

Michelle Claville: Greetings everyone. I'm Michelle Claville the Vice President for Research and Policy Analysis at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation otherwise known as CHEA which is located in Washington, D.C., United States of America. I also serve as the liaison for Chairs International Quality Group otherwise known as CIQG. CIQG continues to focus on the enhancement of quality assurance efforts in post-secondary education worldwide. By way of its quarterly periodical quality international newsletters otherwise known as QI News. CHEA CIQG provides an electronic platform for scholarly dissemination and discourse in related matters. From time to time we have the pleasure of posting conversations with intriguing guests who are experts committed to ensuring that higher education maintains and even forges certain standards of quality internationally. Today is such a day. And so for the December, 2022 issue of QI News, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Dr. Debra Rowe who has a distinction of being the president for the US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development, an advisor and program director for the Higher Education Association Sustainability Consortium, and the founder and facilitator for the Disciplinary Association's Network for Sustainability. Those are just a few of her many honors, but for today we focus on her role as a coordinator for the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, or HESI. HESI is an open partnership between several United Nations entities and the higher education community. Welcome Dr. Rowe.

Debra Rowe: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today.

Michelle Claville: Thank you for being here. And so we'll just get started. Would you tell us a little bit more about your background and how you came to work with HESI?

Debra Rowe: Sure. So my career has been about how do we create change at the societal level, not just the individual level. So I've chosen roles where I can contribute to making the world a better place and reach out to the decision makers, speak with them, and discuss these topics and groups so they will encourage and support each other to create the policies and the programs we all need for a more sustainable future. And so first, I did a lot of work in the US helping colleges and universities integrate sustainable development into their curricula, their student life, their community partnerships, their mission, it's already in the mission actually, but to be more explicit about it and their strategic planning. And then moved on and did that work internationally. And so it's been a wonderful career and I'm still right in the middle of making big changes and inviting others, of course, to join with us in these efforts. But the efforts have now turned into an emerging international trend that I get to participate in with colleagues around the world who all helped get this going.

Michelle Claville: Awesome, so as I mentioned, we wanna focus more so on your role with HESI, which is in your background Could you tell us a little bit about HESI? What is HESI?

Debra Rowe: Sure, so HESI's 10 years old. As you said it's multiple UN agencies and higher-ed organizations across the planet. We work on integrating the sustainable development goals also known as the SDGs into higher education, to improve education and to attain better quality assurance. The SDGs were agreed to by countries all over the world. It has 17 goals to help make the world a better place. And of course, education is a key component and a key colleague or player in this space. If you haven't heard of the SDGs just search on the internet.

Michelle Claville: Thank you. Tell me from your vantage point, what are some of the key international emerging trends that are impacting higher-ed or tertiary education today?

Debra Rowe: Okay, So first I wanna tell a little story of how, a little bit more on how I came here, and then give you some definitions about sustainable development and education for sustainable development. So personally, I became involved because at the age of 12, I watched a woman over 50 years ago start a food program for pregnant women and poor children. This was before we had food stamps in the United States or even that WIC program. I watched her act as a change agent in the community getting excess stored food from the federal government and the commitments of those who owned empty warehouses and trucks to bring the food to the poor communities. I watched her work with the communities to start a local nonprofit that still exists today and still provides food to the hungry and impoverished in Detroit. She was a change agent. What did she do? She met with decision decision makers and helped them create solutions. So years later, I was standing in the One DuPont Center building, it's the one of the higher-ed buildings in Washington D.C., and I saw all these organizations with budget and staff and funds and even though making the world a better place is in the core mission of higher education none were specifically working on education for sustainable development. So in response, a small group of us started the US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development. We invited these organizations in one DuPont Center and many others to meetings. And we ended up with networks now 19 years old of over 60 higher education associations working on education and actions for sustainable development also known as ESD. ESD stands for Education for Sustainable Development and quality assurance is a key component of education for sustainable development. But in order to really explain this, I think we've also gotta start with what is sustainable development and what is education for sustainable development? So the most commonly used definition of sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Another way to think about sustainable development is the shared responsibility for improving quality of life for all economically, socially and environmentally now and for future generations. And if you go look at the missions of higher education institutions, there's often some phrasing about that, right? Contributing to a better society is part of our mission.

Michelle Claville: Yes.

