

The 2021 World Conference on Higher Education: An African Perspective

Based on UNESCO's Constitution, as a means for promoting the intellectual solidarity of humankind, higher education was at the heart of UNESCO's mandate ever since the 2nd General Conference (Mexico, 1947). Indeed, UNESCO remains until this day the only intergovernmental organization that has an explicit mandate for higher education.

A new focus was given to this programme through the World Conferences on Higher Education. The first World Conference in 1998 underlined higher education as a public good and promoted the imperative of access. The second World Conference in 2009 looked at the new dynamics in higher education, massification, diversification and quality. The third World Conference on Higher Education to be held this year, in October 2021 in Barcelona, Spain, will have the 2030 Agenda for Development as its overall framework, with a special focus on challenges posed by the global disruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Peter Okebukola, Professor at the Lagos State University in Nigeria - the first African to win the UNESCO Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science (1992) - participated in both previous conferences. In this interview conducted by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, former Head of the Higher Education Section, he gives his perspective on the expectations of the African continent for this event, underlining the increasingly important role of multilateralism in today's world.

Link to the Interview : <https://youtu.be/NyQLwmk47nY>

Peter O. Okebukola is a distinguished professor of science and computer education at Lagos State University, Nigeria. He holds a Ph.D. degree in Science Education of the University of Ibadan, and specialized in science and technology training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), and Harvard University, USA. A Fellow of the International Academy of Education, he is the inventor of the culture-techno-contextual (CTC) approach to science teaching and learning that is gaining global acclaim as a tool for breaking barriers to meaningful learning of difficult concepts in STEM. He has served as Team Leader of several quality assurance projects involving UNESCO, the African Union, the World Bank, the Association of African Universities and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi-Africa). The first African to win the prestigious UNESCO Prize for the Communication of Science in 1992, he has been awarded several international gold medals in science and computer education.

Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić is an international expert for higher education. Following her service as Secretary-General of the Association of Universities of Yugoslavia, she began her 21-year career in UNESCO which she ended in November 2011 as head of the Higher Education Section. She was responsible for international collaborative projects such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity-Building for Developing Countries, and served as Executive Secretary to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. As an independent expert, she was Senior Advisor to the

Council for Higher Education Accreditation, USA, Member of the International Advisory Board of the Shanghai Academic Rankings and Education Master at the DeTao Masters Academy, Shanghai. She authored numerous articles and policy documents and received a number of international awards for her work.