

Opening the Higher Education Conference 2019 at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS)

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Ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome to Amsterdam and to the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

We are here here to discuss our education in transition: to address the pressing need for new insights and practices. Allow me to open this conference by setting a scene.

Our students are changing. I mention two drivers for this change:

- Superdiversity in the region: growing groups with different back ground. No one group has a majority. This poses challenges to how we fulfil our public role to emancipate learners who are first movers in their families and at the same time keep on stimulation the students who look for more then the linear curriculum they enrolled in.
- Shifting from generation Y to the digital native generation. Generation Y: 'why can't I have it all? An example are students that visiting our information days and more than before know what they want: like fashion education for half a year here and then a course on sustainable entrepreneurship there. That is not a strange question. Specially for larger institution like the AUAS, we have the content and knowledge and need to provide ways to offer that. This is however that these demands do not fit our current croho oriented portfolio.

That's were digital native student come in. And bring an attitude of 'can-do'. Platforms to share content, platforms to share experience. With others students and learners and with teaching staff and researchers. Networks can be built on the fly and content, knowledge and experience must be available like a single search engine query. That education is more than a query and involves pedagogy and a proper dose of nudging is quickly overlooked.

Add the promises of AI to this mix and you can see why we have to think differently on what teaching is and how we fulfil our role.

But, ladies and gentlemen, it's not only our students that change, it's our society too. The region, the industries, the SME's, the hospitals, the public services and increasingly important, the citizens who inhabit this region. All these actors look at our institutions for answers and inspiration. They want to experience leadership in understanding how we deal with elderly care, with maintaining a social balance, coping with logistics because of the on-line consumption market, with greening the city, with climate change. For us, the AUAS, this is actually a very well know demand: it's the roots of our being: educating the future professionals in a close cooperation with public and private actors in the city.

Coincidentally, it's not just the outside world that demands focus for the big challenges, like the Sustainability Goals. It's our own students too. And when they graduate and move into society, the will keep asking for guidance.

To tackle this challenge of society it's not enough just to educate the future professional. Because a single person, how smart and well education she or he may be, will have difficulty in changing the working practices and habits. In order to truly innovate, which is what you must expect from our higher education, we need to provide critical mass, support and

inspiration throughout our learners careers. That's why we are not just an educational institute, but a knowledge institute. A place where new insights, techniques, tools and interventions are developed, nurtured and made available for outside use.

With close to 60 professors and their research groups we have critical mass and we see that the role we play is appreciated in society. Practice Based Research stands in the centre of a fully matured type of higher education, next to the research oriented academic institutions. In fact, today you are invited to witness the installation of our professor for Higher education, Research and Innovation.

I'm coming to a conclusion.

The one thing that all the above developments tell me is: how are you going to do this when we still think in terms of classes, students per teacher ratio's, fixed routes for students to follow, exams as hurdles to take and research as an optional feature. And within the sources that public funding is providing us. Well, the answer is: we can't.

But we must and embrace the new demands from students and from society as a stimulus to rethink education. Can we use the pressure to reinvent ourselves and make the next move. How do we connect education, research and the practice of our society and offer world-class education.

Education is in transition: to answer the pressing need for new insights and practices. Your work is important. These days are important. Thanks you for collaboration in presenting, discussing and designing tomorrow's education.