Debra Rowe: Now the definition of education for a sustainable society is that it enables people for, excuse me, it enables people to develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decisions that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for the future. And this is for their roles, in their adult roles, right, as workers, consumers, investors, community members and analyses have been done to show that these are also the skills needed that employers value. So that gives, I think, a little bit of background that's helpful in terms of, you know, what we're gonna be talking about next. So we see in terms of you asked about international emerging trends. Yes, we see education for sustainable development being included in all academic areas, plus we're seeing innovative interdisciplinary approaches. We're seeing employers asking for the same knowledge and skills students need to have, so that they can help create a more sustainable future, skills such as being a proactive problem solver, being a change agent. Importantly, we see education and standards more focused on helping our students become smarter about sustainability and those adult roles, right? As workers, consumers, investors for some of them researchers, community members. This includes giving students assignments where they can work on real-world problems and contribute to building these solutions as part of their assignment so they can learn how to be change agents, so they can help organizations and society just become more sustainable. Most recently, we're also seeing an international focus on helping students be intrepeneurs, that's like entrepreneurs, but with an i. So they know how to help organizations change to be stronger organizations, while

also contributing to a more sustainable future. So integration of sustainability, education for sustainable development, in the standards, in the criteria and this focus on being change agents and entrepreneurs.

Michelle Claville: Wow. I mean that that that's a heavy lift and it's a very needed lift. And I'm intrigued that HESI has found this way to basically call out higher ed, to engage, well basically, you know, perform in the way that we say we wish to perform for global betterment, if you will. So I understand, based on what you've described that HESI is determined to improve quality— in education as a whole and in research. Tell me some more about what HESI wishes to do to that end and to accomplish that even as far as accreditation.

Debra Rowe: Okay, great. So we have four action areas in HESI. And I'll list them to you and I'll give you a little bit about the third one and then we can dig into accreditation more.

Michelle Claville: Okay.

Debra Rowe: So the first one is around education for green jobs. And before we get done today, I wanna talk about why green and sustainability jobs are such an important focus. But we've got a global guidance document, we have a series of summits. There's a lot going on there where we are convening the educators with the researchers, with the employers, with the other practitioners, so that we have a system that's working better in terms of that education for green and sustainability jobs. The second area is called the SDG Compact Fellows. So the SDGs, you know, the Sustainable Development Goals the International Publishers Association and the UN Publications Office, the main office for all of UN came together and created an SDG publisher's compact. And over 300 publishers, publishing companies have signed onto that compact to integrate the sustainable development goals into the research agenda and into the outcomes from their journals, from their other educational publications, including textbooks by the way, we have a rubric for textbooks on how to check how good your textbook is and how to improve it. And we're convening publishers around that as well. But the Compact fellows are a group of fellows, mostly publishers, but we have some professors. We have someone who is, he just retired as the librarian at Cornell, for example. And the focus with this group is to give publishers, researchers, educators, the tools they need to make it easier, to integrate education for sustainable development and research for sustainable development into what they do. So that's the second group. And you can look for sdgcompactfellows.org. There's a whole website with all sorts of recommended actions, especially since over 300 publishers now have now signed onto the compact. We're gonna be seeing even more and more of this. And this is to help researchers catch up. And also that effects, as you might well, you know, consider the accreditation, right?

Michelle Claville: Right.

Debra Rowe: If this is what we're seeing the publishers do, then how does that show up in accreditation? So we have a third group called ranking, ratings, and assessments. And this third group, interestingly, is being attended by those who do ratings, rankings and assessments. So we've got Times Higher Ed, we've got QS, we've got a large number of the organizations that rank journals, that rank universities, that provide assessments including self-assessments and talking about what makes for a good system of rating, rankings, and assessments and how do you improve that. And they're doing their own self-evaluations and improvements. We even have a subgroup focusing on instead of how many citations your papers have, or how many articles your department puts out and gets published, better measures, like what are the

outcomes of the research. So we're helping the researchers connect to the practitioners who are doing the real-world work and governments and non-profits and business and other sectors of society so that the outcomes of the research actually gets to the practitioners, but also the practitioners help inform the research agenda. So higher ed research will be more relevant to our urgent sustainability and societal issues but also so we can co-create that research. So those are three groups. And this fourth one is this focus on accreditation. Oh, by the way, there's also a free partner program. Any university can go to HESI and join up to be a free partner and get more information. It's just sdgs.un.org/hesi and that takes you right there.

Michelle Claville: Awesome. Thank you so much for that. I'm looking forward to how this initiative grows and how we engage more so. The question that I have, you've already spoken to it and, but I'd like to dig a little deeper, if you will, and that is regarding the impact. Yes, the impact of higher education globally. There are so many issues but you've tapped into the topics that you've mentioned under sustainability development goals. And so if you were to convince the hearer or the reader the person who sees the transcript of this particular conversation about why we should be engaged as you've encouraged us to be engaged, what would you say?

