strong connection with EDEN has followed the entire history of EDEN and no one knows the Association and its development throughout these past 25 years better than him.

On a more personal level, Alan has also been a great mentor and a very dear friend. He was the President at the time when EDEN held the Annual Conference in Lisbon, in 2008, and the 7th Open Classroom Conference in Porto the following year, in collaboration with my institution, Universidade Aberta. Then, he welcomed me on the Executive Committee and I became Vice-President during his term. More recently, during my own Presidency, Alan was again a very close and strong inspiration.

In his impressive contribution, Alan shares with us a deep reflection on his personal experiences spanning from two decades and covering very different phases of the history of the Association. At the end of his post, Alan calls our attention to the challenges of communication in multicultural environments. In fact, EDEN is fundamentally a network of people with many shared interests but also diverse cultural backgrounds. As such, the experience of leading in such complex environments can become quite a difficult challenge. But I can assure you this is an art that Alan masters superbly with charm and wit!

António

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It is a great pleasure to be invited to contribute in the year of EDEN's 25th anniversary to the President's blog, by kind invitation of President Professor Antonio Teixeira. This contribution brings together a number of threads for me: my involvement as Planning Executive in the founding of EDEN out of the provisional Budapest Platform in 1991, under the direction of Sir John Daniel at the Open University UK; secondly my time on the EDEN Executive Committee and in particular the period 2007-2010 when I served as EDEN President; and lastly in reflecting on the first quarter century, and asking myself what account to make of our hopes and ambitions.

The period 1989-1991 when I was tasked with operationalising plans for the first truly pan-European professional association in our field were as stimulating as they were worthwhile. I travelled the length and breadth of the new Europe, across boundaries that in many cases had been difficult to cross since 1945. This was one of the prime motivating forces in the foundation of EDEN, to freely bring together the professional community of the whole continent for the first time in nearly 50 years. The second core element in EDEN's design was the early realisation, significantly contested

then, that open and distance learning represented a much wider institutional landscape than that of the open universities of Western Europe alone. EDEN from the beginning foresaw that open and distance learning would develop not only in the single mode institutions, important though they were, but in institutions that were dual or multi-mode, or blended in their character. Not only this but EDEN also understood that ODL would develop across a wider range of sectors than just higher education, but also in schools, colleges, and companies, and that these sectors could fruitfully meet together. EDEN found a wide response immediately across the whole of Europe, East, West, North, Central and South. The most surprising thing was how quickly respect and affection developed out of new acquaintance across groups of professionals who had never come together before. Europe in all its delightful variety seemed to have a culture in common. None of us knew that concretely when we started.

I returned to EDEN in 2004 with an invitation from the then President, the estimable Ingeborg Bøe of Norway, to stand for the Executive Committee. My 6 years on that body concluded in my three-year term as EDEN President from 2007. This was one of the most satisfying and stimulating periods of my professional life, working intimately with the outstanding Secretary-General, Dr András Szücs and his team in the secretariat in Budapest, and with a creative and lively Executive Committee drawn very widely from across Europe. There was a mix of cultures and languages, of ideas and arguments, of places and cuisines that was truly formative. My time as President saw the continued revival of one of the jewels in EDEN's crown, its journal EURODL; the introduction of the President's blog as a means of engaging with EDEN's membership of more than 1000 individuals; and the introduction of the Fellowship scheme which has so successfully given professional recognition that is, in my observation, truly valued by our community. We saw continued growth of institutional members as well as individuals, and the successful embedding of the structure of conferences: the annual large conference accompanied by its satellites in alternating years of the Research Workshop and the Open Classroom conferences. EDEN truly owes a debt to those colleagues who take the responsibility, own the risk, and manage the workload in hosting these professional meetings. It goes without saying that none of the achievements in this period were mine alone, although I hope I contributed. The Executive Committee and the Secretariat truly worked as a team in developing, refining and implementing the ideas. I should add that, although we saw the beginnings of the financial crisis in 2009, none of us I believe truly foresaw its duration or severity, or the resultant fundamental challenge to cooperation and partnership across Europe.

But what of the success of EDEN over this quarter century? How many of our aims and ambitions have we fulfilled? The first thing to say is that something must have been profoundly right in the founding concept. Open and distance learning has grown and grown across the institutional landscape. Indeed this is so much the case that some of the open universities have found their place in that landscape challenged, and as we come to nearly 50 years of single-mode distance-teaching open universities in Europe, we can note that they have hardly grown in number nor have they extended outside their original region to other parts of Europe, and that some have not fulfilled their trajectory of growth. EDEN might do well to facilitate a courageous and open-eyed review with them and others of how they could reinvent themselves for the next quarter century.

We should also observe that the partnership in leadership of EDEN between successive Presidents, Executive Committees and the Secretary General has provided resilience which has not been available to many European level organisations that we have seen disappear. EDEN has been wise in the management of its business. We can also sadly note that the hoped for untroubled development of the new Europe has in fact been very challenged. No more so than

now, with the continued austerity deriving from the financial crisis, the rise of new nationalisms that propose intolerance, dogmatism and sometimes naked racism, and the youth unemployment in some countries of more than 50%, poisoning the crucial period of growth into adulthood for so many, and with such long-lasting effects into the future. And of course with the refugee crisis, a catastrophe for so many children, women and men. EDEN and its members will be constrained by these negative factors, but I hope will also play an influential part in developing solutions to overcome them. Open, flexible and online education must certainly find ways to innovate for the educational elements of support to the youth of Europe, and to refugees and their children.

