

2013 EDEN Conference

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Creating Joyful Learning Experiences

Keynote Remarks

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I appreciate the opportunity to share the stage with such a wonderful group of educators who are engaged in many pioneering efforts to improve teaching and learning in Europe and around the world. Specifically, I would like to thank Secretary General András Szűcs and President Morten Paulsen for graciously inviting me to speak here today. Since we have a very tight conference schedule today that is packed with many great activities, I will only take a few moments of your time.

In 2010, I founded the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association, known as HETL, with the aim of bringing together educators from every country, every educational institution, and every discipline from around the world to develop innovative ways to transform teaching and learning. Since its inception HETL has been a grass-roots effort - an organization of educators, by educators, and for educators. We are therefore very happy to have recently signed a strategic partnership with EDEN that will allow both organizations to more effectively fulfill our missions.

HETL aims to build vibrant, inclusive, socially conscious, and collegial communities that help faculty, students, administrators, and staff to connect, collaborate and communicate more effectively as well as provide a vehicle for them to achieve their professional and personal aspirations. HETL's mission is to

be a catalyst for transformative leadership, innovative academic scholarship, and meaningful educational development around the world. HETL welcomes and invites all of you to get involved with our association by simply going to our website at www.hetl.org and exploring our various professional development opportunities.

Quality professional and personal relationships are vital in the field of education where most of what we do centers around creating meaningful and joyful teaching and learning experiences. Doing so allows us to progress forward as a profession and also allows us to foster a greater sense of joy in learning, which is what this conference is all about.

EDEN's conference theme, "The Joy of Learning", is a highly relevant one. The words *joy* and *learning* cause me to think about the efforts that we as educators engage in to create more engaging and meaningful learning environments. During this conference, as we dialogue with each other, let us reflect on the following questions:

- 1) Does our work provide us with a sense of joy and allow us to grow professionally? and
- 2) Does our work allow us to have a positive impact on our students, on our colleagues, and on the world?

When I reflect on the nature of our profession and the potential impact that we have on our colleagues, our students, and society, I am reminded that what we do as educators is both an incredible responsibility and an awesome privilege. As educators, one of our great responsibilities is to help our students write their own life stories as they journey through our classrooms. In doing so, we should consciously strive to foster learning environments that are joyful and meaningful. Doing this is important because education is a highly personal and social endeavor.

As such, we need to create learning environments that build self-confidence in students and learning environments that create an atmosphere where learning is highly valued and even considered cool! Educators today realize that human learning occurs in multiple ways: informally, collaterally, emotionally, socially, and tacitly, and not just cognitively and not just within the confines of a physical classroom. Education should be about engaging students in learning activities that are personally meaningful to each student and education should be about developing unique personalities that are more self-regulating and self-determining.

I encourage you to reflect on these issues as we dialogue with each other throughout the conference and I look forward to meeting many of you over the next few days. Thank you very much for your time!