

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education



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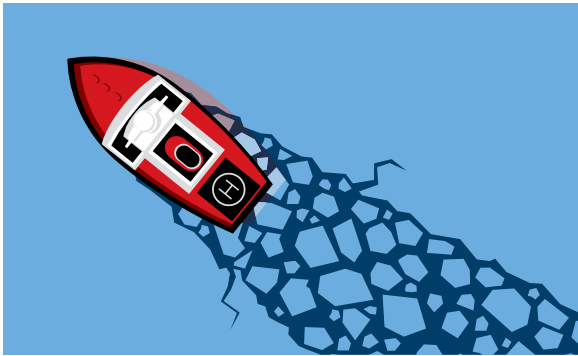
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06

“International educators have a responsibility, and a unique capacity, to help turn the tide”

**UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO LEAD
ON CLIMATE ACTION**

19

“Sustainability is a wider concept than climate, and internationalisation is far more than mobility”

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION



22

“Sustainability is a journey, not a checklist”

IN CONVERSATION WITH DANIELLA TILBURY



30

“Equitable access to education will require models for distance and hybrid education across borders”

BROADENING ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



EDITORIAL

The Spring 2022 issue of *Forum* looks at the growing body of enquiry and reflection on how international education intersects with our changing climate. This question has taken on significant prominence in the last several years in light of two profoundly important – and ironically contradictory – truths. On the one hand, the physical mobility associated with international education contributes directly to climate degradation. At the same time, international collaboration in higher education can and must play an active role in addressing this worldwide crisis.

As we are now aware, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, shone an unflinching spotlight on the urgent challenges currently facing the environment and the impact of human activity on the planet. So how do we, as international educators, reconcile the environmental impact of our work, and what are the alternatives? Internationalisation in higher education can be understood as a direct contributor to the climate emergency, particularly via the extensive use of air travel. However, it should also be seen as a key source of innovative solutions that will support the global effort to deter further degradation and enhance environmental resilience and regeneration.

Articles selected for this edition of *Forum* are drawn from individuals, institutions and associations from across Europe and further afield. In some cases, they present case studies of how particular institutions or groups of international educators have sought to frame local responses, such as the enhancement of online international learning or the integration of sustainability initiatives into

the curriculum. Other articles question where the responsibility for greening international education lies, be it with students themselves, with their institutions, with national governments or within the funding parameters of EU programmes. In that context, the policy framework for action is brought into question, with reflections on how to strategically align international higher education and climate goals, as well as how to empower changemakers at all levels.

I am delighted that Professor Daniella Tilbury agreed to be interviewed for this issue, given her academic and policy work on sustainability as a key agenda for the future of higher education. From Gibraltar, and formerly the inaugural Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of Gibraltar, Professor Tilbury reflects on how her career in education for sustainability was kick-started by an international study experience in Australia. Indeed, she views international education as an accelerator of change, pointing to the fact that cross-border travel by students and staff challenges assumptions and bursts socio-cultural bubbles. That being said, she joins with other authors in this issue to call for a smarter and more efficient approach to travel. Compellingly, Professor Tilbury states that sustainability itself is a journey, rather than a checklist. She calls on higher education institutions to mainstream sustainability concerns and considerations into all courses so that future decision-makers, leaders and practitioners embed sustainability in their everyday thinking and planning across all professions.

In addition to the interview, I'm pleased that some of the authors in this issue have a close association with the



Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE). From its origins as a collective of concerned practitioners hosting meetings on the sidelines of international education conferences, CANIE has grown to become a key influencer of policy and practice at institutions worldwide, with chapters established in Europe, Oceania, and the Americas.

With my thanks to fellow members of the EAIE Publications Committee Dr Jos Beelen and Han Aarts who joined me in reviewing submissions; I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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BROADENING ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL

Interest in environmental studies and Earth sciences is growing rapidly in the Global South, accelerated by the effects of the climate crisis. But this interest will go to waste if prospective students cannot access the education and infrastructure they need. Governments and universities must bridge the gap by providing better support and funding for distance and hybrid learning.

