

Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic:

It's a pleasure to be here. Let me introduce myself, as you have asked me to. My name is Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic. I'm from former Yugoslavia, and before joining UNESCO in 1990, I was Secretary General of the Association of Universities of Yugoslavia, former Yugoslavia, which was a much bigger country that no longer exists. When I did join UNESCO, I had the pleasure of working in the European Center for Higher Education in Bucharest, and it was a time of great enthusiasm. European integration was the beginning. It was after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We were full of hope. And one of the major projects I was involved with was the collaboration together with the Council of Europe, of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and setting up the ENIC— European Network of Information Centres. In 1999, nine years later, I moved to Paris headquarters, where I was, where I became the head of the section for Higher Education. Finally, in 2009, I was the Executive Secretary of the Second World Conference on Higher Education.

Dr. Tariq Al-Sindi:

I am a Tariq Al-Sindi, Chief Executive of the Higher Education and Training Quality Authority— BQA. Secretary-General of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education— ANQAHE, and a board member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education— INQAAHE. I attended the World Conference in Higher Education in 2009 and it was nice to be back after such a long period, especially face to face and not virtually.

Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic:

Well, I was, first of all, very pleased to be invited to the Third World Conference in Barcelona by my colleagues, my former colleagues from UNESCO. And it was a great experience. The conference in Barcelona, the Third World Higher Education Conference, was very inclusive. It was really a great event with more than 100 sessions, with ten different themes, and it was really under the umbrella of the SDGs, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which is quite important because these goals, unlike those before the MDG, the Millennium Development Goals, really acknowledged the very great importance of higher education. This was not the case before, but finally it has been acknowledged that in the Learning Society higher education was an element of development, and without it, these goals could not be attained. The difference between the three conferences, because I also attended the first conference in 1998 that UNESCO's organized, which was extremely significant because it was the first conference, it really focused on the important role of higher education in UNESCO's programs.

It was not new because UNESCO's had a program on higher education ever since 1947, ever since to beginnings. But it was important to give it the greater visibility. So it was important in that sense. The so the difference between these three conferences is that the first ones issued, the first one issued the declaration, the second one in 1998, the second one issued a communique on which we worked until 4:00 in the morning to get all the governments to agree.

And it was quite the challenge, but was successful. And now with the third one, we have this roadmap, which is a rolling document that can be adapted because the way higher education is transforming this really remarkable and so fast that it needs to be changed to one cannot foresee what the issues are going to be and how to adapt. So it's much more flexible.

Dr. Tariq Al-Sindi:

The World Higher Education Conference 2022 in Barcelona made a difference and rethinking our practices and procedures with the focus of post-COVID era online and hybrid learning and the role of technology and artificial intelligence in education which needs consideration by higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies. I have attended the conference sessions and the one that most resonated with me when a crucial global topic, namely equity, diversity and inclusion EDI.

The session has proven that ensuring EDI is a common concern for all quality assurance agencies. Despite geographical location. The study has also provided some important points for the quality assurance agencies to work on. Quality assurance agencies must ensure proper implementation of EDI in higher education by including these standards, and identifying the underrepresented students to consider their needs with the increase usage of online and hybrid delivery modes, we must ensure EDI in all program delivery modes. One way of ensuring EDI in higher education is by promoting lifelong learning inline with goal number four of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nonetheless, EDI remains an important research topic which needs further investigation, and we hope that this gets more attention from relevant stakeholders and networks in higher education.

Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic:

Inclusiveness, equity values in higher education are more and more present now in debates worldwide, in Europe as well, and what the role of higher education should be. So it was very good that such a session on diversity, equity and inclusion was organized by the CIQG that it was part of that it was part of the conference. So already that is a very positive aspect of it, as is the fact that a survey was carried out.

I found the important that the such a session took place and what I retained from the discussion is the importance of awareness raising about these issues in general more broadly, not just the only through quality assurance, but in general and at all levels, starting with policy and legislation which often is not easy. As we heard from some of the discussions. But policy is not enough. Legislation is not enough. What happens at a practical level. So on the one hand you have policy, on the other hand you have practice. Sometimes they don't really meet. So there is a lot of work to be done in that respect. And then finally, what is the role of quality assurance agencies? Which is more difficult.

Which is more difficult. They have a they have a role to play. But quality assurance agencies have so many roles that are put upon them now that it's going to be a long journey to have them embed these issues in their procedures and mechanisms. For instance, CHEA-CIQG

conducted a survey, also had a project on the role of quality assurance in combating corruption in higher education. And the results were pretty, pretty slim. And so there is a long way to go, but it's important that the discussion has started, that there is a debate and that it has been reflected during this session.