

Annual Report 2023

CANIE Academic Advisory Board

1. Background, Membership and Activities

2023 marked the launch of the Academic Advisory Board (AAB) of the Climate Action Network for International Education (CANIE). The AAB was formed in March 2023 at the request of CANIE's global board, with a goal of ensuring that the Board is informed of ongoing and recent research related to climate change and international education.

The 2023 membership was as follows:

Professor Robin Shields (Chair), University of Queensland (Australia)

Associate Professor Anne Campbell, Middlebury Institute of International Studies (US)

Dr William Twayigize, San Diego State University (United States)

Dr Mukovhe Masutha, University of Johannesburg (South Africa)

Professor Hong Yang, University of Reading (United Kingdom)

Associate Professor Vinod Sasidharan San Diego State University (United States)

Dr Savo Heleta, Durban University of Technology (South Africa)

Associate Professor Pii-Tuulia Nikula, Eastern Institute of Technology (New Zealand)

Professor Frauke Urban, KTH, Sweden (November 2023 appointment)

Thi Nguyen, University of Minnesota, US (November 2023 appointment)

The Academic Advisory Board met three times in 2023, working towards a pattern of quarterly meetings from 2024 onwards.

In its first year, the objective was to introduce all AAB members to the work of CANIE, discuss and address any knowledge/representation gaps in the inaugural AAB membership, and respond to assignments/requests from the CANIE global board.

To communicate the establishment of the AAB, all the members provided bios and photos which were used to create AAB membership profiles on the CANIE website (Governance section). Two new candidates were identified and proposed as new AAB members. These new memberships were approved by CANIE Global Board in October 2023 to complement the existing membership. The AAB also discussed different ways to contribute to CANIE's Climate Action Week in November 2023, but this work is ongoing as the Climate Action Week event was postponed until April 2024. AAB member Savo Heleta participated in COP 28 in Dubai as a formal CANIE delegate.

2. Key research published in 2023

2.1 The Intersection of Climate Change and International Education

The past year was significant in developing and advancing research relating to climate change and international education. There are signs of growing scholarship in this area, suggesting that climate change is becoming an increasingly important consideration in how scholars and practitioners think about international education.

This year saw the publication of the Journal of Studies in International Education (JSIE) [Special Issue: Environmental Sustainability and Internationalization](#) edited by Laura Rumbley and Douglas Proctor. The special issue includes seven articles which highlight research on carbon footprints, air travel, sustainability rankings, and the role of professional associations. The issue addresses the need for individual and collective action, and the importance of social justice and equity in achieving environmental sustainability. The editors conclude by saying that “our sense is that the field of international education has only begun to scratch the surface – in terms of research, policy, and practice – when it comes to making sense of the dynamics between internationalization and environmental sustainability”.

The seven articles are

Internationalisation and Climate Impacts of Higher Education: Towards an Analytical Framework
Tristan McCowan

This paper distinguishes between three dimensions of internationalisation: actors (movements of students and staff), practices (integration of the international into curriculum and research) and influence (the global reach of the various impacts of the university). Internationalisation in these three dimensions can have positive or negative implications for climate action and sustainability, through direct impacts (greenhouse gas emissions) and indirect ones (changes in individuals, societal structures, knowledge and technologies). Implications are drawn out for the actions and strategies of universities, as well as for the global system of higher education.

Internationalisation of Higher Education and Climate Change: A Cognitive Dissonance Perspective, Pii-Tuulia Nikula, Adrienne Fusek & Adinda van Gaalen

This article applies cognitive dissonance theory to the internationalisation of higher education sector to comment on tensions experienced by practitioners associated with their work's climate impact. This article posits that cognitive dissonance theory can contribute to a better understanding of how dilemmas emerge at the intersection between international higher education and climate change to promote climate action within the sector.

Towards More Sustainable, Equitable and Just Internationalisation Practices: The Case of Internationalisation Conferences, Samia Chasi & Savo Heleta.

This article focuses on carbon emissions linked to air travel in the context of in-person internationalisation conferences. Drawing on decolonial approaches and lived realities in the global South, this article argues that a return to pre-pandemic practices in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and, more importantly, an existential climate crisis, is highly

irresponsible, unjust and exclusionary.

Promoting International Student Mobility for Sustainability? Navigating Conflicting Realities and Emotions of International Educators, Anne C. Campbell, Thi Nguyen & Maia Stewart

Based on interviews with 17 individuals working in international education, this qualitative study illuminates how international educators view climate change: both as a threat and an opportunity for the field. When considering and mitigating international education's carbon emissions, interviewees reported mostly negative emotions: feeling stuck, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Interviewees also noted difficulties in logically and ethically reconciling the relationship, especially with student mobility as a key component of international education, providing several rationales for expanding international education to promote social and environmental justice. Notably, interviewees called for a reimagining of the field with more virtual exchanges and less air travel.