When it comes to student interest in environmental studies and Earth sciences, there is a growing disconnect between different countries: interest is rising sharply in the Global South but plummeting in the Global North. This is an interesting dynamic given the disproportionate effects of climate change around the world. According to the Center for Effective Global Action,¹ Global South economies bear the brunt of climate change despite the fact that the Global North is responsible for the lion's share of emissions.

Studyportals data from over 52 million prospective students in 2021 showed a stark difference between student interest from traditional 'source' countries in the Global South and 'destination' countries in the Global North. The top destination countries for environmental studies and Earth sciences are all based in the Global North (the UK, Germany, Canada, the United States and the Netherlands). These are also the countries where prospective student interest is falling sharply. In contrast, interest in these disciplines from prospective students based in India, Nigeria, Turkey and Vietnam has increased. The trend is developing over time.

In 2019, 10% of interest came from the US. In December 2021, that figure was down to 4.4%. People from Turkey, meanwhile, made up 2.3% of prospective environmental studies and Earth sciences students in 2018. That shot up to 8.5% by December 2021.

In higher education in general, there is a large imbalance between traditional destination countries and countries where the educational infrastructure struggles to cope with rising demand. The question is: What other options are available to link interested students to quality institutions – to broaden access to environmental studies?

DISTANCE LEARNING

One option would be to broaden access through distance learning. The benefit of distance learning comes down to ease of access, the opportunity to get a quality education without having to relocate and the chance to grapple with local problems within one's own community while learning. Access to top institutions means students can gain more recognised degrees and add their voice to a global community of experts.

The most obvious problem with distance learning, however, is the

STUDIES

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digital divide. This gap, underlined by structural socio-economic conditions, has been made worse by the pandemic. It is estimated that globally, about 60% of the planet's population has access to the in-

FUNDING AND FORMATS

Further complicating the issue of distance learning is the problem of funding. Jo Ritzen, who was Minister of Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands

international education have the opportunity to study abroad. Pedró said: "I think that UNESCO has to remind everyone that this transformative experience, which is so critical in today's globalised world, is just accessible to a minority."

He added: "The experience of mobility could be readily enhanced by the hybridisation of face-to-face and virtual components. We have to recognise that blended mobility can increase that low percentage of internationally mobile students without necessarily increasing carbon footprints."

Broadening access to environmental studies means connecting interested students to the right education – in whatever format that might take. New models are needed to address the asymmetry between regions with high student interest and regions with the educational resources needed to address climate change.

— CARA SKIKNE

Many of the source countries with the most prospective students interested in the environment have poor internet access

ternet. Many of the source countries with the most prospective students interested in the environment have poor internet access. According to the World Bank,² Nigeria's internet penetration stood at 34% in 2019, while that of India stood at 41%. That compares with 95% for the UK, the top destination for environmental studies.

Francesc Pedró, Director of UNESCO's Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, told me in September 2021: "If we were to trust that technology can provide us with solutions to increase access in those particular contexts then we need to make sure that connectivity is available precisely where it is most needed."

from 1989 to 1998, told me in November 2021 that the funding of distance education was a public policy issue. "It should also be easier to find funds to participate in distance education. Why is there only support for scholarships in full-time education? We have a very strange world in which students who work and study at the same time will have no support."

In 2021, Studyportals listed 11,312 English-taught programmes in environmental studies and Earth sciences. The vast majority of these were full-time and on-campus programmes.

Equitable access to education will require models for distance and hybrid education across borders. According to UNESCO, only 3% of students in

1. Reschechtko, Y. (2020, November 19). *Evidence to action 2020: Climate change and the Global South*. Center for Effective Global Action. <https://medium.com/center-for-effective-global-action/evidence-to-action-2020-climate-change-and-the-global-south-792b643b2ee0>

2. World Bank. *Individuals using the Internet (% of population)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

The background of the poster features a vibrant sky with soft clouds transitioning from blue to orange. In the foreground, there is a colorful mosaic wall with a large white star in the center. Overlaid on the sky are several abstract, organic shapes in blue, purple, and orange, connected by thin black lines.

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