Finally let me conclude with some anthropological remarks. My time with EDEN has led personally to a much greater awareness of the ways in which the contributing national cultures of Europe play out in behaviours in meetings. While never bound by stereotypes I have discovered to my amusement that stereotypes exist in many cases at least because they have some basis in fact. I can acknowledge the well known English tendency that is no doubt observable in my behaviour: we are congenitally unable to speak directly, preferring understatement, irony, inference, implication, or even resorting to outright denial. It seems we can only manage a limited amount of truth at any one time. I have been treated very kindly in my time with EDEN, and I am grateful to my colleagues for their patience and tolerance!



Alan Tait is Emeritus Professor of Distance Education and Development at the Open University UK, and has a long record of practice and publication. From 2013 to 2015 Alan was Director of International Development and Teacher Education, and before that was Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) at the Open University UK from 2007 to 2012, and from 2004 to 2007 Dean of the Faculty of Education and Language Studies. He was Editor of the European Journal of Distance and E Learning (EURODL) in 2005-2013, Editor of Open Learning from 1989 to 1998, and was President of the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN) from 2007 to 2010. He served as Co-Director of the Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning in the period of 1988-2013.

In 2012 Alan was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Moscow State University for Economics, Statistics and Informatics, and appointed Visiting Senior Online Consultant at the Open University of China in 2013. Alan is founding Emeritus Editor of the Journal of Learning for Development (www.jl4d.org), produced from the Commonwealth of Learning; Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Open University of Hong Kong; Visiting Professor at Aalborg University, Denmark; Visiting Fellow of the Centre for Distance Education at the University of London; and transformation advisor for the Commonwealth of Learning at Botswana Open University. Alan is also an EDEN Senior Fellow.

EDEN Anniversary Reflections

Morten F. Paulsen - June 7, 2016

Celebrating the silver jubilee of EDEN (1991-2016), all the past Presidents are sharing in this Blog some of their personal recollections and retrospections on the development of the Association and the field.

In today's post, I invite you to read the contribution of Morten F. Paulsen, President of EDEN from 2010 to 2013. Morten was also a Vice-President in the period 2009-2010.

Morten is a very dear friend and was the President for most of my time as Vice-President in EDEN. Since we first met personally in 2007, we have shared many experiences within and beyond the organisation and have continued cooperating in many academic endeavors until this day. During his term, Morten marked the Association with his open, transparent and friendly style of leadership which empowered colleagues and staff as well as his concern with the emerging topics and discussions in the professional community.

In his contribution, Morten presents a very good summary of the major milestones and accomplishments during his presidency and shares a personal reflection on how he experienced this adventure.

I leave you the reading of the delightful post by my dearest friend, President Morten!

António

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When António Teixeira challenged past presidents to share their anniversary reflections, I got a welcome opportunity to review the EDEN President's blog and my memories from the EDEN conferences and Executive Committee meetings.

My first recollection of EDEN is from the early 1990s when I discussed how we could establish an electronic newsletter with EDEN's first president Erling Ljosa. Later, I attended the EDEN Annual Conferences in Helsinki 2005, Vienna 2006 and Barcelona 2006. Apprehensive, I was elected Executive Committee member at the Naples 2007 Annual Conference, Vice President in Gdansk in 2009 and President in Valencia in 2010.

In my [Inaugural Reflections](#), I stated that the three favourite words in my e-learning vocabulary were **Flexibility**, **Cooperation** and **Transparency**. Realising the importance of the EDEN Awards, Fellowships and Anniversaries, I added **Celebration** as a fourth word. These words, and my belief in gender balance, guided my work with the EDEN Executive Committee, Secretariat, valued partners and members.

I attended my first executive meeting on the Norwegian costal ferry Hurtigruta in October 2007. The stormy surfs washing the fourth floor meeting room windows made the agenda tight. Seasickness is good for effective meetings and rapid agreements.

Another memorable highlight was our 20th Anniversary Conference in Dublin. It included the [first EDEN Fellows day](#) and a noteworthy [Keynote presentation by the Irish President Mary McAleese](#). In my presentation, [20 years with EDEN](#), I recalled that we launched the [EDEN NAP members Area](#) in 2010 and EDEN's presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in 2011.

The anniversary conference focused on learning and sustainability while we celebrated our achievements and future opportunities. Just a few months later, the situation was much less spirited when we titled our 2011 Open Classroom Conference in Athens "[Never Waste a Crisis](#)".

In spite of the political and economic backdrop in Athens, the delegates focused more on opportunities for change than on the dire economic situation in Europe. Several of the presenters argued that an educational crisis would spur innovation and more cost effective education. Looking back, I believe the crisis accelerated the development of new educational technology, open educational resources and MOOCs.

The dismal economic situation in Europe made it necessary for EDEN to focus more on economic realities and less on new initiatives than we fancied. The situation strengthened my appreciation of cost effective and sustainable online education and the prudent, hardworking and competent EDEN Secretariat.

