

# Welcome address

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The global economic and financial crisis evokes negative impacts on Government organization, while simultaneously generating positive momentum in terms of progress towards an overall reorganization based on the innovation of processes and products. When analyzing the educational system as a part of the economy of a country, particularly higher education as an indication of the future for each and every nation, it is now clear that the economic resources of national governments are no longer capable of bearing the costs of the actual educational system. The current framework, characterized by the effects of the economic and financial crisis on the individual national structures, highlights the need for the reform of the educational system, beginning with the public education reforms that have characterized modern and contemporary history. In essence, in times of strong economic growth, this trend of demand has led to a strong commitment of the State. The spread of well-being and the related phenomenon of social mobility, has allowed for the crossing of class boundaries: a qualitative change of professional status that is now only possible with the attainment of an education.

During the Sixties, Universities everywhere became available to the masses guaranteeing the possibility to acquire a professional status, providing access to the highest social ranks and income groups. Therefore, in a short time, the harmonic composition of the three traditional functions of the Medieval University System: scientific research, training of the mind, and specialized professional preparation, are no longer valid for providing a specialized professional preparation. Simultaneously, as the educational system became increasingly more dependent on public funding, leaders in academia began to claim for a complete autonomy of expenditure and cognitive programming reduced State control. In this context, the technological revolution impacted the cultural structures of nations, namely the regulations, procedures, methods and professional functions, generating an enormous transformation of the internal structures and relationships of market economies. This rapid historical transition called for necessary readjustments and profound shifts, starting with the change of professional statuses, in other words, what constitutes the social organization of labor and the hierarchy of qualifications, as well as the related income. This explains the strong connection between hierarchies of power and wealth and State educational systems.

As a result the following consequences have arisen:

- Increased importance of central political authorities in the regulatory processes relating to the public educational system
- Regulatory restriction, procedural and administrative complications
- Social implications of access to academic courses
- Fragmentation of educational offering and disorientation of users (students)
- Fragmentation of teaching activities
- Risk of downgrading educational processes
- Progressive lack of available resources
- Uncertainty of placement
- Progressive corporatization of educational institutions

It seems clear that the sudden transition from the “Humboldtian” to the “mass” university model has not been a viable solution for adapting the system to the economic and societal changes. The unsustainable growth of demand for State resources by institutions has progressively worsened the situation and also significantly reduced the quality of education. The advent of a new economic and technological era combined with the globalization process and the current global financial crisis, has contributed to the degeneration of the abovementioned process. In this complex situation, it is urgent to recognize the centrality of higher education within the national agenda, emphasizing its impact on the individual national economies.

Ultimately, the advancement of the global economy and long-term structural relations between nations has proven essential to the reform of educational systems as a determining factor for the growth of a population. The current obsolescence of the higher education system limits the expression of cultural creativity that leads to national prosperity, resulting in inefficient services and research methods. It is necessary to consider the fact that the education system, only for university training, costs each of the major OECD countries, on average, over 1% of the GDP. In this setting of crisis, these resources are likely to be further reduced, becoming insufficient for the achievement of the desired results in terms of efficiency.

In this perspective, one should question the integration of traditional teaching methods with those supported by technology, leading to a considerable reduction in costs in relation to the enlargement of the range of students, while always promising a specialized professional training. In this context, it is essential to survey the solutions that each nation must develop for adaptation to the requirements set forth by such a monumental transition. As a consequence, the recognition of the role of digital technologies in providing the necessary skills for professional success and in assuring cost-effective equal learning opportunities to the vast audience, should be emphasized.