

2nd International Conference on Higher Education Advances, HEAd'16, 21-23 June 2016,  
València, Spain

## Boldly going where no higher educators have gone before: a review of the 1<sup>st</sup> international conference on higher education advances, Valencia, Spain

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### Abstract

Knowledge in action is the order of the day in Universities. It is no longer enough to examine what students know, we also need to know what they can do, and how they will use their soft skills to integrate smoothly into the diverse environments of their futures. Higher educators are responding to this changing landscape by strengthening integration with industry and other community sectors, as well as finding novel ways to engage students in authentic learning. Conference attendees from over 40 countries presented innovations in i) competences and employment readiness, ii) assessment and evaluation, iii) teaching methods and technologies, and iv) student reflections and perspectives. Together, these innovations are creating new models for producing students better equipped to contribute to their community, the global economy, and the building of nations.

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### 1. Introduction

In 2015 the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Higher Education Advances was hosted by Spain's Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). The organizing committee, led by General Chair Josep Domènech intended for the

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event to be truly international, with world-wide representation. As the map of attendees (Figure 1) attests, this goal was achieved.



Figure 1. 100+ tertiary educators from over 40 countries.

The 3 day conference took place in the Faculty of Business Administration & Management on the UPV campus 24-26 June, facilitated by an organizing committee of 10, a local committee of 8, 25 external reviewers, 9 sponsors, and a program committee of 108.

## 2. Keynote Addresses

The tone of the conference was set by opening keynote speaker John Kalu Osiri from Washington State University, who situated higher education within the active process of nation building, embracing industry and government, not-for profit organisations, and the community. In the second keynote speech Ana Muñoz-Miquel from the Universitat Jaume I explored the relationship of higher education and professional practice. Finally, José V. Benlloch-Dualde of UPV narrowed our focus to sites of learning, and ways in which the needs of students' future employers could be collaboratively integrated.

## 3. Overarching themes of the conference

A word cloud of the published conference proceedings (Figure 2) provides a snapshot of concepts informing the conference discourse. Appropriately, the words 'students' and 'learning' appear most prominently. 'International' also has a strong presence. Of the other emphasized terms, it is interesting to note how many of them are verbs, or active nouns - work, teaching, research, knowledge, skills, results, development, activities, evaluation, experience, practice, process – demonstrating the dynamic nature of higher education generally, and the HEAd'15 conference in particular.

Conference organisers structured the content using 20 themes, but for the purposes of presenting a more condensed perspective of conference topics in this paper, we have coalesced the 20 themes of the conference into four overarching themes and assigned each conference paper to these categories in Table 1 below. This was a subjective and non-exclusive process; most of the conference papers addressed more than one of these areas, and were assigned by perceived emphasis.

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