Looking back, the themes of the EDEN conferences show some of the issues we focused on during my term as President:

- Valencia 2010 - Media Inspirations for Learning
- Budapest 2010 - User Generated Content Assessment in Learning
- Dublin 2011 - Learning and Sustainability
- Athens 2011 - Never Waste a Crisis!
- Porto 2012 - Open Learning Generations
- Leuven 2012 - Learners in the Driving Seat
- Oslo 2013 - The Joy of Learning

My entries in the EDEN President's blog provide further insights in some of the issues I was interested in during the period:

- Apr 02, 2008 [Crystal-clear reflections on European e-learning trends](#)
- Apr 30, 2008 [Barred from the Internet](#)
- Jul 01, 2008 [Transparency in Cooperative Online Education](#)
- Jul 15, 2008 [Embedding rich media in online articles](#)
- Oct 01, 2008 [Profiling Online Students](#)
- Jun 21, 2010 [Homage to a President, Chief Editor and Mentor](#)
- Jun 25, 2010 [Inaugural Reflections](#)
- Dec 28, 2010 [2010 – The year of video lectures?](#)
- Apr 26, 2011 [The NKiPad](#)
- Jun 27, 2011 [Thank you President McAleese](#)
- Jun 28, 2011 [The first EDEN Fellows' Day](#)
- Nov 30, 2011 [Never Waste a Crisis](#)
- Dec 06, 2011 [ICDE Interview](#)

Now, when we celebrate EDEN's 25th Anniversary, I am proud of belonging to the EDEN family and of our achievements in the field of distance education and e-learning. The members have made it

possible for millions of students to get the education they want, and we should all be proud of our important contribution to society.

My presidency ended appropriately with the Joy of Learning, which was the theme for our conference in 2013. It was a great pleasure hosting it in my hometown in collaboration with [Fleksibel utdanning Norge](#) and the University of Oslo. There, I received my dearest EDEN souvenir, a memory book with pictures, greetings from many of my EDEN friends and a front cover showing the picture below titled "Our Friend, the President".



Morten Flate Paulsen is CEO of Campus NooA – the Nordic open online Academy (www.nooa.no). Morten was a member of the Executive Committee for two terms (1992-1998) and is an EDEN Senior Fellow.

EDEN - A Community for Collaboration

Ingeborg Boe - June 9, 2016

As we approach the end of the special series of guest blog posts by former EDEN Presidents who have kindly shared their visions and experiences, I'm honoured to introduce the contribution of our former President Ingeborg Boe. She led the Association from 2003 to 2007, making her term the longest so far, and prior to that she was also a Vice-President.

Ingeborg's presidency had an impact on EDEN in many ways. Her progressive, optimistic and sensible approach represented at best a time of great expansion for the field in Europe and also for EDEN. She remained a most beloved and respected member of our professional community and a true symbol of EDEN. For me personally, Ingeborg represented from the first moment we've met a most kind and reliable friend who helped me and my University in a very important moment of our history. It was under Ingeborg's presidency that EDEN took the decision to organise an event in Lisbon – this was our first conference in Portugal. More recently, during my time as President, she has also been a wonderful advisor.

Ingeborg's account takes us on an exciting journey to the days of her presidency and beyond. In her very personal open style she highlights the fundamental mission of our Association - to foster collaboration, and also the importance of combining it with the human dimension of our academic and professional community. In fact, it was Ingeborg who first described the EDEN community as a family. This metaphor is still valid today.

I hope you'll enjoy this excellent post by my dear friend, Ingeborg.

António

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My first knowledge of EDEN was received from Erling Ljosa, my former colleague, who told me about the Budapest Platform and the establishment of EDEN. Exciting times. I was at the time director of the Norwegian Association for Distance Education (NADE). In 1993 I was invited to chair the Program Committee of EDEN's Annual Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, and during the preparation I had my first visit to Budapest to a board meeting in EDEN. When I later was co-opted as a board member and later on elected President of EDEN, the first and only female president, I had the chance to visit this beautiful city many times. This year I am excited to celebrate EDEN's 25th anniversary in the same city and am proud to be a member of the Celebration Committee.

To me EDEN is a community for collaboration, both professionally and personally. The EDEN conferences have always been important events for professional development, exchange of experiences, sharing of knowledge. New and challenging ideas have always been searched for in the plenary sessions, parallel sessions and workshops. In planning the conferences EDEN has always wanted to offer a variety of opportunities so both experts and practitioners could find areas for professional development. The atmosphere has always been friendly, open and welcoming and made us feel like a family. The receptions, conference dinners and "book and wine events" have contributed to the good atmosphere. The conferences have always been of high quality, warm and fun.

The professionalism of EDEN has been evident also through the biannual Research Workshops, the journal EURODL and the Open Classroom Initiative. In my time as President we introduced the

EDEN Fellow scheme to acknowledge and stimulate professional development and recognition.

The main focus of EDEN has always been its members and what serves them best which has attracted members not only from Europe but from all over the world. Strategic partnerships have been established between EDEN and other regional organizations.

