



The European Summit on open and online learning and the modernization agenda for European higher education

The EADTU 25th Anniversary Summit is organized by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) with support of the European Commission. EADTU is an institutional network, consisting of Europe's open and distance/online universities and national associations of conventional universities organizing distance education.

EADTU member universities are recognized across the world as leaders in open and online education and in new forms of learning, e.g. through learner-centered education, learning provisions for guided independent learning, online and blended education, open education by for example the use of OERs and MOOCs.

As the use of online teaching and learning has increased in European universities, the valued pedagogies and methods of online learning in the open and distance sector have become increasingly relevant and significant to mainstream education supporting the need to open education for all, enhance the quality of the learning experience and achieve necessary scale effects. The general breakthrough of open and online education in the universities needs to be underpinned by these high quality pedagogies and by efficient organizational and business models.

Hereafter, the purpose and the agenda of the Summit are defined:

Purpose

- Taking account of current developments and directions in European higher education, demonstrate the contribution of open and online education to the European Commission's modernization agenda for higher education
- Highlight the development and the place of open and flexible education in national higher education systems and the role to be played by national policies
- Discuss an action programme to empower universities European-wide in their transition to open and online education
- Reflect on the (future) role of OERs and MOOCs movement in European higher education and report on the OpenupEd MOOC portal.
- Discuss the role of partnerships, supported by online teaching and learning, to enhance the quality and competitiveness of European higher education

Agenda (9.00h-13.30h)

9.00h-9.05h.

Welcome by Will Swann, President EADTU

9.05h-10.00h.

Strand 1: Developments in European open and flexible education. Implications for national and European policies.

The objective of this session is to show what European open and flexible education has achieved in the last decades and how, simultaneously, European higher education as a whole is about to adopt online learning models to meet new challenges of scale and quality in European higher education. It will be discussed what can be done at the national and European level to promote and support the modernisation agenda for higher education, capitalizing on experiences with student-centred, online education.

Chair and introductory proposition:

Alejandro Tiana Ferrer, Rector UNED, Spain

- David Matthewman, Chief Information Officer of the Open University (UK)

The achievements of the open and distance teaching universities and what is the role of open and flexible learning in higher education systems in the future?

- Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director General Education and Culture, *The European Commission's modernisation of higher education agenda, where we are*

Discussion

10.00h-11.00h

Strand 2: Where is European higher education going? Empowering European universities for 2020.

The objective of the session is to discuss future developments and challenges in European higher education towards 2020 and 2030. Does online education affect these developments and does it respond to the characteristics of future students and to new needs in society? How can first class European expertise and experience in learner-centred online education be transferred to the entire higher education system?

Chair and introductory proposition:

Will Swann, President of EADTU, *Empowering European universities for online and flexible education. Outline of an EADTU action plan.*

Panel viewpoints (one or two):

- Seamus Fox, Director, Oscail, DCU, Dublin, *Reflections on empowering universities for online and flexible education*

- Pere Fabra, former Vice-Rector for faculty and academic affairs at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), *The student experience through online learning*

Discussion

11.00-11.30h Coffee break

11.30-12.30h

Strand 3: Opening up education and the role of OERs and MOOCs

The objective of this session is to elaborate on what Open Education could offer to learners and societies in general, and more specifically the role of OERs and MOOCs in opening up education for all. Their uptake by European higher education will be discussed as well as how this will affect higher education in the future. The first experiences with the OpenupEd portal will be communicated.

Chair and short proposition:

Fred Mulder, UNESCO Chair OER, *OpenupED, the MOOCs portal for open higher education, first experiences and main issues concerning MOOCs in European higher education*

Panel viewpoints

Paulo Dias, Rector Universidade Aberta, Portugal, *First experiences with MOOCs in Portugal*
Prof. Yves Epelboin, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris, *Chargé de mission MOOC*

Discussion

12.30h-13.30h

Strand 4: Partnerships to strengthen the quality and competitiveness of European higher education

The objective of this section is to illustrate how online teaching and learning can support partnerships for collaborative curricula and mobility and how partnerships can lead to targeted, multi-stage provisions, which are easily accessible and flexible. Partnerships between universities can lead to complementary provisions, both for mainstream and non-mainstream students. Hence, each university can contribute in a balanced way to the EHEA.

