Between 18 and 20 October 2019, the tenth Alliance for International Education (AIE) World Conference took place at the International School of Geneva, Switzerland. As at previous AIE conferences, diverse educators with various backgrounds and life stories came together to exchange ideas; this time around the conference theme *Rethinking International Education: Values and Relevance*. Ten of these participants were us, international student-teachers who are following the *International Teacher Education for primary schools* (ITEps) course at NHL Stenden University in the Netherlands. As we will all complete the course within the next two years, it was a great opportunity to exchange ideas about international education in, as ITEps student Rebecca Hein says, ‘a diverse and safe environment.’

ITEps student Lea Husung argues that when meeting people from all over the world it is difficult to define international education, as ‘[E]veryone has their vision of what it entails and whom it includes, but we all agreed that education, in general, should help make the world a better place where learning centres the students and gives everyone the freedom to be actively engaged in their learning’. This phenomenon was also discussed by Professor Abdeljalil Akkari from the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at the University of Geneva, who was one of the first keynote speakers during the conference. Professor Akkari asked ‘Are we able to build a world where we are interconnected and interdependent?’. Celebrating diversity is a common phenomenon in international education, but
let’s ask ourselves – should we not also celebrate the commonalities that we all share? Moreover, Akkari argues, in order to be a global citizen you also need to be a local citizen.

Professor Fazal Rizvi from the University of Melbourne contributed two keynote speeches which made the audience rethink their actions, and established values within them. When talking about ethical responsibilities of the privileged, Professor Rizvi stimulated the rethinking of the use of community work and of the principle of ‘serve to learn, learn to serve’. Furthermore, he argued that values should not be picked from a list; they are always found in pluralism and are clustered. One might consider the purpose of international education, which drives us back to the values represented within international schools. Those values are crucial to the global and the local context, the management of international schools, the curriculum that is delivered by teachers and, lastly, the culture and the language that we work and live in.

The conference had a clear structure, provided by well-balanced contributions from keynote speakers as well as 8 strand sessions in which a range of topics were discussed in more detail. At least one ITEps student participated in each of the strands. Feiyan Xu experienced her strand session as ‘a place that is open for communication, discussion and cooperation towards the immortal topic – international education, where ideas are shared, converged and then adapted to each person’. In discussions during her strand, Chiara Bernardi explored fundamental principles which reflected and discussed ‘the role of teachers in creating a learning environment that provides pupils opportunities to experience and incorporate 21st century skills in their school life’. Emma Golles gained further understanding through discussions on the topics of identity, language, and culture. Hannah Cool concluded that the strand sessions are ‘an integral part of a teacher’s life’, covering topics that do not always receive enough attention during student-teacher training. Another strand took a closer look at the development of teachers and how there is a need for change to guarantee development for students and teachers, which can achieved through research-informed practice, the use of avatars, international pre-service practices and exchange, as well as collaborative inquiry. ‘In the end, it was visible that everything was coming back to the relevance of ethics,’ said ITEps student Ilja Nadorp.

The conference highlight for the ITEps student group was having the opportunity to share their ideas on values during the Saturday morning plenary session. During our investigation into our own university’s values we realized how complex this year’s conference theme is. However, all of us accepted the challenge and enjoyed sharing our views on this topic. To include the audience in our presentation, we asked all participants to add their most important value to our collection, which resulted in an impressive visualization (shown below against the backdrop of a globe).

International education is a dynamic concept that involves the movement of different people, minds and ideas across national borders. It is simplified by the globalization phenomenon, which increasingly reduces the restraint of geography on economic, social and cultural arrangements. The world is changing, and so are views on international education, which is perceived differently by all of those participating in it.

This outstanding opportunity and incredible experience not only set forth our view on internationalism, but also opened exciting new paths for us and our future. We found commonalities between ourselves and other conference participants, while connecting on a professional and personal level with those who are working within the field of international education. In attending the conference, we were fortunate to bring our views as student-teachers to the conference as well as to listen to other people’s opinions and advice relating to the wider international field. We are very grateful to have been part of the AIE conference, which has left lasting impressions on us and will inform our future lives as teachers, doing our best to drive further changes in international education.

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