



Conference Conversation Starter

IMAGINE...

Imagine...

Edited by Leasa Weimer

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EAIE Conference Conversation Starter
Imagine...

Edited by

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Foreword

If given free license to articulate an ideal future for the field of international education, where would your imagination take you? Would your utopia put the internationalisation of higher education at the centre of a world order predicated on mutually beneficial co-operative engagement? On the basis of that engagement, would you envision regions of the world heretofore on the margins of prosperity (in multiple senses) now comfortably occupying positions of leadership and inclusion in the global knowledge society?

Could a better future include a world in which internationalisation consistently and confidently contributes to finding pathways to stability in times of social crisis? Or might the ideal ‘new world order’ consist of a context in which national, regional and institutional strategies – well-crafted and skilfully executed – would be invested in international partnerships and programmes aimed at educating the world’s at-risk youth, permanently disrupting cycles of poverty, disillusionment and, ultimately, destructive radicalisation? For some, it might be that technology figures into the ideal future-forward picture of an approach to education that is supremely personalised, highly democratised and radically effective.

Anything is possible when international educators are called upon to imagine. And this is precisely what we have asked eight individuals to do in the context of this *Conference Conversation Starter* publication for the 2016 EAIE Annual Conference. As we prepare to gather in Liverpool in September 2016, we take our cue from John Lennon, one of the conference city’s most famous sons, and endeavour to imagine – or perhaps reimagine – our place in the world. Ideally, our task is to reflect honestly and intelligently on how we can maximise the extent to which our field makes a positive and meaningful difference in whatever spheres of influence we manage to affect.

Of course, imagining is one thing; *doing* is quite another. And indeed some might argue that indulging in utopian thinking is charming at best, self-indulgent and irrelevant at worst. From my perspective, however, unleashing the full power of our imaginations to conjure up every manner of possibility to advance the human condition through international education is an exercise worth undertaking. Please: come imagine with us. There is nothing to lose and potentially a world of good to be gained.


Laura E. Rumbley
EAIE Publications Committee Chair

Introduction

— *Leasa Weimer*

EAIE Knowledge Development Adviser

World events and the dynamics of globalisation have a direct impact on our work in international education. Our daily engagement with international mobility and strategic partnerships brings conflicts in different parts of the world closer to home. At the same time, educational technology continues to shape the international classroom experience and transform pedagogy. Sometimes it is rejuvenating to take a step back and reflect on such developments in the context of our daily work to imagine what is possible for the future. In the midst of dramatic global developments such as terrorism, mass migration, economic depression and the speed of technological advances, dreaming about an optimistic future can be a challenging prospect. Simultaneously, it can help us realise that the challenges of today can be shaped into something more positive and, crucially, that higher education internationalisation has a role to play.

This year, the European Association for International Education (EAIE) chose to stimulate a dialogue focused on what is possible for the future of international education. Inspired by John Lennon's song of the same name, this year's conference theme is 'Imagine ...'. In the early 1970s, John Lennon released this lyrical masterpiece, which would become the best-selling single of his solo career. The song encouraged listeners to imagine a world at peace, without national conflicts or religious divisions. While these were radical ideas that challenged the status quo, the song quickly became a global anthem for reconciliation and love and could be heard around the world.

Just as John Lennon's song inspired listeners to dream big and imagine a peaceful world without war, we ask you to dream big and imagine how international education could contribute to a promising future with peace, compassion and mutual understanding. The essays presented here collectively touch upon current developments impacting the field of higher education internationalisation including the rise of radicalisation, the current refugee crisis of historic proportions, educational technology and global development goals. Beyond simply expanding our minds, we hope this publication does more: we hope it gives us all concrete and inspiring ideas for how to innovate internationalisation practices for a better future.

The contributors represent a diverse and experienced group of scholars and practitioners actively engaged in the field of higher education, each offering a unique vision for the field of international education. The authors were encouraged to push beyond everyday discourse and traditional thinking to paint a picture of what the future could (and should) look like.

The publication is organised by three sub-themes, and each sub-theme offers a vision for the future of internationalisation.

- 1) Imagine: innovative international education for the future
- 2) Imagine: technology's promise for international education
- 3) Imagine: international education and the global development agenda

The first sub-theme explores inventive approaches to international education in light of recent events and higher education policy developments. The first essay explores how higher education around the world can join together in unity and be more collaborative for the public good. Following this, two essays explore and offer innovative solutions for the hot topics of the refugee crisis and radicalisation.

