

Report for NUPSA Inc. Executive Committee

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Position: International Representative

Date: 01/03/2017 – 03/03/2017

Meeting or Activity: Universities Australia Conference

Date: 01/03/2017

Description of Activity:

The first day of the conference began with the registration at National Convention Centre, the venue for the conference. The Minister of Education and Training – Senator Simon Birmingham, gave the opening address of the conference. We were around 15 minutes late to it and hence missed the beginning of his speech.

He mentioned about a new strategic plan, which is available on the government website. He more or less gave a very simple speech without diving deep into what plans the government has for the future of higher education. One comment that he made in his speech still has not gone down quite well with me, as I am yet to see any facts to support those claims. According to him, new graduate students are creating more jobs and that too at higher pay. One single graduate creates an approximate of 120 new jobs.

Soon after his speech, we had the keynote address by the former US ambassador to Australia – Hon. Jeffrey Bleich. It was the most powerful, thought provoking and relevant speech that I have heard in a very long time. I would suggest all the executive members to visit the Universities Australia website and listen to his speech.

The first plenary was on Global Research in New World Politics. Professor Bertil Andersson gave a presentation on “Challenges to the knowledge society in an era of increasing nationalism – a European view from Singapore”. He started with his life journey and a bit about his current workplace – Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the country Singapore where the university is located.

The presentation was more or less on the need of collaboration. Some of the survey numbers that he put out were simply astonishing. Australia has the third highest proportion of foreign scientists (45%) from the 16 countries surveyed (Global Mobility: Scientists on the Move, Nature, 17 October 2012); the national average of international student enrolment in the country is at 20% (The Australian, 23 November 2016). According to the survey carried out by Royal Society in 2011, only about 26% of the publications were authored by single institutions, i.e. about 75% of the publications are collaborative works. Similarly about 35% of the collaborated publications were from international collaborations. Those figures clearly show that networking and collaboration is the way to move ahead.

To embolden the need of collaboration he gave the example of Japanese Academic system. The Japanese Universities were one of the best and high ranked universities in the world, but since they went insular, their rankings have gone down considerably. With many of the countries becoming

nationalistic, it is yet to be seen how academia will react to such political moods. He went on to talk about the negative impact that Brexit will have on the academia in UK. Citing the example of Switzerland, he mentioned that it would be a tough road ahead for Academia in the UK.

China is seen to be a rising power in academia. It spent around 344 b\$ on education and research, second only to the US. However, with President Trump's policies on climate change and higher education that can change very soon. The uncertainty that currently is present in the world due to Brexit and President Trump, Asia Pacific and Australia may soon become the drivers of Academia in the future.

With the next session being run concurrently, I attended the Academic Workforce 2025 session carried out by Prof. John Germov, Acting DVC (Education) UoN. His presentation – Lost in Translation talked about the rapid skill development the current staff need to carry out to be academically viable for the future. Some of the skills that they need to inculcate are like digital literacy, industry focused approach, global connections, personalized learning and student diversity, student centred learning and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Now this change has even lead the universities to diversify to be future proof. The universities are also starting to provide MOOCs, extended terms, multiple offers, public private partnerships, etc. keeping all that in mind there are still some things / traditions that universities are holding on to like spending several million dollars to build new 'sticky campuses'. Also knowing that there can never be a one-size fits all model, a pragmatic approach is needed which will vary from institution to institution.

Stating the case study of UoN, he mentioned the 3-pillar workforce strategy that is in place at the institution. The three pillars are Performance and role clarity, Leadership capability and finally Talent attraction and retention.

The next session too were concurrent and I attended the session on Governance. Because of unavailability of Prof. Sandra Harding, VC and President JCU, Prof. Caroline McMillen, VC and President UoN took her place.

Some take away points of an ideal council are as follows:

- Small boards are more efficient
- The more diverse a board is the more efficient it is
- The greater the percentage of women on a board, the more productive it is
- 30-60% independent members on a board are ideal for higher performance
- 7-8 years on a board is optimum for being efficient. The longer you are on a board, the less efficient you become.

The session was a bit disappointing since it did not touch on many issues that students might be having on governance carried out at their respective universities. However, I did get a chance to ask a question to our VC and introduce myself and have a chat a little later on during the conference.

For the next concurrent sessions, I attended the session – Global and student perspectives on international education: lessons for Australian universities. The first presentation was by Prof. Horst Hippler, President, German Rectors Conference (HRK). He spoke about the internationalization of universities, the German perspective and approach imbedded in a European context. He mentioned

how it has been a strategic plan of the government to internationalize their universities. Both the universities and government work towards a common goal. They realize that only an internationalised university will be able to meet societal expectations and guarantee its own competitiveness.

Germany is also one of the few countries in the world, which does not charge a fee for education even for international students. They currently have around 34,000 partnerships with over 5,000 partner universities worldwide. Most German universities have developed or are in the process of creating an institutional internationalisation strategy. Study abroad seen as an important tool, not only transmitting additional knowledge and competencies, but also particularly enhancing the students' personality development.