Grappling with Climate Change and the Internationalization of Higher Education: An Eco-Socialist Perspective, Hans A Baer

This article examines campaigns and individual efforts – with particular attention to examples from Australia and New Zealand and the field of anthropology - to reduce flying among academics, including a greater reliance on teleconferencing, and explores strategies for drastically reducing student air travel. This article proposes an eco-socialist alternative as a strategy for achieving social justice and environmental sustainability.

The Relationship Between Internationalization and Environmental Sustainability in Non-Central Latin American Universities, Carla Camargo Cassol-Silva, Paulina Latorre & Uwe Brandenburg

The aim of this article is to put in perspective the various sustainability rankings which have emerged over the past fifteen years, discuss some of the methodological nuances of these, and highlight the disparity in performance of HEIs across world regions. T

The past year also saw the publication of [*Sustainable Education Abroad: Striving for Change*](#), edited by Karen McBride and Pii-Tuulia Nikula and published by the Forum for Education Abroad. This volume is likely the first book entirely dedicated to discussing education abroad and environmental sustainability, featuring 14 chapters by researchers and practitioners from around the world. The volume discusses environmental sustainability in curriculum and program design and features chapters focusing on student views, sustainability in administration, and greenhouse gas emissions. There are a number of chapters that are likely to be relevant to the work of CANIE global board, such as

Chapter 12. 'Carbon Footprints and Carbon Offsetting of U.S. Education Abroad Air Travel' by Stephen Robinson, Christina Erickson, & Tony Langan calculates the carbon footprint associated with education abroad-related travel and discusses potential solutions

Chapter 13. 'Accounting for Study Abroad Travel Emissions and the Myth of Climate Neutrality' by Daniel Greenberg discusses how emissions ought to be measured,

reduced, and prices, including a carbon tax scheme and the issues with offsetting

2.2 Climate Change and Higher Education Generally

2023 also saw continued research investigating the intersection between climate change and higher education more generally. One key publication was [Universities on Fire: Higher Education in the Climate Crisis](#) by Bryan Alexander. This book takes future-oriented perspective to understanding how climate change will impact higher education, and, in turn, what universities may offer global society in this crisis. While focusing extensively on the university's core missions of teaching and research, internationalisation receives comparatively little attention, but Alexander does discuss academic travel (both student and faculty/staff), noting the significant impact of air travel on the climate. Alexander concludes with recommendations for action, with the optimistic note “the climate emergency presents to colleges and universities a way of rethinking, reimagining, and redesigning the entire academic enterprise.” Of relevance to the CANIE Accord, Alexander notes that universities “can come together to encourage each other in taking concrete steps toward decarbonization,” pointing to the Race to Zero declaration as an example (which easily extends to the CANIE accord).

Sharon Stein also published a significant article in Higher Education entitled “[Universities confronting climate change: beyond sustainable development and solutionism](#).” Stein argues that sustainability is a wicked problem and thus there is little consensus in how universities approach it. She establishes three different ways for thinking about sustainability: mainstream sustainability, critical sustainability, and beyond sustainability. While not advocating for one approach in particular, Stein argues that universities need to critically articulate the complexity of climate change in order to effectively respond.

2.3 Adjacent research (climate science, CSR, aviation technology)

Of course, there is a much wider body of research relating to climate change, its impact, and responses.

Carbon offsets and accounting is another important area of work. One study published in Science this year examined carbon offsetting through programs that seek to reduce deforestation, finding “most of them have not reduced deforestation significantly, and those that did had benefits substantially lower than claimed” ([West et al, 2023](#)). Thus, the utility of offsets of a way to counterbalance carbon emissions through flights may be more limited than many in the sector may hope.

Another key area of research therefore concerns sustainable aviation trends. Recent research by [Christley et al \(2024\)](#) and [Lai et al \(2022\)](#) highlights the sustainability transitions that are ongoing in the aviation sector. Carbon offsetting, reduction in demand, energy efficiency improvements and operation management improvements have so far not been enough to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. Instead it requires larger systems' changes, replacing fossil jet fuel with cleaner renewable fuels and technologies. These options include sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), which is already being used on flights today, electric aircrafts for short-haul flights and green hydrogen. SAF includes advanced biofuels

and so-called electrofuels (synthetic fuels ideally produced by using renewable energy). While SAF is already available, production quantities need to be scaled up, prices need to be reduced and more airlines need to make SAF available to customers. This requires increased policy and financial support, in addition to investments and technical changes. Electric aircrafts may have the potential to be operating commercially on short haul flights from about 2028, for example in Sweden. Green hydrogen may only be available from about 2035, as research and development is currently undergoing.

