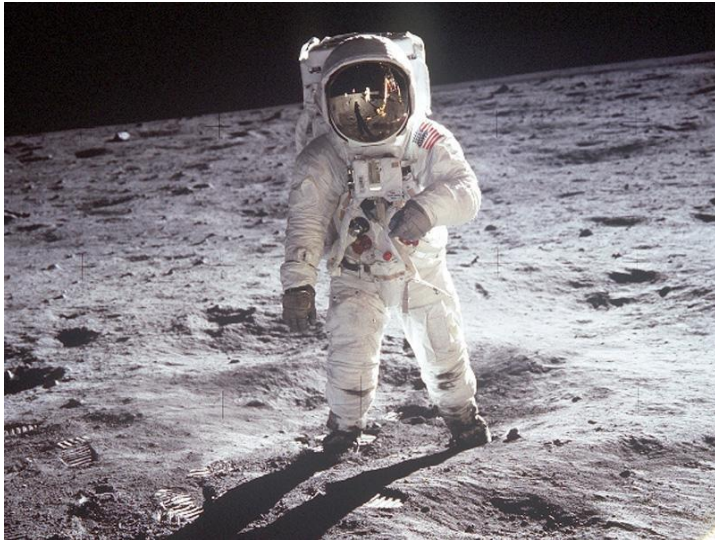




# OPEN UNIVERSITIES: THE NEXT PHASE OF INNOVATION?

Alan Tait, Emeritus Professor of Distance Education and Development, Open University UK

# 1969: A GREAT YEAR



Apollo 11: first man  
on moon



Open to people, places ,  
methods and ideas

# FIRST MOVER ADVANTAGE FROM 1970'S: INNOVATION

Vision and mission

Innovation in learning and teaching

Innovation in technologies for teaching

Innovation in educational logistics

Scale

Embedded innovation



# EROSION OF FIRST MOVER ADVANTAGE



Established universities use blended learning

New entrants with online programmes

Innovation with MOOCs

Digital revolution has brought technology on to all campuses

Shared vision for mass Higher Education systems

# OPEN UNIVERSITIES TODAY

More than 60, in 40 or more countries

4.4m learners in 27 Commonwealth open universities

~8m worldwide

Asia has most, then Europe

Some important exceptions: USA, Russia, Australia, France

Mega universities: More than 100,000 students

# COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

14 Vice-chancellors, Rectors or Presidents

Structure:

Context

Strategic directions

Innovation and technology

# COMPETITION AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Increased flexibility in part-time programmes from other universities

New entrants, especially online universities

Reputation and brand challenges

Low levels of student completions and qualification





# MAJOR STRENGTH FOR SOME...

1970's continued for minority!

Assured position by Government as national distance university

Other universities not interested in part-time, adult students or in online and distance learning

But will this last?





# MANAGING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Transition from second generation Distance Education models into digital age

Learning Analytics: more promise than achievement

MOOCs: minority have produced MOOCs

OER's: only one OU has major commitment to use of OER in course production

Some OU's closing Regional Centres

Resistance to change by academic staff a problem in minority of OU's

# OTHER REFORMS AND INNOVATIONS

Restraint on course fee increase

More flexible course start times

Wider range of local centres

Assessment of prior learning

Programmes for refugees

Links to employers

More flexible advisors and e-tutors

Personalised learning

Careers guidance

Drop-out as priority mentioned by one OU only

# OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN COMMONWEALTH



27 OU's in Commonwealth

4.46m students

2.500 programmes

18.300 courses

Increased enrolments and programmes

'reaching the unreached'

'low output rates suggest many OU's struggle with attrition'

'lack of conscious efforts to relate missions to outcomes'

# THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## SDG4

By 2030 ‘ensure **equal access for women and men** to affordable and **quality** technical, vocational And tertiary education, including university’

UNESCO 2016, Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4

Completing the move to mass higher education



# ARE OPEN UNIVERSITIES CORE VEHICLES FOR EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

From 260m to 400m HE places in next 15 years

Priority areas of growth China, India, Africa and Latin America

SDG plan cannot be met by campus building alone





# INNOVATION SNAPSHOT: OPEN UNIVERSITIES

To showcase the innovation taking place at the world's Open Universities, Contact North | Contact Nord is developing and hosting an innovation snapshot on [teachonline.ca](http://teachonline.ca), a kind of “wikipedia” for innovation. The snapshot seeks to capture what is happening in Open Universities so all of us engaged in online and distance education have direct and immediate access to breakthrough innovations we can adopt, adapt and apply in our own institution (the three “As” of sharing innovations). We divide the snapshot in seven categories of innovation to highlight the focus of the process or initiative: course design, course delivery, assessment/credentialing/credit recognition, program evaluation, faculty development, organizational design and online learner support.



# PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE: INNOVATION

Innovation: to reclaim status of the most innovative universities

Leadership development at international level

Leadership at all levels

Major Professional development themes:

- \* Environment scanning
- \* Defining, developing and defending Quality
- \* Embedding ICT and digital potential on a whole-institution basis
- \* Developing a curriculum for Sustainability



# SWOT FOR OPEN UNIVERSITIES 2017

<b>Strengths</b>  <b>Commitment to openness, flexibility and access</b>  <b>Gender friendly recruitment</b>  <b>Commitment to Technology Enhanced Learning and scale</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>  <b>SDG commitment to major expansion of Higher Ed</b>  <b>Re-establish Quality concept in mass HE systems</b>  <b>Pioneer curriculum for sustainability</b>
<b>Weaknesses</b>  <b>Completion and graduation rates</b>  <b>Reputation and brand</b>  <b>Innovation capacity: slow, with staff resistance</b>	<b>Threats</b>  <b>Government disenchantment with OU model</b>  <b>Other university interest in digital learning e.g. MOOCs</b>  <b>New blended offers for part-time from established universities</b>  <b>New online universities</b>  <b>Foreign entrants and open HE markets</b>