THE IMPORTANCE OF RISK MAPPING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: A CONTEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MEGA UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT
Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is the learning environment for digital natives who were born and grew up in digital landscape. As ODL is dependent on technology, it can't be deprived of the risks that lightning fast developing new technologies pose. Every new technology comes along with new risks that have to be managed within the scope of ODL environment. Risk mapping is a risk analysis tool that visualize the risks that can be found out during initial planning phase of risk management process. It is usually presented with a two-dimensional matrix that helps defining the risks. This study aim to show usefulness of risk mapping for ODL institutions, especially in mega universities.
Keywords: Open and Distance Learning, Risk Mapping,

INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is quickly turning into an acknowledged and key piece of the standard of educational frameworks in both developed and developing countries. Especially in developing countries, this growth trend was triggered by web-based technologies. And ODL provides numerous opportunities for developing countries to reach their educational objectives (Unesco: 2002). Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is the learning environment for digital natives who were born and grew up in digital landscape.

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Risk mapping

Risk mapping is a risk analysis tool that visualizes the risks that can be found out during initial planning phase of risk management process. It is usually presented with a two-dimensional matrix that helps defining the risks. It is simply a list that includes all risk related to each other. It helps you to identify the risks in terms of probability and level of effect.

Probability	Threats Risk Score = Probability x Impact					Opportunities High (RED) / Med (YEL) / Low (GRN)				
0.90 Very Likely	0.05	0.09	0.18	0.38	0.72	High	High	High	Med	Low
0.70 Likely	0.04	0.07	0.14	0.28	0.56	High	High	Med	Med	Low
0.50 Possible	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.12	0.40	High	High	Med	Low	Low
0.30 Unlikely	0.02	0.03	0.06	0.12	0.24	High	Med	Med	Low	Low
0.10 Very Unlikely	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.08	Med	Low	Low	Low	Low
	0.05	0.10	0.20	0.40	0.80	Very High	High	Med.	Low	Very Low
	Example Impact Definitions – May Be Tailored to Each Project Objective Impact on an Objective (e.g. Cost, Schedule, Scope, Quality)									

Figure 1: Sample Risk Mapping Graph

METHOD

An inductive methodology was adopted, comprising two discrete elements: documentary and conceptual analysis. According to Thomas (2006), the purposes for utilizing an inductive methodology are to consolidate information into a short outline design; build up clear connections between research objectives and findings. Furnet (2004) discusses that Conceptual analysis is a technique that treats ideas as classes of objects, events, properties, or relationships. The method includes absolutely characterizing the importance of a given idea by distinguishing and determining the conditions under which any element is grouped under the idea being referred to.

Importance of visualization

In today's global economy and society, if anyone is asked about present situation or future related issues regarding companies, countries and societies, you will be told that there is disturbance, uncertainty (Haksöz, 2016). That is why, overseeing and communicating risks has turned into a skill which is urgent for economy and society. When the cognitive and communicative nature of human beings is considered, Visualization has the absolute advantage in assessing and understanding the risks. Maybe, that explains why many forms of diagrams and mapping methods are in use of daily business life (Eppler & Aeschimann, 2009). As Hahn et al (2007) discusses that In their study, they have found the proof that when the risks are visualized, it is usually better at showing risks than simple text explanations. Accordingly, Rahl (2003) points out the need for risk reports that are simple and understandable. He thinks that these kind of reports can maximize value for beneficiary.

The primary advantage of visualization of risk is clarity (Eppler & Aeschimann, 2009). When it is "clear and simple", it can be fully understood by stake holders that share the risks (Cutter, 2008). During risk management process, risk visualization plays an important role not only for risk managers but also other stakeholders (Eppler & Aeschimann, 2009). Horwitz (2004) thinks that risk visualization can be "a key competent" for understanding the risks.