Chair and short proposition:

Tim Gore, Director Global Networks and Communities, University of London, *Online and flexible education within university partnerships*

Panel viewpoints:

Danny Pieters, Vice-Rector, KU Leuven, *Innovative partnerships through online and distance teaching and learning : networked education and mobility*
Anja Oskamp, Rector Open Universiteit Nederland, *Academic partnerships: The European Virtual Seminar approach*

13.30h -14.00h

Conclusions

Xavier Prats Monné and Will Swann, *Further discussion and reflections on institutional, national and European policies for opening up education by online teaching and learning. The initial question about what can be done at the national and European level to promote and support the modernisation agenda for higher education will be retaken.*

ANNEX

Description of themes

Strand 1: Developments in European open and flexible education. Implications for national and European policies.

Theme: Achievements of the sector of open and flexible education and its relevance for the national policies and the modernisation agenda of the European Commission

In the last decades, the open and distance teaching sector paved the way for a systemic approach to open and flexible education in higher education systems of the future. Typical contributions are:

- *Instructional design for student-centred, largely online courses, by course teams, including learning designers and media experts. Quality assurance is done by reviewers and experts, before the course is taught.*
- *Tutoring and coaching students online by course staff, individually or in learning communities. Interactivity has always been a strong constituting element in European distance education (in study centres, now more on line), hence it is blended*
- *Assessment of students online, formative and summative*
- *Organisational and business models for part-time and non-mainstream students*
- *A large scale involvement in OERs, MOOCs and open media in general*
- *Partnerships are created for collaborative curricula and online/blended mobility*
- *Important R&D institutes for online teaching and learning (IET, KMI, Celstec, IN3, e-Learning Centre,...)*

The main achievement of the European open and flexible education model is the creation of large scale higher education provisions for massive, non-mainstream student numbers, nowadays based on learning-centred educational models on line. Students are followed up from start to degree delivery in a learning organisation, which supports them in making their study a success.

Simultaneously, in the entire European university sector, we witness an increase of student numbers (also pushed by the ET2020 benchmark). Conventional lectures in lecture halls foster only sub-optimal solutions for these massive student numbers. Hence, universities are looking for (combinations with) innovative learning formats online. This will change the nature of teaching and learning and touching the heart of higher education. Although in most universities interesting experiments have been set up, there is a need for a systemic approach to student-centred online learning as counterpart of the mere digitalisation of content. The models in the open and distance education sector can be inspiring in this respect.

In most European countries, national governments and the university sector are struggling to find the appropriate pedagogical, organisational and business models for open and flexible education, reaching out to new, non-mainstream groups, e.g. 25 plus students at work.

Finally, the need for flexible non-degree education (non-formal, informal) and knowledge circulation to business, not for profit organisations, the public sector and society at large will increase in the coming years. This concerns new forms of openness and flexibility, where universities play a privileged role as knowledge providers. These functions should be taken on board in institutional and governmental policy.

Hence, it is important that national policies deal with open and flexible education. This is already done with various grades of success.

The European Commission is doing very fruitful work in the Lifelong Learning Programme and in preparing new policies in various recent documents concerning the modernisation and innovation agenda for higher education. Last year, communications were published concerning opening up education, excellence in teaching, rethinking education and international education.

Strand 2: Where is European higher education going? Empowering European universities for 2020.

Theme: the role of high quality online teaching and learning in the modernisation agenda for higher education and in increasing excellence in teaching and learning.

Universities of the 21st Century will gradually reinvent themselves. Sometimes disruptively, but in most cases gradually. The concept will be driven by change factors as increasing student numbers and the evolving student profile; the nexus between research, education and innovation; employment needs; and developments in society at large. Universities will teach much more online. The future will be blended and some universities will eventually teach completely online. The involvement of ICT will be the only way forward to enlarge the educational capacity of universities, to provide multi-stage higher education during anyone's lifetime, including non-formal and informal learning (OERs, MOOCs) and to keep university business models sustainable. There will be fewer buildings on university campuses in 2030 and more students from all ages.

This brings new challenges to the universities, e.g.

- How will evolving academic and professional profiles be reflected in the curricula of universities in the European knowledge society towards 2030 to keep this society sustainable and competitive? How can universities feed the knowledge of citizens in multi-stage provisions throughout one's lifetime, including large scale informal learning (OERs, MOOCs)? Does the student compose his curriculum (at different universities) or is the curriculum the (final) responsibility of a single university, where the student is enrolled?
- Smart learners require smart learning environments, where learning activities are more at the centre than teaching activities: how do we design and develop this new type of high quality online courses, to be taught in combination with traditional teaching and learning formats? How can we realise mass-personalisation and a rich learning experience?
- How can we anticipate increasing student numbers combined with the likelihood of lower funding? How should we combine online and traditional formats to enhance quality and at the same time devise university business-models sustainable?
- Will badging be an alternative for current academic degrees? Or do we envisage LLL portfolios? How do we solve the issues *of certification, recognition and validation of new forms of open and flexible education*, e.g. short, flexible programmes/courses and informal education. How does this relate to frameworks of formal degree education?

