Report for NUPSA Inc. Executive Committee on ISANA Conference

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International Education Inc. (ISANA) Conference

Te Papa Museum, Wellington, 8th-9th December, 2016

This year I had the pleasure of attending the ISANA Conference at the beautiful Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, along with the NUPSA President and Project Officer. Our International Representative was going to attend this conference but was unfortunately unable to due to issues with VISA processing which prevented them. Unfortunately, due to poor timing we were unable to attend the first days events due to the ANZSSA Conference overlapping. In the past these conferences have run concurrently and this will be the case for the 2017 conferences in the Gold Coast.

The main theme of the conference was 'Evidence based practice in international education services'. The conferences had six major goals that it wanted to explore in this context:

1. Improved methodologies and ways for Practitioners to get student feedback.
2. Improved methodologies and ways for Practitioners to monitor outcomes and evaluate impacts of their programs.
3. Designing policies and practice based on collected evidence from the coal face.
4. Case studies in holistic approaches to using evidence to improve systems of support (including the use of learning management systems and student records).
5. The use of learning analytics in understanding the needs of students.
6. Evidence based practice can be applied to all areas of international education services

As a whole this conference gave excellent insight into the expectations and challenges of the student experience. It was a much more professionally run conference than the previous ANZSSA Conference, and the conference panel is to be commended for their excellent speakers from relevant government, business and university sectors. It was particularly heartening to see an entire section dedicated to a student panel which really teased out the issues currently facing international students across Australia and New Zealand.

The following sections will briefly summarise the major talks that I attended during the conference.

Day 1

The initial session of the morning presented the perspective of business in terms of international education which had a number of speakers from different backgrounds such as insurance, small businesses and education bodies.

The following session after the morning tea was delivered by former Victorian Minister, Phil Honeywood entitled "Social Impact: Integrating International Students into Local Communities". This

talk focused on the needs to engage the broader community in order to understand the benefit of the international student body to the community. Three themes were essential to this process and they included transparency, inclusiveness and respect of customs and authority. The long term benefits to the community are retention of a skilled workforce and enhancement of global competiveness and standards. Some of the current issues facing international student integration include communicating the benefits of the international student to the business community. The focus on the business community needs to be the value added i.e. the potential new clients and international communities that can be exposed to local business. In respect to integration into the university environment there has been a significant change in building policy for student accommodation; international and domestic students are generally grouped together to help develop intercultural competency.

Following this session I attended the "Intercultural Competency" workshop by Shireen Chua, who has set up a business in Auckland called Third Culture Solutions. The need to develop this business arose out of the need to develop cultural intelligence in New Zealand, which like Australia is a multicultural society, particularly in the cities. Cultural intelligence essentially refers to ones ability to function effectively across various cultural contexts (national, ethnic, organisational, generational, etc), with respect, trust and love all essential to the cross cultural space. This results in a need for two individuals to potentially recognise if they are having difficulty communicating and whether this comes from a poor cultural understanding of each other. In order to be effective, both parties need to recognise a plurality and compromise on certain aspects to better understand each other. There are a number of platforms developed in order to better understanding a persons cultural competence and it would be quite a useful tool to develop for use for the NUPSA Executive and potentially the University.

The last session attended during the day was given by Wendy Larner of Victoria University entitled "Universities, diasporic academics and global knowledge networks" discussed the internationalisation of the academy. This talk focused mainly on the shifts in the research community to international environments and the likelihood of these academics to adopt to life in their new homeland and thus become diasporic. It also talked about the 'global elite' of academics, in that it is seen as essential to move to an international institution in order to develop a successful career. Conversely, in a positive aspect it showed that by doing this, it strengthened colloborations with an individuals prior institution and current institution.

Day 2

The second day of talks we attended began with a plenary session by Pro-Vice Chancellor Paul Spoonley from Massey University discussing "A new era in global education: Talent Shortages and Changing Demographies". The key focus of this talk was on future jobs and careers in society. The take home message being we have a rapidly changing and ageing workforce and that we do not have the capacity to replace our current and evolving workforce with children. In order to replace the shortage of skilled workers New Zealand has focused primarily on the marketing of international students with pathways to permanent residency. This has resulted in a peak net migration to New Zealand in 2016 of >70, 000 (highest percentage in OECD). Interestingly, it was postulated that these numbers will likely drop and potentially quite dramatically as China has a dropping birth rate and will have an interest in maintaining a skilled worker population. Also of concern is the fact that most

migrants move to urban areas and there is a significant drop in the net migration in regional communities. Some other potential issues to the students who migrate include low value courses, student exploitation in the workforce and document fraud. On a positive side New Zealand is seen as extremely open to international students and the benefits of their role in the New Zealand community are widely seen. The new focus for student retention will reflect a change towards 'soft-skills' development such as employability skills, etc to try to distinguish New Zealand universities from the international market.

Following this talk, the President and myself attended a PhD workshop focused on life after PhDs. The essential take home messages were not to foreign to us but focused on branching out widely and not necessarily limiting oneself to their own specific field. Also it is critical to publish wherever possible, although there is a change in agenda slightly in Australia with the government led NISA paper; and to develop strong collaborations across multiple institutions.

The last session of the day was a student led panel of international students chosen from various institutions across Australia and New Zealand. The student panel were all student leaders in their respective institutions and were exceptionally knowledgeable. On a personal note, it was particularly heartening to see a university sector conference dedicate a specific slot to student experience that was represented by students. The wide issues arising from the student panel spoke of the need to be heard but in appropriate safe spaces and the potential difficulties faced with integrating into a new society.