Phil Honeywood, CEO International Education Association of Australia, gave the next presentation titled - international education in Australia: leveraging the economic inputs into genuine social policy and service delivery outcomes. Some take away points from his presentation are as follows:

- Approximately 5 million students studying away from home. Australia is third on the list accounting for 8% of the total, behind US (26%) and UK (13%).
- As far as enrolments go, Australia is again third on the list with 18% international student enrolments in 2014
- International student education is the third largest export of the country with an estimated revenue of 21 billion \$
- Two ESOS Bills passed with amendments in late 2015. National Code reform issues a 6 month minimum rule and 25% online will become 33%
- Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill newly passed
- Simplified Student Visa Framework (SSVF) introduced
- Post-study work rights visas offered
- NSW, Vic and Qld state governments have advisory councils and strategies in place
- New Colombo Plan and Global Alumni initiatives being carried out to give back to the communities of South and S.E. Asia

The key priorities that are to be looked at employability, safe student accommodation, student and academic mobility and research collaboration. Deakin University is the first in the country to have a PVC for Graduate Employment, could this be something that could be looked as an option for all universities.

The last part of the session had four student on the panel, two inbound and two outbound student. They talked about their experience, challenges and suggestions if any regarding international education.

The day ended with us attending the conference dinner held at the Parliament House. At the dinner, they launched the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020.

Meeting or Activity: Universities Australia Conference

Date: 02/03/2017

Description of Activity:

The second day began with the opposition address given by Shadow Minister Tanya Plibersek. This was followed by the first plenary: The Smartest Places on Earth hosted by Prof. Caroline McMillen. Mr. Antoine van Agtmael and Fred Baker co-authored the book – The Smartest places on Earth. Mr. Antoine gave the presentation on the theory behind their book whereas Mr. Fred talked about Eindhoven case study.

Mr Antoine US as an example. The employment in manufacturing industries was decreasing and a similar trend was seen in most advanced economies. The reason for this was

- It was easier to scapegoat emerging markets
- Competition in developing countries
- Automation killing skilled jobs
- Recession of 2008

However, this has changes and the jobs are on the rise again. This is because there is a new paradigm emerging. The era of cheap is over and that of 'smart' has begun. Manufacturing is surely not coming back but it is being reinvented. The two pillars for the same are – Sharing Brainpower (collaborations, start-ups, etc.) and a new branch of the economy (smart products). The future is all about connecting and connectedness.

What makes a Brainbelt?

- Life threatening situation
- Universities performing world class research
- Complex challenges requiring a multi-disciplinary approach
- Openness to sharing brainpower
- Supportive local community and officials
- Vital and affordable infrastructure
- Money / Capital

The rustbelts (places on the verge of extinction due to death of manufacturing industries) are slowly transforming themselves into brainbelts. This is so because they already have the research just need to implement it differently for the future. Some of the examples are like Akron, Ohio, which became the Polymer city from being the rubber capital of the world. Another example is Eindhoven, which from the largest producer of lightbulbs has become the world's smartest city. A way in which the university can help in turning the rustbelt into brainbelt is to design curriculums according to the skills that are needed to rejuvenate the industry and city.

In saying that he also mentioned that Australia is going to face several challenges in the future. With the world-class research being already carried out in universities across the country, it should not be much of a difficulty to turn and future rustbelts into brainbelts.

The next session was concurrent and I attended the the session titled – Universities reshaping for Gen Next. This was by far the best and most educative session of the conference. Six universities talking about what they are doing to become future proof and diversify their core teaching formats. Prof. Peter Rathjen, VC UTAS gave the first presentation titled – Towards an Australian University system matched to state need.

He began with giving the current picture of university education and state affairs in Tasmania. The state has high levels of unemployment especially in youth and regional locations. Its geographical isolation and aging population has not helped either. With 92% of the people are first in the family to get a university education and out of that, only 17% of them go for higher education. With such disappointing numbers, they looked at the American University system and learned a few things. The state based American system where the needs and targets for a university are driven by the socio-economic development of the state and not the other way round looked to help better the situation in Tasmania too. Focus should be given towards reducing cost of tuition to both students and taxpayers and on regional delivery.

Tasmania taking a few cues from that has struck a 10-year deal with the state government. Associate degrees are to be introduced which will make the students industry / workforce ready. People can transfer from bachelors' degree to an associate degree to enhance their skills. Vice versa, people can jump into a bachelors degree to advance their learning. Significantly expanding Associate Degrees in Tasmania would provide valuable insights on using an expansion of Associate Degree places as a strategy to address educational disadvantage on a targeted or national scale.