Importance of risk mapping at mega universities

A new type of university that is called mega university appeared 30 years ago. There are 57 mega universities in 25 countries (Berberoğlu & Berberoğlu, 2015) and the number seems likely to increase along with the demand in ODL environments. Mega universities are higher education institutions most of which are open universities that has more than 100,000 students (Rogers, 2009). Definition of mega university holds three criteria: Distance Learning, Higher Education and size (Daniel, 1996). Because of its size, it holds enormous educational, economic and logistical difficulties while serving a very large number of students (Latchem et. al, 2006). With its massive and complex structure, mega universities can be assumed as they are open to risks more than conventional higher educational institutions since they are dependent on technology that is developing with overwhelming speed. That speeds also change and shape the society along with educational trends. That is why, mega universities should take on the risk to survive in the age of uncertainty. In terms of sustainability and manageability, it is usually the best to manage risks in a simple way. From that point of view, risk mapping may be assumed as a convenient risk management tool for mega universities.

FINDINGS

When *Google Books NGram Viewer* is used to show the trend for the key words "risk mapping" and "mega universities" in the corpus books in English during 1960–2008, you get the Figure 2.

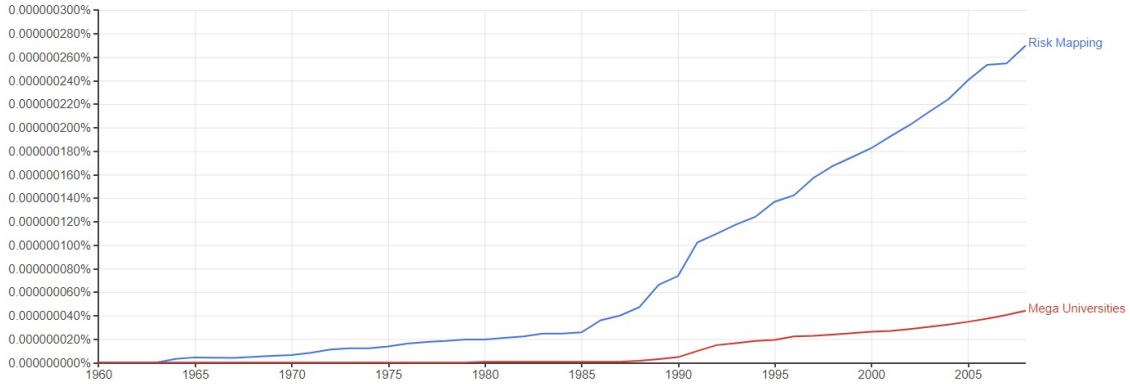

Figure 2 Google NGram Viewer results for "risk-complexity-uncertainty" in the *Corpus of English Books* (1960–2008).

It clearly shows that although the use of "Risk Mapping" and "Mega Universities" is increasing, the occurrence of "risk mapping" is increasing much faster, especially after the 1990s. Moreover, to our knowledge, there are no scientific studies to date that examine the visualization of risks at mega universities. These findings shows that there is not enough empirical data for risk management at mega universities

Quality assurance and risk management

Although quality assurance and risk management might seem like different study topics, they are highly interrelated because in an enterprise, how can we implement quality assurance procedures without considering proper risk management process? In a risk aware institution or enterprise, quality assurance is made sure by assessing probable risks while using proper tools that are usable by everyone. Hence, it can be said that risk mapping tool made available to be used by every department at a mega university is an asset in terms of quality assurance procedure and risk management process.

CONCLUSIONS

This study adopts an inductive approach to develop a framework summarizing perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration of risk mapping tool at mega universities. It tries to explain why visualization of risks is important at mega universities by using risk mapping assessment tool. After reviewing literature and framing a concept; it concludes that for sustainability and quality assurance issues, it might be crucial to take advantages of risk visualization.

As Daniel (1996) emphasizes the mega-universities are an important resource for the future so it is vital to strengthen them. After the revolution these institutes created within the scope of higher education, it is very important that mega universities sustain their presence in ODL environments. If they can't manage the risk in a simple way, it will be nonsense to talk about educational equity.

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