

## **VC-NET**

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**World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE): Leading voices in education come together in Doha**

Earlier this month the Qatar Foundation held the first World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). The conference was significant in both scale, with over 1000 delegates (all sponsored to attend by the Qatar Foundation), and scope, bringing together educators, government officials, private sector representatives, media people and politicians from over 120 countries.

The Qatar Foundation is charged with leading education development in this burgeoning economy and among its priorities has been to work closely with foreign universities, which has included support for the establishment of a number of foreign branch campuses in Doha's education city. Education will undoubtedly have an important role to play in the future diversification of the Qatar economy but the task of the Foundation is a daunting one in a country where education remains stubbornly low profile with very little media coverage and low political priority. WISE was seen as a major opportunity by the Foundation to put the need for innovation and change at all levels of education in front of a wide audience, in line with its mission to 'make Qatar a leader in innovative education and research'.

The objective of the conference was to look at new ways to address some of the global challenges in education and consider new opportunities and models for tackling these. Under the heading global education: working together for sustainable achievements there were three sub-themes around which the conference sessions revolved: pluralism, sustainability and innovation. Across the three days of discussion and debate a number of priorities emerged.

The importance of breaking down silos in education underpinned the conference. The Summit brought together educators from all parts of the spectrum to discuss common ways forward. Representatives of research intensive universities sat side by side with providers of private primary education, and providers of technical education and skills talked with those dedicated to encouraging learning among those with special needs. The importance of working across educational boundaries was seen as particularly important in the discussions on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was stressed that, despite the prioritisation of primary education, all sectors of education have a critical role in working towards the MDGs. Establishing 'pathways' through a lifetime of learning thus formed another focal point of the Summit. Crucially, however, the summit was not only about educators speaking to each other but engaging in dialogue with other sectors. One outcome of bringing large companies together with educators at this Summit was that specific opportunities were identified for public, private and third sector partnerships to push forward change.

In the discussions on pluralism it was recognised that debate around education access needs to develop into thinking about inclusiveness in the broadest sense. Part of this is about moving on from measuring activity, such as the number of students enrolled and completing their education, to finding measures of the effectiveness and value of this education.

Two further priorities stemmed from discussions about the role of education in giving students an international perspective while at the same time embedding education in local communities. It was recognised that information technology has provided the opportunity to completely change the education landscape, making it both more inclusive and more internationally connected. This opportunity has not, however, been fully grasped. While there are severe barriers limiting access to much of this technology these barriers are being overcome. Much harder is to change the way we work. The widespread availability of information and learning materials allows a movement from instruction to the facilitation of learning. WISE reaffirmed this in its closing statement, stating that it will 'promote innovative practices, methodologies and partnerships, making best use of modern technology'.

Under the overarching theme of sustainability it was acknowledged that education is the key agent of change in the struggle to move to more sustainable lifestyles.

None of these priorities are new but this summit was characterised by a degree of urgency to try to bring about real progress and change. WISE represented a major investment by the Qatar Foundation and this certainly contributed. It made an excellent start at bringing education into the limelight and has proved the value of an international forum distinct from established structures, and perhaps narrow interests. It was originally planned as a biennial meeting but is now planned as an annual event, and aims in future to be an 'agenda-setting forum' focusing debate towards globally applicable, but also achievable, change in 'all sectors of education'.

Sources:

- Further information about the Summit and its outcomes can be obtained from the official WISE site: <http://www.wise-qatar.org/>
  - For a summary of WISE declaration and strategic priorities see: <http://www.digitalnewsroom.co.uk/wise09/closing-statement/>
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### **Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: Key issues in Cross-Border Higher Education from the Observatory's 2009 Global Forum**

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education hosted its 2009 Global Forum, 'Global Connections, Local Impacts: Best Practices, Models and Policies for Cross-Border Higher Education', in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at the end of October. Organised in collaboration with the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, the 2009 Global Forum set out to address the political, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of cross-border higher education, and how they affect host countries and regions.

By assembling a group of international leaders from higher education, business and government sectors the 2009 Global Forum sought to enable institutions and individuals from around the world to compare their higher education successes and challenges. The event provided attendees with an opportunity to position their work within a global context and analyse the transnational issues most likely to dominate the development of cross-border higher education provision in the coming years.

One such issue is quality assurance regulation. Quality assurance was a prominent point of discussion over the four day event, with concurrent sessions presenting a multitude of perspectives on the topic. Contributions included: an Australian case study mapping quality and engagement in offshore delivery; assessing good practice in two alternative approaches to cross-border higher education partnerships in China; and lessons learned by quality assuring Open University awards across borders. Eva Egron-Polak, President of the International Association of Universities (IAU), emphasised that regulation and continued vigilance with regard to the quality of what is on offer must frame the expansion of cross-

border initiatives. In line with various guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education, cross-border activities should meet the same high standards of academic quality at home, as away. Otherwise, the reputation of international higher education may be compromised and corruption by way of bogus provision could undermine the international efforts of legitimate higher education providers worldwide.