EDEN has been heavily involved in EU-projects, never as the leading partner but as a facilitator for its members and involved in dissemination, evaluation and research. The expertise in the Secretariat is very high. With so many organizations in Europe competing for the same project funds, we tried in my time to establish a round table of heads of some of the major organizations involved in e-learning. It was called "The Liaison Committee". I am afraid it did not survive, but I still believe that EDEN is a collaborating body in the field of e-learning influencing authorities both within the EU and nationally.

The development of EDEN has been a solid one, never giving up the quest for quality and good membership services and at the front of the development within our field. This is most of all thanks to good leadership from the EC and the excellent secretariat in Budapest led by Andras and Anna and now Ildiko. Never change a winning team.



Ingeborg Boe is a former Executive Director of the Norwegian Association for Distance and Flexible Education (NADE), which she led for 15 years, and a former President of EDEN (2003-07).

She is chair of the ICDE Election Committee and until 2014 was a member of the Board of Directors of the European Foundation for Quality in E-learning (EFQUEL).

Ingeborg has an arts degree from the University of Oslo, Norway. Throughout her professional life she has worked within the field of open and distance education in a variety of positions. She started her career as editor at NKS, one of the largest distance education institutions in Norway, and now runs her own consultancy firm.

She has been member of boards of directors of institutions for adult and distance education and is member of several national and international committees. She has been also a member of the international editorial board of the journal LLine, Lifelong learning in Europe.

Ingeborg was a member of the EDEN Executive Committee for two terms (1999-2007) and is an EDEN Senior Fellow.

Post-Millennium EDEN Through the Eyes of a President

Erwin Wagner - June 10, 2016

We complete today the special series of guest blog posts by former EDEN Presidents on EDEN's 25 years of service to the open, distance and eLearning community. For the conclusion of this memorable cycle of reflections, I have the privilege and the pleasure of sharing with you the contribution of our former President Erwin Wagner. He was the leader of our Association from 2000 to 2003.

Erwin was the President who drove EDEN into the new Millennium and celebrated the Association's first decade (1991-2001). This symbolic milestone is not just a happy coincidence, but a good metaphor for his Presidency's legacy. To borrow the words of my dear friend Ulrich Bernath, the chief editor of EURODL, Erwin made a substantial contribution to the consolidation of EDEN as the leading European association in our field. It was under his vision and leadership that the Association adopted his current name: European Distance and E-Learning Network, instead of the original European Distance Education Network. This was the result of a bold and expertly organised effort of modernisation, which included the refreshing of the brand and raising its profile. He was also responsible for strengthening the Association by strongly emphasising the necessity of professional and academic development.

Although I didn't experience those exciting days in EDEN, I can relate to the enduring legacy of Erwin's Presidency. My personal view about Erwin is that of a kind and generous colleague whom I've learned to deeply respect and appreciate.

In this final post of the series, Erwin looks at EDEN from a very interesting and original perspective in which he shares a very insightful analysis on how EDEN has evolved since the start of the Millenium. Erwin highlights factors of major importance in our Association's more recent transformation, namely, EDEN's new global leading role. He finally claims that EDEN is already part of the history of our field. This is quite true indeed and we're very proud to carry this great legacy which resulted also from the work of such visionary leaders as my good friend and past president Erwin Wagner.

I wish you'll enjoy reading as much as I did this delightful post by Erwin.

António

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To be frank: Some years passed since I served EDEN as a president. So what should/could I contribute to this vivid professional community? Clearly I do not want to be sentimental only. Still I am proud that EDEN nowadays is active as the professional body in Europe and beyond. EDEN now seems to act on a global scheme all the time. When I was serving, EDEN was just on its way to enter "new continents", was invited to present itself at American and Chinese conferences. EDEN made itself a kind of hub to support the professional development of people as well as organizations. But it was not only in geographical terms that the network extended its scope. It was in theoretical, methodological and professional terms too. Coming from "old" distance education it made itself open for (at that time) new media, new networks, new issues, new approaches, new topics and frameworks and - doing this - became a professional home for so many young people as well as for newly coming organizations in the field as well.

Now EDEN is celebrating its 25th anniversary. What a success, what a story, what a push in the development of professionalism in our field! Only 15 years ago we included our series of research workshops - thus also attracting the research community. So many good presentations, good

discussions and good papers became part of EDEN's 25 years. How do we measure the benefit of all these contributions to the development in the field and discipline? As I get to know the voice of EDEN is heard more often in the political field. We always were eager to achieve this, of course. But at the end it is a question of a "good fit". If you, as a professional organization, are part of proper projects (and EDEN often was and is), track the proper questions (and EDEN very often was not running behind but setting the pace) and political bodies do need and want some support or consultation this may suit. I am glad to hear that this has evolved as well.

So you may see: I am still regarding myself as being part of the community – even as I do not even know many EDEN members personally any more. This is part of history. More so: This is history. And EDEN played and plays an important role in these social, scientific, cultural and political games. So EDEN already belongs and will further belong to the history of "distance education" (which still exists) and eLearning especially (which now is spreading all over the world). It is and will be worth to collaborate with EDEN for so many people and institutions, no doubt. I am not sure whether there will be a 50th anniversary and whether I personally will be witnessing that. This doesn't matter: It was and is a gift to have been serving EDEN for some time and to continue following the new ideas, questions, members and conferences. Thank you!



