

Nurturing Global Citizens:

Sustainability and Internationalization in Education

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The theme of the Opening of the Academy Year of Leiden University on 4 September 2023 was *sustainability* and how the university could take the lead as a change agent. In the context of the Modes project, it is important to reflect on how is sustainability related to internationalization. In today's rapidly evolving world, education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about preparing students to be global citizens who can tackle the complex challenges of the 21st century. Two key pillars that play a crucial role in shaping this vision of education are *sustainability* and *internationalization*. When universities embrace these concepts, they not only enhance the learning experience but also contribute to a more sustainable and interconnected world.

Sustainability in university education is not only reserved for environmental studies and the like. It



encompasses a broader perspective that includes social, economic, and environmental dimensions. It teaches students about responsible citizenship, ethical decision-making, and the interconnectedness of global challenges. Universities can promote sustainability through practical experiences like facilitating community service projects, organizing field trips with student associations, and allowing bachelor and master students to have follow minor programmes that focus on environmental

conservation and social justice. Faculties can lead by example through sustainable campus practices. This includes energy-efficient buildings, waste reduction, sustainable food options in cafeterias, and facilitating bike or other green alternative transportation initiatives that reduce students and staff carbon footprint.

When sustainability and internationalization intersect in education, it creates a potent synergy. Internationalizing education exposes students to diverse environmental and social challenges from around the world, fostering a sense of global responsibility. In fact, understanding different cultures and worldviews by today students is essential for future effective international cooperations on sustainability issues. Students become informed, empathetic, and responsible global citizens who are committed to addressing the world's most pressing challenges.

Sustainability and internationalization are not mere buzzwords in university education; they are vital components of preparing students to thrive in a globalized and sustainable future. It is a task of universities to shape the leaders of tomorrow, leaders who will have the possibilities to create a more sustainable and interconnected world.

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