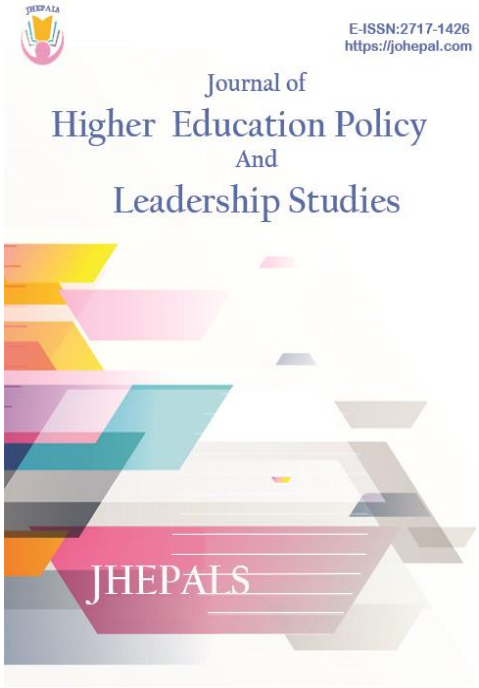
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Internationalization of Higher Education -- Reflections from a Canadian Scholar: Interview with Prof. Marianne A. Larsen

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Interview

Internationalization of Higher Education -- Reflections from a Canadian Scholar: Interview with Prof. Marianne A. Larsen

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Marianne A. Larsen *



Dr. Larsen is currently a Professor Emerita at the Western University's Faculty of Education in London, Ontario. Within the field of comparative and internationalization, Dr. Larsen is a global expert on the internationalization of higher education. She is widely published in the field of higher education internationalization, including her book, *Internationalization of Higher Education: An Analysis through Spatial, Networks, and Mobilities Theories*, endorsed by Dr. Jane Knight, who wrote that Larsen "challenges readers to shift from a more linear, deterministic, and Western-centric approach to a multi-centred and worldwide frame of analysis. A critical contribution to the literature on higher education internationalization." Dr. Larsen has a critical and broad knowledge of the many different aspects of both internationalization 'at home' and 'abroad' in higher education settings. She has conducted many empirical studies in North America and East Africa on international service learning. Dr. Larsen has also researched and published on the internationalization of teacher education, international higher education research partnerships, and academic mobility. You can hear her vision for higher education through her keynote address at the Intercultural Competence Conference, Tucson, Arizona in January 2020: *Internationalization of Higher Education – Moving Towards Global Learning for All*. Currently, Dr. Larsen is also an elected public school board trustee for the 4th largest school board in the province of Ontario, the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). She has a deep and long-standing commitment to public education having spent 13 years' experience teaching in public schools in Ontario, the U.S. and England as a classroom and supply teacher; and 17 years teaching in faculties of education.

https://www.edu.uwo.ca/about/faculty-profiles/marianne-larsen/index.html ; https://mariannelarsen.ca/

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Interviews with globally recognized scholars within the realm of HE policy and leadership give us a novel and new chance to learn from wealth of knowledge and expertise which, in most cases, are from years of enormous and continuous research.

JHEPALS has the honor and privilege to publish an exclusive interview with Prof. Marianne A. Larsen as a world renowned expert in comparative and international education focusing on research on education policy, teacher's work, the internationalization of education, and global citizenship education.

We are sure that Prof. Marianne A. Larsen's insightful, illuminating and critical responses enriched with her academic/ leadership experience in higher education and global cooperation will be of interest to a broad audience of international researchers, students, policymakers, and leaders in Higher Education.

Question #1

Many institutions in the developed world are reevaluating their internationalization strategies, seeking to address equity, diversity, and inclusion, and developing more comprehensive approaches to global engagement that extend beyond traditional student/professor mobility. As a well-known researcher in the field of internationalization of higher education from the developed world, what strategies or scenarios do you consider probable or suggest for the future of internationalization of higher education in HE institutions in the less developed world?

Answer:

Within the context of the Global South (a term I prefer to 'less developed world'), there has been some suspicion about the internationalization of higher education (IoHE) given the history of colonialism, and contemporary over-emphasis on valuing knowledge of the Global North, specifically of the West. Indeed, there is a long history of the IoHE largely favouring Global North universities, especially in terms of academic mobility and unequal research partnerships

Despite this skepticism, many Global South universities have jumped on the internationalization bandwagon. As in the Global North, many universities in the South have viewed internationalization strategically in terms of enhancing world-class status (through university ranking systems) and generating revenues. However, we are also seeing some innovative ways in which Global South higher education institutions are embracing the IoHE in ways that best fit the needs of their institutions and local contexts.

For instance, new ways of thinking about the IoHE have started to emerge from the Global South. These challenge the dominant, Western conceptualization of internationalization.

In terms of the future of the IoHE in the Global South, we are already seeing more flexible and culturally responsive initiatives where the IoHE fits local contexts and meets local needs.

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For example, in some Asian countries, internationalization is "conceptualised as a way of promoting the context to the international community and inculcating a sense of nationalism" as internationalization is used to develop a sense of national pride and graduate positioned as ambassadors for their countries (Trahar et al, 2015, p. 31).

