



*Conference Conversation Starter*

# Rethinking education Reshaping economies

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**Rethinking education  
Reshaping economies**

*Edited by Laura E. Rumbley*

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*Edited by Laura E. Rumbley*

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## Foreword

For nearly 25 years, the annual conferences of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) have provided a dynamic and distinctive forum for practitioners, policy-makers and researchers to connect, discuss, and learn. This kind of engagement has become increasingly critical in recent years, as the field of international higher education expands and evolves in a broader global context of rapid change and increasing complexity.

Our thirst for information is acute, to be sure. But just as important may be our need for a bit of time and space to reflect on the multi-faceted trends we see around us. This is crucial in light of the important implications these developments have for all aspects of the work done by EAIE members and their institutions, both in the immediate- and longer-term.

As we gather in Dublin for the 24th Annual EAIE Conference, we are called upon to make sense of a conference theme of substantial proportions: ‘Rethinking education, reshaping economies’. How can we begin to reflect on the many dimensions of this very broad topic? The book in your hands will hopefully help, as it was designed to provide a thoughtful (and thought-provoking) introduction to a range of key issues and ideas related to this complex and timely theme. The content will also ideally serve to promote deeper engagement – with the ideas and among participants – not only during the conference but also beyond our time together in Dublin. This deceptively slim volume is full of big ideas, which we hope (as its title suggests) will stimulate a range of new conversations and, ultimately, an altogether fuller conference experience.

This first-ever EAIE ‘conversation starter’ publication would not have been possible without the concentrated effort of a group of dedicated individuals. We are exceedingly grateful for the time contributed by the authors to share their ideas and insights. We also wish to thank the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) for their support of this project.



– *Gudrun Paulsdottir*  
*President, EAIE*

## Introduction

— *Laura E. Rumbley*

*Associate Director, Center for International Higher Education (CIHE),  
Boston College*

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Conceptualising a publication that is designed to address a theme as broad and as multi-faceted as ‘Rethinking education, reshaping economies’, is a daunting business. This is particularly true when the design calls for a series of relatively short essays representing very diverse perspectives from around the world. The open-endedness of the topic, however, and the high levels of knowledge, experience and commitment presented by the group of individuals who agreed to participate in this exercise, certainly ease the way.

But, where to begin? How to get a toehold on the complex synergies (and disconnects) found at the intersection of international higher education and 21st-century economic (and social) needs, developments, and concerns? There are, of course, all manner of ways to think about an organising principle for this exercise, but in this case, five key sub-themes were identified as being particularly relevant to the overarching topic:

1. Educating a globalising workforce
2. New markets for international higher education
3. International higher education and the public good
4. International academic talent attraction and retention
5. Internationalisation and the entrepreneurial university

Two essays were commissioned for each sub-theme, with the understanding that a great deal of ‘spillover’ would inevitably occur across the essays, given the interconnectedness of so many fundamental issues. In total, 12 authors, representing nine countries on four continents, contributed to the final result. Taken together, these 10 essays provide a rich panorama of perspectives on a range of current trends and future possibilities with respect to the interplay between international higher education and economies, with clear implications for individuals, higher education institutions and societies at large, as well.

**Ulrich Grothus** (German Academic Exchange Service) gets the ball rolling with a consideration of what he terms ‘new Argonauts’. These are individuals for whom the ‘stations’ of

a career will be distinctly international, by virtue of a string of meaningful educational and professional experiences in a variety of countries. The German experience with international student attraction and retention provides an important backdrop for this analysis.

**Jamie P. Merisotis**, of the Lumina Foundation in the USA, presents a call to action centred largely on the American context, but rooted in global realities: economic and social prosperity in the coming decades will require that more citizens receive relevant, high-quality higher education. And international engagement has an important role to play here, as educational reform efforts – undertaken in both the USA and Europe to try and make progress in this area – are proving to be mutually beneficial.

**Neil Kemp** (Institute of Education, University of London) provides a panoramic picture of ‘evolving markets’ in international higher education, particularly in terms of new and different flow patterns among internationally mobile students and the push to understand and react to their unique expectations and experiences; private sector activity in international higher education around the world; and new modes of education delivery through online and open sources.

A detailed perspective from China is provided by **Yang Xinyu** (China Scholarship Council), which highlights that country’s heavy investment in all manner of international engagement in higher education in recent years. Amongst other key issues, her commentary highlights the emerging sensitivity in China to finding an effective balance between quality and quantity when it comes to international student mobility, and the increasingly important role of institutional initiatives for internationalisation in tandem with programmes supported at the national level.

**Anna Glass** (Magna Charta Observatory) and **Allan Päll** (European Students’ Union), examine the topic of ‘international higher education and the public good’ from two very different perspectives. Anna Glass calls on institutions to pursue purposeful internationalisation, with due caution paid to the potentially detrimental effects of the phenomenon. In doing so, higher education institutions may very effectively contribute to both national and international public good concerns, and in the process may even help mend the rift that seems to exist between higher education as an inherently borderless concept, and higher education institutions understood as distinctly national actors. Allan Päll, for his part, puts forth an argument that the public good would be best served by a profound ‘rethink’ of how universities support learning that is relevant to 21st-century economies and citizens, everywhere.

On the ‘international talent attraction and retention front’, we have input from one small European country and one large world region. **Sheila Power** and **Louise Staunton** (both of the Irish Council for International Students) and **Gill Roe** (Education in Ireland), give insights into how their country envisions its place on the world stage when it comes to international talent recruitment, and what effective international student support in Ireland can and should look like. These issues are of critical importance in light of the emphasis being placed in Ireland on higher education and international competitiveness, in extremely difficult economic times. Meanwhile, **James Otieno Jowi** (African Network for Internationalization of Education) highlights the unique opportunities and risks of internationalisation for countries across the African continent. The highly competitive global context places enormous pressures on African higher education institutions and African societies at large, and the need for investment and effective international partnerships is crucial.

**Marina Larionova** (National Training Foundation) and **Paul Temple** (University of London) address the issue of internationalisation and the entrepreneurial university, the former from a distinctly Russian perspective, the latter through a more global lens. For Marina Larionova, internationalisation and entrepreneurship are “mutually reinforcing resources for universities’ development and, as such, are vital factors for individual countries and global economic growth”. The Russian experience, amongst others, shows a clear place for government support of internationalisation and entrepreneurialism, but this does not come without its own set of disadvantages and concerns. Paul Temple notes the same sort of symbiotic relationship between internationalisation and entrepreneurship and alludes to a competitive advantage for the internationalised and entrepreneurial university in the era of globalisation.

The range of issues and topics covered from start to finish is clearly wide. What is striking, however, is the recurrence across the essays of such issues as equity, inclusion, and fairness. In some fashion, all of the authors allude to the importance of attending to those stakeholders – be they individuals, institutions, or countries – at risk of being left behind or increasingly disadvantaged as a result, for example, of the ongoing forces of globalisation or the choices made for the sake of internationalisation. There are unquestionably countless ways to imagine the coming evolutions in education and economies. But it is distinctly pleasing to see here both sharp analysis of ‘the facts’ and keen attention paid to the ‘higher calling’ upon which the higher education enterprise arguably rests.