Professor Dr. Erwin Wagner is an Honorary Professor at the Department of Social and Organisational Education and the Director of the Center for Lifelong Learning (cl³) at the University of Hildesheim in Germany. He is also a former President of EDEN (2000-2003).

With a background in mathematics, physics and educational sciences, he lead over 20 R&D projects. His work has focused on the development of key skills in flexible teaching-learning settings, lifelong learning, e-learning, organisation and education.

Erwin was a member of the EDEN Executive Committee for two terms (1995-2003) and is an EDEN Senior Fellow.

EDEN is Different

András Szűcs - June 13, 2016

This is the week of the EDEN16, the largest and probably the best academic and professional conference in Europe in the field of open, distance and eLearning. Year after year since 1992, the community is gathering in June for the EDEN Annual Conference. After the first one in Krakow, 20 other major European cities have hosted the conference at its 25 occasions so far. No less than ten thousand delegates had attended the different editions and shared the EDEN Conference experience. Looking back and forward to the history of such major annual event, what did actually strike us the most? What have we learned? What can we expect in the future? What surprises has EDEN prepared for the Budapest conference?

To inspire you on your reflection about this questions, I've invited today my good friend Andras Szucs, Secretary General of EDEN, to share with you his insights and personal recollections of the many editions of the EDEN conference. Naturally, to reflect on the 25 various EDEN conferences is also the sharing of a personal account about the experience of belonging to the EDEN community and also to analyse the evolution of the Association throughout these 25 years of service. Andras has kindly accepted that challenge too.

The connection of Andras to EDEN is deep and enduring. He has been the Association's Secretary General since 1997, accumulating in the process a truly amazing experience, almost without parallel, that has been a tremendously valuable asset for our organisation. The continuity of EDEN throughout these decades is in many ways a result of the solid organisational development work carried out by the Association's Secretariat under the responsibility of Andras and also his capability to advise wisely the Presidents and the Executive Committee. During my term, I had the opportunity to fully benefit from this great advantage as a leader.

In his most interesting post, Andras looks into the history of EDEN and shares a significant episode of the early days. His conclusion, that EDEN has become a pillar for the modernisation of education, is very appropriate. It should be said though that Andras was a major contributor to that reality we're so proud of.

I hope to see you soon in Budapest, at the EDEN16. Come and join us for the celebrations of the Association's Silver Jubilee.

António

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Whilst being away on missions often around Europe on behalf of EDEN, it has always been heart-warming to experience the awareness about our Association, the activities and events and a general positive feeling around them. There are several similar organisations in our field but EDEN has become, to a certain extent, different, carrying distinguishing characteristics and attractive sides to inspire and involve the interested stakeholders and professionals.

When we say that EDEN is "a smart network for the community of experts – and a professional community for smart learning", this is not just a slogan but also a mission statement. What does EDEN offer to its members? What services do we provide? How do we attract the knowledgeable people to join our community as members like more sustained affiliation, or as conference delegates for special, highlighted occasions, maybe partners in research, development, networking projects and as partners in a well identified activity?

One of the keys has probably been the attention paid to organisation building in my view. We experience continuously that the great people, serving as Directors of EDEN in the Executive Committee and the colleagues working in the Secretariat team, have always been passionate about establishing more than a smart machinery for international learning innovation.

This passion works when we are building up the strategic relations of the Association, leading to EDEN becoming really a central player on the European (and increasingly, global) scene of education, a catalyst and promoter of important sensible links amongst academics and professionals. Besides the hard work, it is a joy and intellectual excitement to recognise the momentum and diversity of the content of the conferences, where hundreds of leading experts from dozens of countries from all around the world find a platform to meet each other and present and exchange their valuable views and scholarly resources.

The EDEN portal on the web – the relaunch and renewal of which will be announced and presented in Budapest at the Anniversary Conference – is a very rich and, for everyone, open resource of structured professional information in our field.

The ever-improving performance of IT devices and the development of networking infrastructure have transformed the information society –generally outside institutional settings and often along unexpected pathways. This has led to the rapid spread of cutting-edge technologies, resulting in a spectacular increase in demand for them and in their use. Reliable information and guidance is badly needed for the countless groups of teachers, developers and instructors to identify, if not the best, at least correct solutions in the jungle of tools and concepts. The knowledge in our field (as well) is growing exponentially but being a new inter-sectoral discipline, the consolidated, structured, verified understanding and expertise is rare. This is what the EDEN platform and organisational activities aim to improve.

The changing notion of access, accompanied by the increasing volume and improving quality of digital content, and the radically transforming habits and expectations of users have generated new interpretations concerning several related concepts and have repositioned the social impact of ICTs in learning as well, leading our community towards new tasks and challenges.

Professional associations should create good platforms and help effective networking between members and partners from outside the network, to be opening doors to access organisational resources. This hopefully also leads to a quality gain - challenging each other in the network communities. We should care for relevant and useful information and knowledge in order to serve its members and the community outside, highlighting and supporting research activities.

We have reached the critical mass to strive for leadership, to be able to act and reach impact on large scale. EDEN has achieved the high profile attitude that deserves to be followed.