Moreover, many post-colonial Global South countries are viewing internationalization through the lens of decolonialization, considering ways in which internationalization can be a part of the broader processes associated with decolonization (Thondhlana et al, 2021). This involves rejecting the idea of internationalization being equated to Westernization and developing more 'home-grown', local approaches to internationalization that fit the needs of local institutions. In particular, we see calls from among African and other Global South scholars to decolonize IoHE and develop locally contextualized, home-grown approaches towards development (e.g. Jowi, 2012).

Finally, I think the future of internationalization will need to break down the binary divisions between local and global, and even engage more with the regional. Internationalization involves learning from others, especially those who bring a different set of cultural lens to understand some of the world's most pressing problems. We can find those perspectives locally, regionally and globally. Rethinking internationalization from a Global South perspective will therefore involve rethinking constructed divisions between the local, regional, national and global. For example, we are seeing more efforts towards regionalization (as internationalization) and South-South cooperation, and ways in which thinking and acting locally are the mark of an 'globally minded' citizen.

Question #2

As you may well know, internationalization of higher education is a dynamic and evolving landscape, characterized by several notable trends. What are the current trends of internationalization of higher education in Canada; specifically in Canadian top-tier universities?

Answer:

There are many trends in the internationalization of higher education, but I will just mention one in Canada. The Covid pandemic and economic instability in Canada have had a negative impact on the numbers of international students studying in Canada, across all higher education institutions including top-tier universities. Canada has a long history of being welcoming to newcomers due to our relatively open immigration policy (compared to other countries). Many international students have chosen Canada as a destination for study due to the country's reputation as a safe and stable country; the reputation and quality of Canada's tertiary education system and the fact that Canada is known to be a welcoming, multi-cultural country. However, during the Covid pandemic due to travel restrictions, the number of international students in Canada decreased over 2019- 2021. Numbers rose again in 2022, but recent legislation to deal with the lack of affordable housing in the country

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means that Canada will not accept more than 606,250 in 2024, with the intention of granting only 360,000 new study permits this year. (In comparison, there were 807,260 international students in Canada in 2022[*]). This means Canadian universities, many of whom have largely equated internationalization with recruiting international students, have had to consider different ways of conceptualizing the IoHE, a topic I address next.

Question #3

Many institutions are prioritizing the development of global citizenship skills, intercultural competence, and language acquisition, acknowledging the importance of preparing students to succeed in an interconnected world. While the world outside of academia is full of conflict, war and misunderstanding among nations and states, how and by adopting what policies and plans can such things happen?

Answer:

The development of global citizenship skills and mindset are, I would argue, the most important and valuable ways of conceptualizing (and enacting) the IoHE. This is largely what scholars refer to internationalization at home, or internationalizing the curriculum, "the incorporation of international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2015).

Internationalizing the curriculum means shifting from internationalization for the few to global learning for all, which means providing opportunities to foster cross-cultural knowledge and intercultural understanding for all faculty, staff and students, not just a privileged few. This can involve cross-cultural partnerships (within the local region where the university is based and/or with foreign partners); opportunities to learn foreign languages and better understand foreign cultures and perspectives; and chances to work with others across difference.

Question #4

Technology is apparently playing a pivotal role in enabling virtual international exchanges, digital collaboration, and distance learning, broadening the scope of internationalization efforts and fostering global connections. In the context of technology-driven internationalization, what will be the fate of the internationalization of higher education in its traditional and conventional sense?

[*] https://www.statista.com/statistics/555117/number-of-international-students-at-years-end-canada-2000-2014/

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Interview

Answer:

The pandemic rapidly accelerated digitization as educational institutions in most parts of the world were closed and educational practices shifted from being on-site to fully online. Post-pandemic this shift to digitization continues to influence teaching and learning within universities and also the shape of internationalization. Overall, as digitization has spread globally, we have witnessed pervasive adoption of digital instruments in teaching and learning, including laptops, tablets, interactive whiteboards and educational software.

Education has also been reshaped by platformization. Online educational platforms, while present in many schools prior to the pandemic, grew exponentially after 2020. This included the spread of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and learning platforms such as Moodle and Google Classrooms, as well as COIL (collaborative online international learning), an interactive model of teaching and learning involving students and teachers from different partner institutions. These forms of platformization have allowed students from different physical places and across time zones to be simultaneously present in a class through their digital devices and the Internet, and provided, in some cases, increasing opportunities to engage in virtual mobility or virtual exchanges. These and other examples of digitization and platformization illustrate the shift towards considering the importance of internationalization as a way to develop global citizenship competencies among students and staff across borders.

Question #5

It is obvious that the internationalization of higher education brings with it a range of opportunities as well as possible significant challenges. In the context of new managerialism, academic capitalism and commodification of higher education, what are the most important challenges associated with internationalization of higher education in the coming years and decades?

Answer:

As always, the most important challenge is equitable access to internationalization opportunities. Many forms of academic mobility (e.g. studying and researching abroad) have only been available to a privileged few. New virtual ways of thinking about mobility, learning, knowledge production, etc. provide opportunities for those previously unable to participate in internationalization opportunities to do so. As well, the internationalization landscape, especially in terms of university rankings, continues to be dominated by Anglocentric, Global North universities. It is time to make room for the pluralization of knowledges, especially knowledges from Indigenous communities and from the Global South. This will help challenge the domination of Western ways of knowing; and open up further opportunities to address the pressing global crises the world faces today such as war, global warming, habitat loss, and pandemics. If we can shift to a more humane and ethical oriented form of

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IoHE where all are able to access opportunities for global learning, there may be hope for this planet and all that live upon it.

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