Debra Rowe: I would say that your students are feeling pretty doomed and gloomed right now. That they look around at the world and they're really worried about the future that we're leaving for them. And so we need our education to take them past doom and gloom and into engagement and solutions. And to make that not just something that the sustainability champions do but to make it more the norm. You know, many years ago I came to CHEA and I gave a keynote speech on this and there were many interested organizations some of which, you know, have been involved with the networks and have done more in depth work. But as I say, we're now seeing this emerging international trends. Let me tell you something about our accreditation work and then I'll focus in on that one issue. So we're planning a convening where those who are interested in quality assurance and accreditation can see examples of how accreditation organizations are doing this. They're including ESD more specifically, right? So examples, engineering. You cannot be a civil engineering school in the United States unless you include a body of knowledge on sustainability that is part of the accreditation process. Business schools, AACSB, and other accreditation agencies have become very interested in ESD and have lots of information on it, on their websites that explain their accreditation processes. So the convening will include examples of this emerging trend and accreditation to include education and actions for sustainable development. And we'll provide assistance to those that need to catch up with this trend. So now, like, let's talk about that one issue, right? I think if I had to just pick one and what I love about the 17 sustainable development goals is it really helps you wrap your head around what would it take to create a better world?

Michelle Claville: Yes.

Debra Rowe: And, you know, people agree with it. It's kinda like that phrase mom and apple pie, you know, how can you disagree with these things? And there's a lot of good information there. But if I had to pick one, I'd say that the most urgent and the most damaging if we do not pay attention is climate change. I refer a lot to this recent Princeton study from Princeton University but the whole international community of science pointed to the facts that we are not on track to stabilize the climate. We're not even on track to prevent the worst impacts. And that the worst impacts will include more pandemics. You think this was rough, more pandemics more extreme weather, including droughts, floods, crop failures that we don't talk about a lot even though they're going on right now. Disruptions in our food supply and many other supply chains that basically causing a pretty massive economic disruption way beyond what we're having today.

Even with the food and energy supply disruptions from the war on Ukraine today. And the science, you know, the science is really clear. It's been around for decades to prevent the worst impacts and keep more people safe. The science now says we need to reduce greenhouse gases by 50% by 2030. That is seven years. Now the good news is we have the cost-effective technology to do much of this but we need to accelerate the implementations of the solutions that already exist. And think about it. A lot of those solutions are in the energy area, and energy doesn't exist as a discipline, as an academic area. So a lot of students graduate and they're still illiterate about this. If we don't do this, to give one specific example from that Princeton University study as many as 2 billion people, that's right, with a b, 2 billion, will be displaced from their homes, from their communities. 'Cause they aren't gonna be able to live outdoors where they live now. Just the combination this study only looked at heat and humidity and said for 2 billion people living there in their homes in their communities will not be viable. So imagine, I laugh 'cause it's like so people don't tend to know this, but they need to know, imagine a quarter of the world as climate refugees and migrants. The good news is there's a way to address climate adaptation humanely instead of barbarically and to keep our societies functioning better. But students need to learn about it. Quality education includes that every graduate student from higher education should learn about our sustainability challenges and our solutions and see how they can help create and participate in the solutions. So they come out, you know, beyond doom and gloom. I work with students all over the world in coalitions, and I say, how you're doing? They say, as long as I'm working on the solutions, I'm feeling better.

Michelle Claville: Wow. You've given us a lot to think about. And it's a, it's an encouragement, an admonition I would dare say to get away from business as usual and-

Debra Rowe: That's the danger. Yep, business as usual is the problem right now.

Michelle Claville: Yeah.

Debra Rowe: And people thinking about things instead of acting on things, that's another problem.

Michelle Claville: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I truly appreciate this and I thank you for telling us that there is some good news. So I'm gonna build on that. Let's say we embrace the challenge as a global society and we start implementing the tools that we have already in our possession, the intellect, the knowledge the wherewithal to address these issues that you have so clearly and eloquently stated and charged us to address. Let's say it's about 10 years, you talked about 2030. So let's add another 10 years. Let's say it's 2040, 42, to be more precise and the international community have collaborated and done just the very things that you've said that we can do. What do you think higher ed and our society might look like in its ideal state?

Debra Rowe: I'll start with higher ed, okay?

Michelle Claville: Okay.

