



Library Hi Tech News

Conference report of INTED 2015, the International Technology and Education for Development Conference
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Conference report of INTED 2015, the International Technology and Education for Development Conference

Martin Kesselman

In March, I had the opportunity to attend *INTED 2015* in Madrid, Spain. *INTED, the International Technology and Education for Development Conference*, is held every other year by IATED, the International Academy of Technology, Education and Development. "IATED's Mission is to promote and enhance the dialogue in education among the institutions devoted to Science and Technology fields through: Promotion of best practice standards in the service of international education; The facilitation of relevant forums, training and information exchange; Creation and dissemination of knowledge; exert an influence in public policy; (and) Production of publications used as a database document for research works, projects and innovation activities held on the international education field." (www.iated.org/about).

This was the third education-focused meeting I attended this year, each with a very different focus and audience. *Educause* was clearly a conference aimed at emerging information technologies in education, and the majority of attendees are those from university IT departments

and instructional designers with a few educators and librarians in the mix. *Educause* is a membership organization with an annual conference that focuses on academia in the USA. *Educause* has a huge exhibit space where one can also learn the latest trends for digital education environments. The Consumer Electronics Association holds a one-day forum, *Transforming Edu*, where the focus is also on technology but in the context of entrepreneurial opportunities in higher education that are possible due to new emerging digital technologies.

And then there is IATED, an organization I find a bit confusing, as did most of the attendees I spoke with. The great majority of attendees, truly an international audience of mostly first-timers, were educators (from K-12 to higher education) who are involved with or looking to be involved with new educational trends and the use of technology. Unlike *Educause*, IATED is not a membership organization and except for having a digital library of papers (primarily presented at their many conferences) is trying to fill an international niche related to practical

aspects of technology in education. Of the three meetings, IATED is the most basic and a great many of the presentations were of dubious quality, probably because the mission and need for the conference is limited. My gut feeling was that the conference truly was going to focus on development (economic development, educational development, professional development, etc.) but instead the topics were all over the place and the sessions in which papers were slotted into did not always make sense.

A colleague and I presented a paper on flipping the classroom for a required unique information literacy course at Cuttington University in Liberia (I was the librarian embedded in a team of academic professionals as part of a large USAID [USA Agency for International Development] grant, EHELD – Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development). With a library component, I helped develop the curriculum for a new College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development which involved developing a course, “CASD 304 – Information Use and Technology”, that the students will be required to take in the junior year and that will provide the research background needed for their senior-year experimental projects. The major deliverable for the course is selection of a topic and a literature review with an annotated bibliography. As there is no person at present qualified to teach the course, nor adequate Internet access for remote distance learning, the only option was to flip the classroom and put the onus on the students and teacher learning together. We are providing them with tools, offline instructional materials, active learning opportunities, interdisciplinary approaches and self-

assessment tools and rubrics to keep them on track. This was the kind of talk I was expecting others to speak on.

Although there were many sessions on flipping the classroom and blended learning, all other talks were focused on schools and academic institutions in highly developed countries with a myriad arsenal of digital tools available at their disposal, so I really wondered where the term development fit. So, instead of walking away from this conference deep in thought and reflection, I instead found myself asking, why this conference, and how does it differ, if at all, from the other conferences offered by IATED? Other IATED conferences include *ICERI, the International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation*, and *EduLearn, the International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies*. I cannot understand the differences between each of these conferences (nor do I believe the attendees I spoke with can either) except as a venue where academicians and educators from around the world can present papers that are also published in the proceedings. As IATED is not a membership organization, I could not put my arms around the need for an organization whose sole purpose appears to be putting on conferences and could instead just as easily serve as a repository based at an institution of papers on the general topic of educational technology. All papers and abstracts of the Conference are available on CDs that can be purchased from IATED. In addition, the papers are indexed or included in ISI’s Conference Proceedings Citation Index and Google Scholar. In fact, the full text of many of the papers is available on Google Scholar from various institutional and other repositories.

Ok, back to the conference. As I noted, this was a mish-mosh of topics

that ranged from information and communication technology’s (ICT) use in home and school for 8-12-year-olds in Luxembourg to a huge math course available as a massive open online course (MOOC) at the Polytechnic Institute of Oporto in Portugal. With a continuing venue of various places in Spain, it was not surprising that the majority of participants were from Europe. With so many papers (many worthwhile) competing with each other due to numerous sessions, it was easy to miss a good paper while sitting in the audience of one that was mediocre. Hence, the conclusion that a repository where one can read all papers of interest makes the most sense.

Here are some topics I found of interest: using technology for interaction and involvement in large enrollment classes, video lectures in MOOCs, mobile devices in higher education, experiential workshops, gamification, social networks for language instruction, three-dimensional (3D) environments to study proteins, e-assessments, collaborative teaching platforms, visualizations and learning, blended tutoring, using evidence-based research in teaching, etc. As you can see, many of the topics at the Conference are of great interest for librarians. So, my advice is to sift through all the noise, look at the IATED digital library for papers of interest and see if the full text is available on Google Scholar. As a networking opportunity, it is always gratifying to meet professionals from around the world and in the end, that is the best part of any conference.

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