The 25th Anniversary of EDEN is a great occasion, also a challenge – whether we can say something new, a message relevant to the jubilee, appreciating the achievements of the past, suggesting a content meanwhile for the future, to find a balance between celebration, forecast and positioning our potential role in the amazingly rapidly changing environment, in the atmosphere of uncertainty and hope.

When we look at the list of prominent personalities joining us in Budapest, I think we can be delighted and touched. Most of those who left their fingerprints on the substantial developments of open, distance and e-learning in the last decades, will be present at our Anniversary Conference.

I am proud of having enjoyed, for almost twenty years, the trust of our Executive Committee to work in the EDEN management. I remember well when in June 1992 in Krakow, after the closing of the first EDEN conference we were sitting in the magnificent but then already empty Ceremony Hall of the University of Mining with Tamas Lajos, Sir John Daniel and Erling Ljosa (I was just a kind of assistant to Professor Lajos at the time). The sun was going down, just some last beams reached the hundreds years old paintings on the wall of the antique room through the slots of the heavy curtains. Just 60 people were attending this first conference. Europe was in the middle of huge political, economic and social transformations. How to direct further the just launched European association for distance education? Shall EDEN take the perhaps easier way and focus just on Eastern-Europe?

There was an encouragement felt to go for the more ambitious solution and build a strong pan-European academic and professional association.

EDEN is now 25 years old, became a pillar for the modernisation of education and is looking ahead for new challenges.

Let's celebrate together!



Dr. András Szucs has been first Executive Director (from 1997 to 2000) and since 2000 is Secretary General of EDEN. He is also the Vice-President of the Lifelong Learning Platform (until recently called EUCIS LLL).

He graduated as bio-engineer in 1980. After ten years of university teaching at the Technical University of Budapest, from 1990 held international posts as Director of the EU TEMPUS Programme in Hungary (1990-95), Director of the EU Phare Central-Eastern European Distance Education Programme (1994-96), Director of the European Communication Strategy Programme of the Hungarian Government (1996).

From 2000 to 2015 he has been Director of the Centre for Learning Innovation and Adult Learning at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. In 1996-97, Secretary General, since 1998 President of the Supervisory Board of the Hungarian Association of Technology Parks. Delegated member in the European Economic and Social Committee (Consultative Committee of Industrial Change, CCMI) 2004-2010.

There Are No Limits to EDEN

Antonio Teixeira - June 21, 2016

Last week, at the 25th EDEN Annual General Meeting, I completed my term as President of the Association. The baton was passed to the new President Airina Volungeviciene, to whom I wish all the best in her new role.

At this significant moment, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the EDEN community for their support, engagement and contribution throughout these last three years. Similarly, I would like to thank the members of EDEN for the opportunity they gave me to serve, in this capacity, the largest and most dynamic European Association in our field.

My idea of leadership is a very personal one. Let me share it with you through a story that is special to me. Like most of you, I had idols in my youth. Looking back now, probably the one who made the biggest impression on me was the F1 champion Ayrton Senna (1960-1994). Senna was five years older than me and although we were not personally acquainted, our paths crossed several times. I first met him in 1978, when he was still a very young aspiring driver. The world kart championship was organised at the Estoril circuit and I attended the event with a bunch of school friends. Senna finished second and I remember that I became almost immediately a fan.

Three years later I was thrilled to discover that he had triumphed at the British F3 championship. The following year, Senna was introduced to F1. By May, at the Monaco Grand Prix, he drove superbly in the pouring rain. Starting at 13th in the grid he missed the deserved victory only because the officials called off the race. But, Ayrton didn't give up and continued impressing throughout the season. The following year I returned to the Estoril circuit thrilled to be able to attend the first race of the F1 season. In dreadful rain, Senna demonstrated his unique technique and talent, winning his first Gran Prix. A star was born.

Senna was arguably the best driver of all time. For me he certainly was. I still remember his most amazing races. However, what impressed me the most in Senna, was not just his natural ability or driving technique, he had a complex and very rich personality. Someone who had a deep understanding of his condition as a human being, as well as a professional driver. Someone who refused to compromise with the 'powers that be' and with injustice, and someone who didn't believe in luck or fate, but in the competence and commitment to elude the limits.

In Senna's own words: "On a given day, a given circumstance, you think you have a limit. And then you go for this limit. You touch this limit and you think 'Okay this is the limit.' As soon as you touch this limit, something happens and you suddenly can go a little bit further. With your mind power, your determination, your instinct, and the experience as well, you can fly very high." Moreover, Senna recognised that this possibility to push the limits further was the ultimate expression of a well organised, engaged and focused team work to which everyone's contribution was critically important. A detail can make the difference.



*Ayrton Senna driving at the European Gran Prix at the Donington Park Circuit, in 11 April, 1993.
Photo by Sutton Images/Corbis*

For me this sums up the idea of leadership. To lead an organisation such as EDEN is in many ways a constant search for the limits and a tireless collective effort to expand them, as Senna described it. I'm happy to realise that our Association's limits have been continuously pushed and that our field of research and practice expects of EDEN more and more in each passing year.



