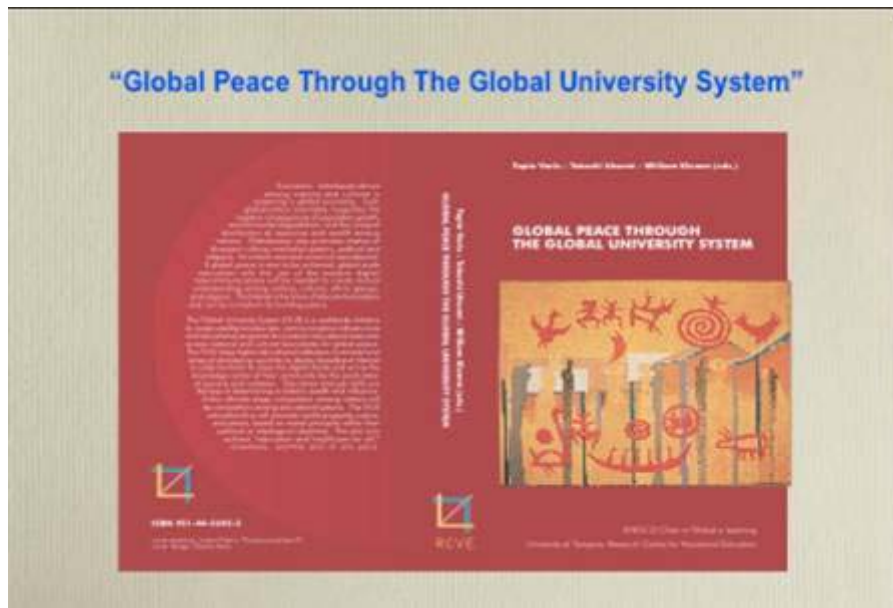


Global Peace through the Global University System

Edited by Tapio Varis, Takeshi Utsumi, William Klemm
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INTRODUCTION

Utopia is defined in Encarta Dictionary as "an ideal and perfect place or state, where everyone lives in harmony and everything is for the best." Developments all around the world especially in the last decade have supported the idea that global peace is nothing but just a utopian dream. However, for centuries a group of believers have always been in search of global peace via different means. This book, titled as "Global Peace through the Global University System", can be considered as one of the artifacts of this search.

Actually this book is a collection of papers presented in working conference on the Global University System (GUS) hosted by the University of Tampere, Finland in 1999. The main goal of the conference was bringing international experts to share their philosophy, past and present experiences about the GUS. The conference was held by the University of Tampere because UNESCO has an agreement with the University to establish the UNESCO Chair in Global e-Learning. The objectives of the Chair were set as:

- promotion of an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the field of global e-learning with applications to multiple domains and
- serving as a means of facilitating collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers and teaching staff of the University and other institutions in Finland and Europe and other regions in the world. The first editor of this book,

Tapio Varis, was appointed as the first UNESCO Chair in Global e-Learning and is still serving. He is also acting President of the Global University System (GUS).

The GUS is a worldwide initiative to create satellite/wireless telecommunications infrastructure and educational programs for access to educational resources across national and cultural boundaries for global peace. The GUS, in accordance with UNESCO's missions, aims to help higher education providers in remote/rural areas of developing countries build broadband internet in order to act as knowledge centers of their communities for the eradication of poverty and isolation. The GUS is expected to close the digital divide in the targeted communities. Its terminal objective is to achieve "education and healthcare for all" at anywhere and anytime.

The book, Global Peace through the Global University System, simply draws a background for the Chair's activities concerning the GUS and informs the reader about how a virtual multi-language multi-cultural university system may help establishing global peace.

Global Peace through the Global University System is primarily focus on design and management of a virtual university system that brings experts and learners from different cultures and countries to collaborate. Therefore, it mainly targets policy makers and open and distance learning providers. It also provides a basic and rich introduction to issues, ideas, practical applications, strategies, theories and concerns associated with multi cultural learning and teaching, virtual learning environments. That is why, practitioners, researchers, administrators, designers, teachers and learners as well as anyone who is interested in these topics might find this resource very helpful to start thinking of impact and role of virtual university systems on establishing global peace through intercultural collaborations.

CONTENTS AND ORGANIZATION

Global Peace through the Global University System was published by the Research Centre for Vocational Education (RCVE) of the University of Tampere. It was edited by 3 experts. As I have mentioned above, Dr. Tapio Varis is the first editor who is also the UNESCO Chair in Global e-Learning and acting President of the Global University System (GUS). The second editor Dr. Takeshi Utsumi is the founder, President Emeritus and Vice President for Technology and Coordination of the GUS and is Chairman of GLObal System Anaysis and Simulation Association in the USA. Dr. William Klemm is a professor of neuroscience at Texas A&M University.

The papers are presented in four sections in the book. The first section consists of 9 manuscripts that are actually greetings of the high-level dignitaries (e.g. former president of Finland, a member of European commission responsible for education and culture) and representatives of international organizations (e.g. Director-General of International Labour Office, the vice chancellor of the UK Open University). In these greetings, authors express their standings points on relationships between globalization, technology, peace, education and culture. The second section includes 6 manuscripts that concentrate on how to use of advance information and communication technologies to attain global peace and to meet the educational needs of multicultural world. The section starts with an article in which the editors of the book give details about the GUS (vision, mission, goals, organization, and so forth). 10 manuscripts included the third section offer both theoretical and practical information about how GUS kind of initiatives can be successful with a community development approach, how e-learning can be implemented effectively with narrow band Internet connections, and how broadband connection can be used to enhance e-learning. Some of the manuscripts in this section directly deal with healthcare. The last section's theme is global collaboration. There are 10 manuscripts that try to draw a theoretical background along with practical implementation examples about how to achieve global collaboration for reaching global peace.

STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS

One of the main contributions of the *Global Peace through the Global University System* is its intention to start discussions on some of current hot concepts (or topics) of education systems all around the world: global education, intercultural relations, collaboration, e-learning, healthcare for all and global peace. The book tries to draw a big picture about interactions between these concepts by using the GUS as an anchor. Papers included into the book provide both theoretical background and practical information about how to achieve global peace and global healthcare through global information technology based initiatives such as e-learning. Additionally, design of the book (colors) facilitates accessing papers easily and authors' biographical sketches help readers get a clear idea about the authors of the manuscripts.

On the other hand, *Global Peace through the Global University System* does not include enough number of manuscripts that gives prescriptive information about how to attain world peace via integration of information and communication technologies. The GUS is the only practical solution for this issue but despite the Gus there are several important issues unanswered such as how to provide instruction for different cultures, how to bring people (learners in emerging areas) into the system and how to find sustainable funding resources. Moreover, as Visser (2003) indicated, a great majority of the past experiences in international collaboration suffered from high bureaucracy. I could not find satisfied information about how to overcome bureaucracy. Furthermore, majority of the manuscripts are sort of a review of literature, opinion papers or description of implementations. There is not research based manuscripts.

CONCLUSION

Overall, for those who want a thorough and knowledgeable introduction about how to attain global peace through use of information and communication technologies in education, Varis and his colleagues' book, *Global Peace through the Global University System*, can be a good start. It does not only give theoretical background but also provides practical solutions such as the GUS. This book is a good starting point for majority of administrators. However, those who are more related to the research based information may not find this book very interesting.

REFERENCE

Visser, J. (2003). Distance Education in the Perspective of Global Issues and Concerns. In, Moore, M.G. & Anderson, W.G. (eds.), *Handbook of Distance Education* (793-810). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.