

GUIDE towards the future

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For the period 2014-2015, GUIDE Association will intensify its activities of organizing international events, which will serve both as a bridge between the hosting geographical area and the rest of the world, and also as an international platform for the analysis and discussion of the hottest trends in the field of online and distance education. In doing so, the Association aims at meeting the needs of its members in regions in which such conferences are not common, thus fostering new opportunities for development and knowledge sharing.

The next edition of the International GUIDE Conference will be held at the Universidad Panamericana (UPANA) of Guatemala City on April 10-11, 2014. It will explore cultural identity in the midst of global modernization and the role of distance education in the development of original solutions based on the specific characteristics of each country.

Over the past two centuries, modernity has been conceived as a process of continuous innovation, which has provided significant economic, social, political and cultural changes. Despite the differences that have characterized this process in various knowledge fields, its most direct consequence has been cultural homogenization. Moreover, education systems have had to contend with globalization and international competitiveness, all the while trying to preserve their own cultural identity. However, the combination of innovative technologies and traditional models has stimulated the ability to develop original answers based on each country's context and cultural heritage.

In the field of higher education, the use of ICT and new educational models and tools have eased the integration of specialized knowledge within the specific cultural context of a country, contributing to the definition of fundamental values for recovering a collective, individual identity, together with global development.

In addition to analyzing different solutions developed by each country as a result of the combinations of modernization and technological innovation, the Conference will be a platform for collaboration between Central and South American institutions, as well as a forum for professionals and experts from around the world to promote the exchange of knowledge, expertise and best practices.

The Conference will confront the following issues: distance education as a strategy for development; the role of distance education in

both the global and the local workplace; quality assurance as a key to accessing the international educational system; technological and pedagogic innovation and its social implications; the vices and virtues of the application of OERs and MOOCs in formal education. The following autumn, the Universidade Tiradentes (UNIT) will host the VIII International GUIDE Conference in Aracaju, northeastern Brazil, on November 27-29, 2014. One of the main themes to be highlighted will be the management of quality assurance in massive online educational projects. Quality will also be analyzed as part of the adaptive learning process, in order to understand how to ensure the best results when adjusting the teaching process to each student.

The use of innovation and new technologies applied to education, such as augmented reality, social networks and virtual labs, will be featured prominently in the conference. Experts and practitioners will reflect upon the current usage and customization possibilities of MOOCs and OERs, two recent but highly influential aspects of higher education.

Lastly, social issues will be addressed such as the responsibility of universities to the more underprivileged sectors, along with the cultural impact of the use of learning tools designed abroad, especially in more traditional cultures.

GUIDE Association will organize two more international conferences in 2015: "Quality Certification for Online Teaching and Learning", to be held in March 2015 in Amman, Jordan, and "Leadership of eLearning in Experiential Learning: Simulations, Laboratories and Games in Schools, Universities and the Workplace", November 2015 in Vienna, Austria. "Digital Universities. International Best Practices and Applications" is the name of the new journal created by GUIDE Association, as approved by its Board of Directors and Scientific Committee. The scope of the publication is to provide a platform for the diffusion of case studies and applied researches. As suggested by members of the Scientific Committee, there is a lot of practice but not enough research on recent trends of education such as MOOCs and OERs. "Digital Universities" aims at bridging this gap, and providing a new space for the exchange of knowledge among international experts and practitioners.