Next was Emeritus Prof. Ian Harper, Senior advisor, Deloitte Access Economics & Member, Reserve Bank Board. He spoke on building www.theluckycountry.com.au, which is a privately owned portfolio of Australian businesses. Prof. David Lloyd, VC and President UniSA was next. He spoke about the partnership program that his university has with tech giant HP. UniSA has co-developed a joint degree with HP. This degree includes a 12 month paid internship with HP. At the end of the degree, the company also offers a 4-year contract to eligible students.

Prof. Annabelle Duncan, VC and President, UNE presented next. University of New England was the first regional university in the country and the first one to offer distance education. This trend has continued and almost 80% of the student at the university are online students. Most of these are mature age people who cannot afford to attend university at a regular basis. The need for further skill development is what drives them to join university and no one is interested in a 3-4 year degree to inculcate the same. Thus, UNE developed special courses for which students could receive a certificate on completion of 2-4 units. Providing freedom was also important hence students can choose units across disciplines and degrees. Both postgraduate and undergrad courses are on offer.

Prof Janet Verbyla, VC and President, University of Southern Queensland spoke next. She mentioned that her university also boasts of a high percentage of online students but the university wanted to take education offline. They started providing education to prisoners. Their offline study material is present at some of the correctional facilities across the state. They are now planning to make it more mobile and accessible. They are incorporating the same study material in a high school grade Dell laptop. The laptop can be taken inside the cell by the prisoner to study, but in saying that the laptop is required to be like a brick so that it can't be used as a weapon. They are also developing tertiary preparation programs and Indigenous higher education preparation programs. With over 1200

enrolments and a retention rate of 60% it is one of their most successful initiatives. The program is already active in correctional facilities in Qld, WA, ACT and SA and is to be rolled out later this year in NSW and Vic too. The education provision at the correctional facilities has seen the rate of reduced offenders decrease phenomenally. Another positive of the program is that the graduates of the program at the correctional facilities have gone on become mentors for fresh inmates.

Prof. Beverley Oliver, DVC (Education), Deakin University talked about Deakin Hallmarks. At Deakin, they believe that just a sheet of paper with a few numbers and grades on it does not always portray the learning a person would have achieved. Hence, they developed a system of hallmarking for outstanding achievers. Typically, the staff select and offer one Hallmark. Students apply and present evidence in addition to assessments to achieve these hallmarks. Students create and upload a “Me in a minute” video to claim their worthiness for the hallmark. The seven hallmarks are:

1. Communication
2. Digital Literacy
3. Teamwork
4. Critical Thinking
5. Problem Solving
6. Self-Management
7. Global Citizenship

Hallmark recipients receive a digital credential that creates a detailed record of their achievement and can be shared publicly through social media and professional platforms like LinkedIn. The digital credential links to data that verifies the criteria and standards of assessment, and the identity of the assessment panel and industry partners who endorse the award. The achievement is also recorded on their statement of academic achievement - and announced at graduation.

Mr. Rohan Workman, Director, Melbourne Accelerator Program (MAP), University of Melbourne gave the final presentation of this session. He mentioned that 40% of the jobs currently being created are by companies, which are 0-5 years old. Universities across the country should have and support accelerator programs because

- They are the places of cutting edge technology
- They can equip the future generation for problem solving
- Students are unique assets in which the universities ought to invest
- They can be responsive to community needs.

MAP started four companies and provided them with office space, 20K\$ initial investment and mentoring. They have been evolving regularly and have come up with the startup accelerator where the plan to help 10 startups in 2017, provide each with a 5 month program, 20K\$ funding, office space and mentoring.

The penultimate plenary of the day was titled “What does deep Indigenous engagement look like at a university?” Prof. Steve Larkin, Pro-VC, Indigenous Education and Research, UoN talked about one of the research carried out by him on indigenous education across Australia. He mentioned that almost all universities now have a PVC indigenous and 60% of the universities had some kind of indigenous

employment strategy in place. In spite of all this, the rate of enrolment of indigenous students for HDR is not improving.

Dr Leanne Holt, Director, Walanga Muru, Office of Indigenous Strategy, Macquarie University gave a presentation on “Accelerating indigenous higher education: A whole of university approach”. The indigenous higher education approach has certainly evolved over the years. At the beginning, the interaction was at a university and separate aboriginal unit level. The aboriginal unit being incorporated into the faculty level, hence increasing the involvement, transformed this. The current scenario is where the aboriginal unit interacts with all the department, faculties / associated deans, senior executives, services and major committees in the university. She has suggested for a new model that could be the future. This has four main players – the VC, senior executive groups and councils; Faculties, offices and departments; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spaces and voices; and University Community Environment. These all work collaboratively in a whole university approach to advance the indigenous education and engagement.

The closing plenary of the conference was on Entrepreneurs in action. Going with the concept of one of the concurrent sessions of the day (Next Gen: Women in leadership) this was an all-female panel. Four graduate students talked about their life stories and how they went on to become successful entrepreneurs.