Delivering the Senior Fellow Award to Tony Bates, at the Sheldonian Theatre, in Oxford, during the opening ceremony of the EDENRW8. In the picture is also the Mayor of Oxford, Councillor Mohammed Abbasi (left) and the Deputy Lieutenant, Mr. Graham Upton (right). Photo by EDEN.

We're living through the most challenging and exciting times in Europe and in our own field. I believe EDEN is very well prepared to support our community in exploring the emerging opportunities. Most surely, the best of EDEN is yet to come.

I'm deeply thankful to all the many colleagues and organisations who helped me through this demanding but also rewarding experience of leading EDEN. A special word of appreciation

is dedicated to all my excellent colleagues in the EC, in particular the Vice-Presidents. Another very special recognition is due to the Secretary General Andras Szucs and the Deputy Secretary General Ildiko Mazar, as well as Anna Wagner, whom I once called the “guardian angel of the EDEN Presidents”. I’m very thankful also to the EDEN staff whose expertise, commitment and cooperation have been absolutely critical for our Association’s success.

This being my final post on the EDEN President’s Blog, I would like to thank all those who have made this experience possible. I would like to acknowledge the 23 most distinguished guest writers who contributed to make this a collective medium of EDEN’s governance and community.

Last, but not least, I wish to express my appreciation to Deborah Arnold, Ildiko Mazar, Eva Suba and Krisztina Tatrai who supported me brilliantly in setting up and managing the blog. Their contribution was simply great.

In the coming weeks, a renewed President’s Blog will be launched. Please stay tuned.

Thank you so much for following us. All the best!

António



Conference Dinner Speech - EDEN Annual Conference 2016, Budapest

Sir John Daniel – June 16, 2016

Can EDEN help Europe rise to its major challenge?

Remarks by Sir John Daniel, O.C

EDEN Colleagues; Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour to speak to you. Tonight we celebrate EDEN's Silver Jubilee and its remarkable contribution to the development of open, distance and online learning in Europe over a quarter of a century. EDEN stands for the European Distance Education Network. These 25 years have been times of great change for Europe, for Distance Education, and even for the notion of Network.

EDEN was created in 1991 because Central Europe was in the throes of major political changes. In the late 1980s Hungary had appeared to be the first country to anticipate the implications of those changes, so it is appropriate that we celebrate this anniversary in Budapest.

Hungary had realised that the politics and economics of Central and Eastern Europe were about to undergo radical change. Massive re-training and re-education programmes might be necessary, so Hungary sent a delegation around Western Europe to find out how best to deliver such programmes at scale. When it returned home the delegation reported that distance education was the solution and cited the UK Open University as a powerful example.

In 1990 I arrived from Canada to be vice-chancellor of the UKOU. Over the subsequent years first Hungary, represented here tonight by Tibor Dori of Eurocontact, and then four other Central European countries and Russia came to us at the UKOU to negotiate partnership agreements for offering our business courses in their local languages. It became a remarkable operation that reached tens of thousands of working people in those countries over the next decade and more. Some of those partnerships remain active today.

In the late 1980s some practitioners of ODL in Western Europe learned of Hungary's interest in distance learning through the UKOU. A group of them, who wanted to share good distance learning practice with their colleagues in Central Europe, met in this city and created a mechanism for collaboration called the Budapest Platform, which mutated into EDEN in 1991. It gives me special pleasure that Professor Tamas Lajos, who played an important role in bringing things together in those early days, is here with us.

I must recall too that EADTU, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, had been established in January 1987 by the principals of Europe's major distance teaching institutions. Today EADTU is comprised of 21 national members from 19 countries collectively providing distance education programmes to over 2,000,000 students. All members of EADTU are non-profit institutions.

The prior existence of EADTU helped EDEN to define its own purpose. Whereas the members of EADTU were institutions - and just a handful of them in those early days - EDEN planned to be a network of individuals.

It was clear that campus universities across Europe would start offering distance education programmes, so the need for professional development in ODL spread well beyond the open universities. Moreover, developments in distance education were not limited to the public sector. Indeed, the UK Open University's partners that I referred to earlier in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Russia and Slovakia were all private institutions.

EDEN did a remarkable job in helping hundreds of professionals in Central and Eastern Europe to acquire the skills to develop ODL programmes in a great variety of settings. Nearly all our EDEN conferences were held in those parts of the continent to keep travel costs low. Great idealism inspired those meetings. Even in the West distance learning was still struggling to acquire a reputation for quality and it felt good to have a pan-European vehicle for pressing our case, not least in Brussels.

Indeed, the European Commission had a very favourable view of EDEN, both because it united the whole of Europe and also because the EC realised, perhaps before some national governments, that new technology-based approaches to education and training would be needed. Putting together projects for the European Commission gave added vibrancy to the network that EDEN was becoming.

We were most fortunate to have some enormously able and dedicated individuals to build EDEN. I ask the forgiveness of other devoted and long-serving members if make special mention of two of them.

First, EDEN owes a great debt to Alan Tait. I worked with Alan to set up EDEN as a legal entity in the 1990s and he has remained deeply involved in EDEN's development ever since. Second, we have been extraordinarily lucky that Andras Szucs has served as our devoted Secretary-General since the very start. Please give them, and all the other EDEN veterans here tonight, a round of applause!

