

It is a tremendous honor to be able to speak to you this afternoon, and it is a tremendous **privilege** to share a podium with Professor Collini. His question of “**Who do Universities Belong To**” is very much of interest to me and to my students and colleagues at Leiden University College.

LUC is the international honours college of Leiden University, offering a broad, interdisciplinary **liberal arts and sciences** curriculum focused on the theme of “Global Challenges”—befitting our location in The Hague.

Our city is home to over 160 international organizations, and there is no doubt that they enrich the education we deliver. For example, students majoring in International Justice can sit in on hearings at the Yugoslavia Tribunal ... or the International Criminal Court ... —while taking classes with professors who have direct experience serving in those very bodies. Similarly, many of our World Politics students do internships at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is located right next door to our college building.

But as important as these institutions are, the Hague is more than a collection of NGOs and governmental agencies. It is vibrant, **highly diverse** community made up of longstanding residents, recent immigrants, itinerant professionals, and students—*and*, in recent months, growing numbers of refugees. It is important that our students get to know *this* Hague as well.

But just as we wish to send our students out into the community, it *also* important that we welcome Hague residents into our own auditoriums and classrooms—and into the broader intellectual community of the university.

Again, we ask the question: **Who do universities belong to?**

This brings me to the teaching and learning I've been asked to tell you about.

A few years ago, some of us at LUC got to thinking that we could do more to help our students explore how so-called “global challenges” operate not only at a distance, but also right here at home. We also thought we might add a more CONCRETE side to our curriculum in **global citizenship**.

In collaboration with the Municipality of The Hague, and with support from the Leiden Teachers' Academy, we decided to establish a **service-learning program** that would invite LUC students to study a local “challenge”—in the first instance, we chose **multicultural education**—while also doing *volunteer work* relating to that issue—in this case, **serving as language tutors in local schools**.

“Service learning” is a fairly common form of pedagogy in the United States, particularly at public universities. The idea is simple: By combining academic study with practical, hands-on service to the community, students connect **theory to practice**, while also relating their *own* personal experiences, and their own *individual* learning, to the experiences—and to the *expertise*—of people outside the traditional university classroom.

At the same time, **partner organizations** benefit from the volunteer service of energetic, enthusiastic young people—while *also* sharing their own resources and ideas with people beyond their own institutional confines.

So what does this look like in practice?

In my course, I met weekly with twenty really inspiring, curious, and committed undergraduate students to investigate the **challenge of multicultural education**. We did this from a variety of angles. We studied history, philosophy, sociology, pedagogy, public policy—even film. We compared Dutch educational experiences to cases from other countries. And we welcomed a range of visiting speakers, all of them **practitioners**: teachers and teacher trainers, administrators, policy officials. Along the way, students wrote weekly reflection papers, and two substantial essays.

What made this course special, though—and what I think will stay with my students more than any book or article they might have read—was the experience of tutoring in the Hague neighborhoods of Mariahoeve and the Schilderswijk.

Dutch education minister Jet Bussemaker, in an interview in the *Volkskrant* last spring, said that she believes that “*studenten af en toe uit hun comfortzone moeten komen... Ze moeten geconfronteerd worden met iets wat buiten hun eigen wereld ligt*” (students must step out of their comfort zones to be confronted with things beyond their own worlds....)

This, I can assure you, is *exactly* what happened when my students first set foot in high school classrooms: learning how to connect with diverse groups of young people, learning how to think on their feet, figuring out how to *ignite* learning—and figuring out how to maintain their composure on days when that ignition faltered, as (inevitably) it sometimes does.

By the end of the course, my students had gained first-hand experience of what it might be like to work someday as a secondary school teacher – a career pathway some of them are now considering.

They also learned about—and directly EXPERIENCED—the ways that policy decisions, as well as historical traditions and public discourses, shape the everyday lives of students and teachers—in ways both positive and negative, intended and unintended.

And finally, they explored sides of The Hague that many of them had never seen before...

At the same time, **local secondary school students** received more one-on-one attention than is typically possible in an ordinary classroom setting. They gained **more experience** speaking English (and for the newcomers, speaking Dutch) than they would have had otherwise. And – simply through conversation practice based on real issues – they also taught my students about their *own* perspectives on education, migration, and politics in the Netherlands.

So I believe there were worthwhile rewards. One of them I observed at the end of the semester, when LUC hosted **eighty students** from the Johan de Witt School for a tour of our college building and an introduction to University College life. These eighty students—all of them recent arrivals in the Netherlands—hailed from all over the world, from Turkey and Poland, to Syria and Sierre Leone. The LUC students who welcomed them were also a highly international bunch, and on that afternoon students from both schools greeted one another in at least a dozen languages.

From where I sat, observing their laughter, energy, and the bonds they had clearly developed over the preceding months—it certainly seemed like a fulfillment of at least one of the promises of multicultural education, which is building solidarity across difference. **And on that afternoon, it really felt that our university, our college, belonged to all of us.**

It is my hope that some of those young people from the Johan de Witt School will be able to come study at LUC—particularly as we expand our scholarship programs (work that is both urgent and crucial). At the same time, I hope that some of my own students at LUC will go on to become teachers in their own right—either here in the Netherlands, or in their home countries.

And as far as LUC is concerned, I hope we can continue to expand our community engagement efforts. Through our **Engage The Hague** programme, students can already find opportunities to volunteer with a variety of organizations, and to participate in locally engaged research projects led by LUC staff. If you'd like to learn more, you can visit **EngageTheHague.nl**.

In closing, I want to emphasize that **the exchange of ideas and resources** between *universities* and *local communities* is potentially **very powerful**.

And it is also accessible. To succeed, community engagement projects don't necessarily require **massive financial outlays**. But they *do* demand **a shift in our thinking** about the kinds of practices we want to *encourage* and *reward* within universities.

And I think the Leiden Teachers' Academy is a perfect example of what a difference such encouragement and reward can make.

After giving this course, I've realized that university instructors like myself share *much* more in common with secondary school teachers than we typically recognize.

All of us benefit from close attention to the development of our craft. *All* of us benefit from institutional frameworks that take teaching seriously as *intellectual* and *professional* work. And all of us benefit from spaces that invite us to *talk* to one another, and *value* one another, and *support* one another, when it comes our work in the classroom.

And so I want to say THANK YOU to the Teachers' Academy, to Vice Rector Simone Buitendijk, and to the Dean of LUC, Jos Schaeken, for taking teaching seriously, and for being open to new kinds of pedagogy, and new kinds of professional spaces.

My final thanks, though, go out to my students – who worked so hard in our course, and who taught me so much – and who are the real reason I find teaching so rewarding, and so much fun. Thank you.