

## Welcome Speech at the Future Education Conference Rome, November 16, 2017

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1. The World Academy of Art & Science was founded in 1960 by 80 eminent intellectuals from many countries concerned with the policy consequences and social implications of knowledge. One of the founders' original intentions was to establish an informal world university. Today the academy has over 800 fellows from more than 80 countries working a wide range of global political, economic, social and ecological challenges. Our motto is leadership in thought that leads to action.
2. Four years ago the World Academy partnered with the United Nations in Geneva to convene a conference of around 200 thinkers, scientists and diplomats to examine how to effectively address the pressing global challenges confronting humanity today. In one of the sessions, we asked a critical question. "If you wanted to create an accessible, affordable, relevant and world class system of higher education open to all human beings, how would you do it?" This marked the first step in a long journey of inquiry and research that has brought us to Rome today.
3. It led directly to organization of the first international conference by WAAS at University of California at Berkeley in October 2013. This is the time in which MOOCs were just gaining ground as a new delivery system for education. The conference brought together leading educators and technology experts from six continents to examine the potentials of on-line education. This conference led within six months to the establishment of the World University Consortium, an offspring of WAAS whose chartered members include 4 of the organizations that are collaborating with us to host this conference in Rome, namely IAUP, IUC, IACP and MSS.
4. The mission of WUC is to facilitate awareness and collaboration among all stakeholders to evolve and promote development of accessible, affordable, quality higher education worldwide based on a human-centered approach that shifts the emphasis
  - from specialized expertise to contextualized knowledge within a trans-disciplinary conceptual framework reflecting the complexity and integration of the real world,
  - from teaching mastery of a field of knowledge to learning that enhances the capacity of students to think and discover knowledge for themselves, -- from theoretical mastery to acquisition of knowledge, skills and values relevant to each individual's personal development and career
  - on an educational system better suited to develop the full potentials of social personality and individuality for productive engagement, social welfare and psychological well-being.
5. Pursuant to this mission, over the last 4 years WAAS and WUC have carried out an in-depth inquiry on the state of H.E.world-wide and identified a critical need for rapid and radical changes.

6. Today it is with joy and deepest appreciation that WAAS and WUC are here to partner with our host Roma Tre University to launch the second international conference on future education.
7. Over the past fifty years as a former Rector of the United Nations university, adviser to the Director General of UNESCO, Secretary General of IAUP and in numerous other capacities in my native Brazil I have attended countless conferences around the world on higher education. But among them all this conference is really very unique.
8. We have gathered here eminent thinkers, researchers, university administrators, and professors of education and of many other disciplines with vast experience covering all aspects of education. But at the same time we have also gathered representatives from the business community, from labor unions, from NGOs and international organizations such as ILO, and from various government departments. Most importantly we have a large contingent of students in the assembly including a large group from our partner organization Kyung Hee University in Korea. I give special importance to the students because they represent the voice of the future. They are the customers and beneficiaries of the educational system whose future lives can be affected by what we think, say and do as a result of this conference.
9. So this event is not merely one more instance of educators talking among themselves. This is a multi-stakeholder gathering of different social groups who share a strong aspiration to evolve an educational system capable of effectively addressing the complex challenges confronting youth and all humanity tomorrow.
10. It is with greatest pleasure and gratitude that WAAS and WUC come to Rome to partner with Roma Tre University in our joint effort to make a difference to the future of education. Our profound thanks to the rector of Roma Tre Luca Pietromarchi and to Professor Anna Aluffi Pentini and Fabio Olivieri for their unstinting efforts and generous support to make this unique event a reality.
11. My thanks also to all the speakers and participants in this conference for coming to join us in this collaborative effort. Indeed it is my hope that all of you will have the opportunity and inclination to speak out and share your ideas and suggestions during the conference. Thank you for your attention.