Patricia Pol, Vice-Chair of the Bologna Follow Up Group, asks critical questions concerning the development of European and global higher education policy. She begins by sharing a story: in the early 2000s, actors were excitedly working together to build a collaborative regional area to promote more mobility and cooperation. However, after almost 20 years of building the European Higher Education Area, Patricia questions the evolution and current reality of collaboration versus competition in the region. *Do we need a new vision for higher education in Europe, the European Higher Education Area and international cooperation beyond 2020?* Patricia's dream paints a picture where higher education is connected in solidarity through intricate regional networks, ensuring inclusive practices and access for all students.

Jennifer Olson introduces the notion of 'inclusive internationalisation' to juxtapose the more competitive 'exclusionary internationalisation' that creates winners and losers through more strategic and targeted agendas. In light of the recent influx of refugees in Europe, an inclusive orientation to internationalisation allows institutions to assume a more creative and nimble position with respect to this 'new mobility' while at the same time contributing to peace and prosperity for all. Creating a more inclusive approach to internationalisation enables institutions to act as 'first responders' in the current refugee crisis. Jennifer dreams of a realistic future where institutional agendas embody inclusive internationalisation practices to balance exclusionary strategies.

The recent attacks in Paris and Brussels bring the complex topic of radicalisation close to home. **Peter van der Hijden**, a long-time Brussels resident, argues that international education can help dismantle the radical inclination of disillusioned youth today through more intentional efforts. First, we must understand the motives of radicalisation, and here Peter points to the lack of opportunities for this young generation to achieve their

professional aspirations. This frustration, combined with a hijacked form of religious ideology, makes for a dangerous potion. Four internationalisation strategies are introduced as a way to weaken the motives for radicalisation: enhancing knowledge of the Middle East, training refugees and asylum seekers, inviting talent from neighbouring regions to work and study in Europe and investing in education in the Middle East.

The second sub-theme focuses on technology, an integral topic for the future of international education. In the globalised world, technology can serve as a bridge to connect us in ways that circumvent borders, allowing even those individuals who are isolated or displaced to benefit from borderless education. Educational technology can also transform international education through inventive pedagogy and enhanced student learning.

Martin Hall offers a new model for ‘borderless education’ that takes into consideration the new reality of a generation on the go and an incredible array of emerging technologies at our fingertips. This novel framework makes a radical departure from the economic motives currently driving transnational education. Three dimensions of ‘connected learning’ form the basis for both face-to-face and virtual learning. A student learning cohort is at the core of this model, with heavy community support from non-governmental organisations and local universities. Martin dreams that this model will transform refugee camps, where education can be a vehicle for self-determination.

Malcolm Brown likens the next-generation digital learning environment to a handheld device; adding functionality to a student’s learning environment can be similar to adding an app to a smartphone. He argues that personalised and adaptive learning technologies will transform the way international students learn in the future. Tailoring a student’s learning environment to his or her individual needs will drive how we use technology in the classroom.

The final two essays address the vital role that international education plays in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Implemented in 2016, this worldwide development agenda calls on nations and regions in the global village to work together to achieve 17 ambitious goals. Creating a truly sustainable world and eradicating poverty by 2030 are pillars of the agenda. Two perspectives, European and African, are offered by authors actively engaged in higher education internationalisation efforts in these regions.

In their essay, **Han Aarts** and **Alva Bruun** call on European higher education to actively contribute to the 2030 goals by incorporating them into institutional core missions through a comprehensive strategy. Even though tertiary education is only briefly mentioned in the SDGs, Han and Alva argue that international higher education has a significant role to play. Internationalisation serves as a vehicle that unites nations from the North and South, and it can facilitate dialogues and stimulate thought and action for inclusion and sustainable development. Specifically, all institutions in Europe have a responsibility to edify future generations to be sustainable in their thoughts and actions.

Goolam Mohamedbhai, former secretary-general of the Association of African Universities, focuses in on the capacity of African higher education to work towards the 2030 development goals. He addresses how Africa is disadvantaged by internationalisation via brain drain, lack of collaborative research that benefits the region and isolation through global rankings. Goolam argues that regionalisation is key to achieving the SDGs, and he highlights numerous best practices and innovative initiatives in regional collaboration. More efforts need to build on this momentum, however. The essay ends with the author painting a canvas of what African higher education could (and should) look like in 2030.

We dare you to dream! How can international education contribute to creating opportunities for a better human existence? While tackling timely subject matters such as refugees, radicalisation and global development needs, these essays are meant to stimulate reflection and lead to conversation and debate in Liverpool – and beyond. They are not blueprints with specific directions; instead, the essays give us all future-focused and innovative ideas to push the dialogue forward and encourage new creative practices. The future is in your hands: it is time to imagine the unimaginable and to act.