Another area that is related to international education and climate change is climate anxiety. Climate anxiety is considered a sub-discipline of psychology, formerly considered to be a fringe research area, yet is moving into the mainstream. More young people are reporting climate anxiety. According to [The Lancet](#), climate anxiety is widespread in youth, noting

Respondents [from 10 countries] were worried about climate change (59% were very or extremely worried and 84% were at least moderately worried). More than 50% reported each of the following emotions: sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty. More than 45% of respondents said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning, and many reported a high number of negative thoughts about climate change (eg, 75% said that they think the future is frightening and 83% said that they think people have failed to take care of the planet).

Moreover, there has been an uptick in research in the past few years. For example, here is a list of [researchers at UC-Davis](#) working on this topic. International educators are not exempt from similar worries and its impact on students, staff, and program development.

2.4 COP 28 - brief report

At the COP 28 that took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December 2023, CANIE was represented by Marianne Mensah (former CANIE Europe president, founder of the Climate Innovation Education Lab; lecturer at Université Côte d'Azur, France) and Savo Heleta (member of CANIE academic advisory board; researcher and internationalization specialist at Durban University of Technology, South Africa).

The negotiated agreement reached at COP 28, known as [the UAE Consensus](#), for the first time refers to the need to transition away from fossil fuels 'in a just, orderly and equitable manner' during the current decade, in order to reach net zero emissions by 2050. While there may be some room for cautious optimism following COP 28, it is questionable whether the agreements reached in Dubai will contribute to systemic and structural changes that are needed and to reaching climate goals in the years ahead. Useful reviews of COP 28 and the agreements that have been reached can be found here: [Carbon Brief](#) / [Al Jazeera](#).

The next COP will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024. There is [already criticism](#) from climate and human rights activists regarding the selection of another oil producer with a bad human rights record to host COP 29. The next COP will also be [presided over](#) by an ex-oil industry executive. Azerbaijan also initially [named an all-male](#) organizing committee for COP 29. After criticism, 12 women were added to the committee. It is unclear at this point whether education will remain an important feature at the next COP in the same

way it was in Dubai.

A detailed report about COP 28 outcomes, preparations for COP 29, recommendations for CANIE and personal reflections will be submitted to CANIE's board and published on CANIE's website. Below is a short personal reflection of COP 28 by Savo Heleta:

COP 28 was an interesting event. As someone interested in climate action and climate justice, and as a person who is fairly informed about the need for urgent systemic and structural changes globally as well as climate reparations to undo the damages in the developing world caused by developed countries and their corporates over centuries, I - perhaps naively - hoped for some form of urgency and action over all this. What I saw at COP 28 was high-tech, impressive and a very expensive trade show and a display of what [oil] money can buy and build. The venue itself was impressive, with lots of appropriately named sections such as the 'sustainability district' and 'opportunity district,' which were built and named for the Expo 2020. But the impressive and 'sustainable' venue does nothing in terms of the challenges, needs and urgencies the world is facing and the solutions we need.

What I saw at COP 28 was an ultimate contradiction - on one side were the historical and contemporary problems and destructions and structural challenges; on the other side were the high-tech, corporate solutions which promise to fix things without necessarily acting with urgency to cut the production and use of fossil fuels. The message I got from all this was that radical economic, technological and other changes are not necessary; we can 'save the world' with innovation and tech solutions. Furthermore, while it is important to note that this COP created space for education and knowledge to showcase what can be done, these hubs also largely resembled trade shows. In addition, the education hub largely focused on primary and secondary levels of education, missing an opportunity to critically engage and showcase the role and responsibility of the higher education sector in coming up with meaningful solutions, education and knowledge for global change.

3. Trends to Watch in 2024

The temperatures in 2023 reached high levels: 2023 was confirmed as the warmest year on record (since 1850) ([Copernicus, 2024](#)). The return of an El Niño weather pattern in 2024 is unfortunately widely predicted to bring a return of record-breaking temperatures and extreme weather events, which is likely to keep climate change and its consequences in the headlines.

A growing body of international education practitioners and consultants are now focusing on international education and climate change. There may therefore be more research conducted within institutions (e.g. evaluations) and data generated that tracks how institutions respond, including areas of focus and changes over time.