Debra Rowe: So the good news is that what I'm about to describe is already an emerging international trend and people are doing it. So it's like finding out where the successful precedents are and just building on them. But let's imagine this positive possibility for our future. Imagine the whole international community of quality assurance is doing the following: higher education, I mean tertiary education for those of you thinking around the world, right? So this includes the TVETs, it includes the universities, will include across the curricula, across their student life activities, how they handle their facilities, and their community partnerships, education and actions for

sustainable development. The focus will go beyond dooming and glooming students, right? By teaching them about our societal challenges. In this future, it'll be less of teachers being the sage on the stage where they know the answers and more about co-creation, being the guide on the side and helping the students gain and want to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to participate in the solutions and helping them become literate about the SDGs and giving them opportunities to become change agents for a better world by including, and this is key, real-world problem solving as assignments.

Michelle Claville: Yeah.

Debra Rowe: So we had a whole grant that we got from US Department of Education and then we had international partners and we worked with STEM disciplines and also the psychology societies and we created something called Sustainability Improved Student Learning. Just documenting that if you don't focus on doom and gloom and you engage students in real-world problems how it can be transformative education. So imagine this future, right now we're helping 2,500 cities in poor countries and connecting them to students to help them. So imagine in the future this is all done, not just beginning, students are helping with needed data analysis for these cities project implementation, formative assessments and evaluations to help these communities move forward with not just climate solutions but other societal solutions. Imagine in this future students get to practice being change agents and real world problem solvers during their education. students are learning and then they're reflecting upon what they've tried not giving up when they have difficulties but understanding that change agent skills build over time and building that persistence and a commitment to continuous improvement. Of course, also seeing how employers and organizations are healthier now because students are bringing this into the organizations and they're also getting better jobs with it. So that's the future I would see for higher education. I can go into details if you want. 'Cause the practical details are what make it, oh yeah this is doable. We can see this. Oh, all of these universities are doing it. Wow, I wanna learn more. You know, let's get going on it. Yeah.

Michelle Claville: It's quality, it's quality. That's what I hear is quality in the student, it's quality in the institution, it's quality in the corporations it's quality that benefits our world. That's what I've heard you say.

Debra Rowe: Yeah. And it's baked into accreditation criteria.

Michelle Claville: It's baked into accreditation.

Debra Rowe: This isn't optional, this is just what we do in higher ed, right?

Michelle Claville: Yeah, yeah. That's what I hear you saying. And I I'm sure that's what the rest of our audience will hear you say. So as we close, do you have any other final remarks? I know you've given us so much to think about and you've given us a tremendous charge, but I I would be remiss if I did not ask. Do you have any final remarks?

Debra Rowe: Sure. So just a couple things. So last week we convened educators, publishers, and academic journal editors in a solution summit. We have this ongoing solution summit series that helps people create this future I just described and learn from others who are already doing it. So if people wanna find out more I'll give you kind of a complicated email but then I'll give you also a easier email. So my email's just my name, DebraRowe@aya like apple yellow apple, .yale, Y-A-L-E, .edu. Or if you want something simpler it's compactfellows@gmail.com. And then we

can invite you to future events, right? Including this accreditation work, the ranking work. Do I have any other final remarks? Yeah, if you haven't yet, please look forward to less armchair pontificating and more actions at a quicker pace to create a more sustainable future for all. Come to the website, sdgs.un.org/hesi and learn more about real-world problem-solving with students and visit that Sustainability Improve student learning website. I won't give you the whole url, but it starts with *serc*, SERC, and see what the STEM disciplines have said as they've engaged in this. And that website is, you know, couple years old now but it still has a lot of useful information key components of quality assignments and assessment tool that students can do to reflect on their change agent skills. So we're here to help make it easier for all of you as you move, you follow this trend to put it into your accreditation criteria. More importantly, put it into the actualization on campuses around the world. I just wanna thank you, Michelle. I mean, you clearly understand the need for this. You saw the trends, the excitement for it, the people working on it all over and brought it to your membership. So thanks for this opportunity.

Michelle Claville: I thank you. We are so grateful to you, Dr. Debra Rowe for sharing your time with us with the CIQG audience. We applaud your work and we counted an honor to have been given a glimpse into your invaluable expertise and not just as you say armchair conversation, but just active work. Let me also thank you, our audience for spending this time with us and we hope you enjoyed the segment and will join us again as release additional issues of quality international news throughout the year. Let me also add that we encourage and welcome submissions to QI News from all CIQG members. So be certain to get those submissions ready for the March, 2023 issue. And we look forward to hearing from you. We hope you'll come to our CHEA CIQG conference the last week of January and we are so looking forward to more engagement and more activity to ensure that quality is maintained and is forged in the future. Thank you so much. Until next time, this is Michelle Claville on behalf of CHEA CIQG. Take care.