- How does the university connect with users/professionals/alumni and knowledge networks in society and businesses? How does it share knowledge in the public domain (OER, MOOCs, open access, open innovation,...)?
- Will higher education be truly border-less (interacting with other sectors in society and internationally)? At all edges of the knowledge triangle?

How can the decades of experience in the European higher education sector contribute to responses on these challenges? How can we best capitalize on this experience and empower European universities in the next five years?

The EMPOWER action programme aims to capitalize on this expertise and experience, with instructional design for online learning, online tutoring and coaching and online assessment as a core. It will be further explained what the sector can bring into the entire system and how.

Strand 3: Opening up education and the role of OERs and MOOCs

Theme: elaborate on what Open Education could offer to learners and societies in general, and more specifically the role of OERs and MOOCs in opening up education for all.

The main interest in OERs and in MOOCs arises from their perceived potential to improve access to higher education and lifelong learning, to improve the quality of education available by using first class educational resources and also to provide higher education at a cost greatly below the cost of conventional higher education (as is debated in the US) . OERs and MOOCs give also an impetus to international education and they can support curricula in developing countries.

MOOCs have been both highly praised and severely criticized. They certainly do give access to higher education at no cost for many learners. But it may be questioned whether successful learning through the many of the current MOOCs will take place with those who lack any prior participation in higher education, let alone if they have a weak competency profile at entry.

Indeed ‘open’ stands for much more than just free online availability of learning materials, even if they are openly licensed. Openness to learners is about the learned centred activities, which are carefully designed by the teaching staff. Here, the core question is “how does good learning proceed as a process” in a potentially rich environment. In this sense MOOCs should be designed such that learning is facilitated and optimized by the pedagogical concept of the course and by interactions with peers and staff. All unnecessary barriers to learning are to be removed, aiming to provide students with a reasonable chance of success in an education.

In 2008, the International Council on Open and Distance Education (ICDE) was already emphasizing the possible ‘golden combination’ of open, flexible and distance learning with OER for developed economies and especially for developing countries. This idea of combined power of the ‘classical’ open universities model and the ‘new emerging openness’ was elaborated in the 2011 EADTU conference. And it has led to a better understanding of what Open Education is about and what it could offer to learners and societies. It is therefore essential that both traditional and distance/online universities work together on this.

As a first step the OpenupEd portal has been launched earlier this year. OpenupEd will strengthen

the collaboration of MOOCs that supports the opening up education for all.

This strand will also illustrate how OER and MOOCs influence the organizational and business models of open and flexible education, discuss how OERs and MOOCs affect current online teaching and learning models in European higher education, and the contribution of European open and online education to MOOCs (pedagogical models, organisational features, large scale provisions). The early experience with the pan-European OpenupEd MOOC initiative, will be explained.

Strand 4: Partnerships to strengthen the quality and competitiveness of European higher education

Theme: Partnerships leading to high quality and competitive transnational education and creating complementary provisions in the European Area of Higher Education

This theme is about partnerships between universities to work together to upgrade their levels of quality and to be competitive across the world. The role of open and online teaching and learning to make these partnerships happen and to create new opportunities for learners and institutions will be illustrated and discussed, based on the experience of three institutions. Online education is increasingly seen as a specific form of transnational education, contributing to excellent teaching and learning and to the European area of higher education.

Collaboration leads to richer content, based on the diversity and complementarity of research areas and methodologies in European universities. It supports more effective responses to new areas of expertise and the needs in society and to the interests of students and to new academic/professional profiles. To make this operational, new (blended and online) formats of partnerships and transnational education are needed across European countries and beyond, based on learning communities, teaching and learning networks and shared educational platforms (more internet than intranet-based learning environments in higher education).

Today, collaborative courses/curricula and online or blended mobility already are brought into practice, based on sound pedagogical principles and organisational frameworks, but it is expected that they will extend in the next future. It is important that their approach is learning-centered (student-centered) and differs from the mere digitalization or exchange of content.

A special case is the collaboration between universities to serve new target groups, e.g. students who combine study and work (25 plus), practitioners/researchers/ knowledge workers in professional networks in sectors of innovation (university-business collaboration), learning in the context of regional development (smart specialisation), ... In such collaborations, partnerships with open and distance initiatives (open universities, specialized distance departments or programmes in conventional universities, ...) might establish complementary and multi-stage provisions at the national level and in the framework of the European higher education area, using formal, non-formal and informal resources. This also should be part of the modernisation agenda.