

European High Level Conference « Education in the Digital Era »

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The European Commission organizes a yearly meeting on Education (European Commission, 2014). Participation is on invitation only and EUNIS was invited for the first time. Most participants are representatives from National Ministries on Education and from various Education organizations. Very few came from Higher Education. However it is worthwhile to listen to such speakers, especially the political ones.

Mrs S. Gianini, Italian Minister of Education, gave the opening speech. She emphasized the importance of Education to pass our heritage as well as novelties to the youngest generation. Technology is changing the ways of learning and has an impact on our societies. It modifies the rights and duties of every European citizen. It transforms the creation and the dissemination of knowledge but human relationship must not be forgiven. Students as well as teachers need new competencies in all fields and not only computing. Classical ways of teaching will coexist with new models.

Mr Tibor Navracsics, the European Commissioner for Education, Youth and Sport emphasized the fact that Education and technology will determine our future. Education is the key factor to fight unemployment for young people and OpenUpEd (OpenUpEd, 2013) is a solution to answer to this challenge.

Mrs S. Costa, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education, went along the same direction but expressed her regret about the fact that the new commission does not mention the word culture in its title. Technology will help in building education and teachers must be trained at European level. This is an important mission that we care at EUNIS.

Lord D. Puttnam, chair of Atticus Education, gave the last talk of the introductory session. He emphasized mainly on the facts that the new generation is educated more with pictures than texts and that 14% of the students only believe that the school is preparing them well for their future life when 96% of the headmasters believe the opposite.

The remaining of the day was divided in four panels.

The first one was “Increasing the quality and relevance of learning “. B. Dixon, from the Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation, expressed very controversial views, explaining that kids were learning differently and that the organizations are outstripped. His regret was that one is more speaking of technology than pedagogy.

In the second one « Increasing the impact of educators » P. Sahlberg from Harvard expressed his concern about globalization and the declining status of teachers. G. Brown-Martin, from Learning without Frontiers, explained that technology is not disruptive and maintains the status quo for the social organization.

Panel 3 was devoted to “Addressing inequalities through better access and lower cost ».

Mrs C. Jeux, from MiriadaX, spoke of MOOCs and the difficulty to fight inequalities with a very high dropout rate. The business model does not yet exist but will come since MOOCs encounter a large success. MOOCs will be the cheapest means to educate large numbers of students. The other participants emphasized the interest of SPOCs and of co-construction of courses with students.

Panel 4 was of particular importance since it was a ministerial panel: “Impact on National Policy Agendas ». C. Meisch from Luxemburg spoke of the interest of MOOCs for foreigners to learn national languages, M. Seile, Latvian Minister for Education and Science complained that most teachers were unable to use technologies and that they should be included in the European mobility program. He made a strange declaration, saying that the business does not require most of the highest level diploma delivered by the universities and that diploma should be better adapted to the requirements of the industry. For those following me on tweeter, I sent a protest!

X. Prats-Moné, Director General for Education and Culture delivered the conclusion. Knowledge has changed and is not only the transfer of information. His main criticism is that university is still based on disciplines in a world based on cooperation and trans disciplinary. An Education system is based on its teachers and their expertise. They should be encouraged to be trained. Analytics will become of importance to guide students through their training. He concluded with a warning: “Education shall not be monetized!”

European Commission (2014) *Education in Digital Era*. Retrieved from [h\[p://openeducationeuropa.eu /en/edu-in-digital-era](http://openeducationeuropa.eu/en/edu-in-digital-era)

OpenUpEd (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.openuped.eu/>