

Inga Bostad:

MCO Conference - University Freedoms and Responsibilities: responding to the challenges of the future

Workshop 3.3. Equity and Access

Facilitators: Graeme Atherton, Director, National Education Opportunities Network NEON; Mary Tupan-Wenno, Executive Director, ECHO, Center for Diversity Policy, The Netherlands

Report:

In the workshop around 7-8 people attended and we had the opportunity to engage in a discussion around the global picture on access and equity. In the introduction we learned that the gross enrolment ration is increasing but that there is inequality in HE access in over 90% of the countries, and that inequality is not the same over the world. Most universities focus on “traditional students”. Students with migrant background have low access and when they become students they do poorly.

Few countries defines specific participation target for different groups and that makes it difficult to measure improvement.

We agreed that there is a need to distinguish between two dimensions: the ability of access for individuals and the system of rules and regulations, as well as between diversity (representation) and inclusion (the case of belonging). Today we see an increase of complexities in the universities system of intake, rules and regulations and thinking more flexible about intakes is fundamental.

In the discussion we addressed the need to support students and that “superdiversity” confronts us with a lot of challenges and few solutions. What works are often community-driven and universities cannot do this alone. The need for a holistic approach is fundamental though one strategy does not fit all.