There are many other great EDEN supporters that I could mention, but let Alan and Andras stand as examples of the longevity of commitment that has been such an important element in securing the remarkable impact that EDEN has achieved.

So much for the history! Both EDEN and EADTU helped to advance distance education across Europe and I saw no conflict in being a member of the Executive Committees of both organisations during my time as vice-chancellor of the UKOU. And by a nice coincidence I am speaking at both the EDEN and EADTU conferences this year.

Times have changed greatly since 1991 so I should say something about that before I sit down and let you get on with your conversations.

I start with the easy part: distance education has been transformed. The 1980s were the heyday of multi-media open and distance learning, but with the 1990s came the Internet revolution. When I joined the UKOU in 1990 only a handful of our students were online, in courses that included what we called 'computer conferencing'. By the time I left the UKOU in 2001 we had over 150,000 students online.

The 2000s saw the emergence of Open Educational Resources and in this decade we are seeing the explosion of social media. I'm just completing my 12th MOOC as a student with the FutureLearn consortium. This one was from Australia, about Mindfulness, and my earlier MOOCs came from

four other countries. FutureLearn courses combine open access, excellent materials and social media in a highly engaging way.

FutureLearn would have been unimaginable when we created EDEN back in 1991. But I'm sure that EDEN has greatly helped teachers and professionals across Europe both to adapt to the technological revolution in ODL and also to seize the opportunities that it presents for exciting new approaches.

I said that the evolution of distance education was the easy part. Europe has changed too and that also invites comment. We are now a long way from the idealism and enthusiasm that accompanied the reunification of Europe after the Berlin Wall was knocked down.

Hindsight gives us 20/20 vision. More recent developments have shown that, despite all the good intentions, the structures of the uniting Europe hid serious weaknesses. I mention only two.

First, creating a common currency without greater harmonisation of financial and fiscal policy was a mistake - and the Euro has suffered from it. Second, implementing the Schengen Treaty without adequate attention to securing the external borders of the Treaty area has made the current influx of migrants more difficult to cope with. But let's remember that the migrant crisis would have been a huge challenge no matter what border controls had been in place.

EDEN and ODL cannot do much about the Euro and border security, but I do believe that ODL must be part of Europe's response to the needs of the migrants themselves. The ideals that inspired the expansion and modernisation of ODL nearly fifty years ago, to be open to people, open to places, open to methods, and open to ideas, are as important as they ever were.

I live in Canada, which is now almost the only country in the Western World where 'immigrant' is still a good word. That's because all Canadian citizens were once immigrants. Of the 12 members of my immediate family in Canada only four were born there. The other eight were born in six countries.

So you may discount what I shall say as being out of touch with the European reality. But let me say it anyway by making three points. First, world history is the account of human migration around the planet, sometimes resisted, but usually successfully absorbed in due course. It is particularly sad and ironic that Hungary is taking a hard-line stance in the migrant crisis. Hungarians must have short memories. After the Soviets put down the Hungarian uprising in 1956 nearly 200,000 Hungarian refugees were resettled in other western nations in quite a short time.

Similarly, I grieve that the UK, the country of my birth, is tearing itself apart in a referendum debate that has acquired some nasty xenophobic and anti-immigrant overtones. I voted in this referendum before leaving Canada and I shall watch the results next week at my brother's home in England. It was only after I had invited myself to stay with him that I learned that he and his wife, like many UK couples, are on opposite sides of the Brexit issue. I shall keep my mouth shut and pray that Britain votes to remain in the EU. I cannot imagine that a country with such a remarkable international history will decide to turn its back on the world.

Let's also hope that the results are not the cliffhanger that we experienced in the second referendum on Quebec sovereignty in 1995. I was staying with friends in Montreal that day and we put a bottle of scotch in the middle of the kitchen table vowing not to open it until the 'No' vote won. It was a long evening and only after midnight did we celebrate a victory for Canadian unity by a margin of only 0.5%. Nevertheless, that narrow result has buried the issue for a generation and I trust that the same will be true if the UK decides to remain in the EU.

My second point is that the best predictors of how quickly migrants will integrate into their new societies are their levels of education and how fast they learn the local language. It was not by remaining in unilingual ghettos that Britain's 10,000 Muslim millionaires rose to success. Moreover, Arthur Koestler, who was born in Budapest in 1905, went on to become one of the most stylish writers of the English language in his books such as *The Act of Creation* and *The Ghost in the Machine*. He migrated to England in 1941 and began his life there in prison.

Third, ODL and technology-based teaching can play a vital role in furthering the education of migrants and improving their language skills. Here let me pay tribute to another distinguished Hungarian, Peter Gonda, who helped to launch UNESCO's work in educational technology several decades ago with Herbert Marchl. Educational technology and ODL can be powerful tools in bringing our migrants into the mainstream of the societies they have joined. Through EDEN's pan-European network and its strong relationships with distance learning institutions and networks in other continents it can bring very powerful resources and techniques to bear on the challenges ahead.

Please take up those challenges. After 25 years EDEN's work to build a better Europe is needed more than ever. I wish you well.



25 Years of EDEN

A special collection of the
President's blog anniversary posts



EUROPEAN DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING NETWORK