The sustainability of cross-border higher education ventures is another important theme. Participants at the Forum agreed that there is considerable scope for cross-border higher education to grow in the coming years, not least because demand for higher education in rapidly developing countries (China, India, Vietnam, etc.) continues to outstrip local supply. Given the benefits associated with transnational ventures (economic, reputational, educational, etc.), universities from a widening range of countries are interested in 'getting in on the game'. Before doing so, however, it is important that they realistically consider what it is that they hope to achieve, and perhaps more importantly what host country partners expect from them. At a final plenary session entitled "What Do Host Nations Expect from Cross-Border Partner Universities and Why?" panellists suggested that while strategic objectives for engaging in cross-border differ by institution, host countries expect all cross-border partners to commit to meaningful involvement. This requires genuine commitment to invest in the host institution – and country – in the longer term, so as to encourage sustainability over short-term opportunism. Doing so facilitates the development of distinctly international, but locally embedded, provision benefitting host institutions and countries as much as their partners.

With over 180 delegates from 32 countries including Australia, Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Malaysia and the United States, the Observatory's 2009 Global Forum allowed cross-border providers to set expectations for future development by sharing lessons learned through experience. The "slip-ups and solecisms" presented served to teach by example, offering practical advice and guidance to universities undertaking a transnational education venture, especially those doing so for the first time.

The next Global Forum will be held in April 2011 in Canada and will build on the themes explored in Malaysia.

Sources:

- The 2009 Global Forum's programme, a full list of abstracts and a selection of presentations are available on the Observatory's website. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education: [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk).
- Further information about the 2011 Global Forum in collaboration with local partner Athabasca University is also available from the OBHE website. A Call for Presentations will be available in February 2010.

NB: A longer version of this summary will appear in an upcoming issue of the Association of Commonwealth University's Bulletin (January 2010).

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### **Commonwealth Scholarships celebrate 50 years by looking to the future**

Around 70 alumni, current scholars, commissioners and external guests from a wide range of Commonwealth countries gathered at Cumberland Lodge in early November for a celebration of 50 years of Commonwealth Scholarships.

The event explored themes arising out of the recent White Paper by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) entitled 'Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future'. The event also discussed how scholarships can best advance international relations, meet development objectives and continue to attract candidates of the highest academic standard in the future.

The priorities of DfID, as the primary funder of Commonwealth Scholarships awarded by the UK, are important to the future development of the scheme and David Hallam, from DfID, emphasised the importance of gender equality and of working with fragile states in the UK's contribution to international development. He went on to praise the importance of the CSC's work for the past 50 years, and the role it would have in facing future global challenges.

The core themes addressed at the event included: 'economic recovery and greener growth', 'sustaining our common future', and 'building peaceful states and societies'. Building on this broad discussion of the role the Commission plays in development, subsequent sessions looked more specifically at the challenges facing international scholarships – notably, 'ensuring access', 'finding the best candidates' and 'evaluating our effectiveness'.

The event was the latest in a year-long programme of events celebrating 50 years of Commonwealth Scholarships, including a reception to launch the publication of the second Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, and the launch of the CSFP Endowment Fund, aiming to support more Commonwealth Scholarships in low- and middle-income countries.

Discussions from the conference will feed into the Commission's long-term evaluation programme, the first of its kind from a UK scholarship provider. This body of work analyses the impact that the UK-funded alumni have had since their award. Of the 16,000 alumni who have benefited from the scheme, around 6000 have been traced, and of these over 2000 completed a detailed evaluation survey. In terms of impact, the survey found that contrary to the perception that such schemes can contribute to 'brain drain', 88% are working in their home countries. Over 90% reported that they had an impact in key development and leadership areas, while 45% indicated they have had a direct influence on government thinking. Around half specified having a socioeconomic impact and 81% reported involvement in a specific project, in at least one of the 12 priority areas ranging from environment protection to governance and poverty reduction to health. In addition to paid employment, 25% have held an elected or nominated position in public office, and 51% reported involvement in charitable and other NGO activities.

The Commission has recently completed a regional study on the impact of awards in the Caribbean, to coincide with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad and Tobago. Ongoing studies include an analysis of the impact of awards in higher education institutions in developing countries, and a study of impact in the health sector.

Both the programme of events for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the ongoing evaluation work will help to inform future policy, helping the CSC to ensure the relevance of its awards to scholars' home countries, and increase international collaboration and partnerships.

In concluding the conference, it became clear how important strong branding and working with alumni is to the next 50 years of Commonwealth Scholarships, and of building upon the important work that has been done in evaluating the high impact scholarships can have.

Sources:

- Directory of Scholars and Fellows: <http://www.cscuk.org.uk/alumni/directory.asp>
- Endowment fund: [http://www.csfonline.org/CSFP\\_fund\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.csfonline.org/CSFP_fund_brochure.pdf)
- Evaluation Report: <http://www.cscuk.org.uk/docs/CSCEvaluationPhase2report.pdf>
- DFID White Paper - *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future*: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/whitepaper/building-our-common-future-print.pdf>

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## **The UK releases framework document for higher education and launches review of higher education funding**

The UK's Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS) has released its delayed strategy document for higher education: 'Higher Ambition: the Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy' [see VC-NET 83 & 91]. It emphasises the need for universities to:

- widen access,
- strengthen research capacity, and
- 'make an even bigger contribution to Britain's economic recovery and future growth'.

It also advocates more responsive quality processes and supports increased engagement of universities locally, regionally, and internationally.

Although it makes reference to the 'higher education debate' launched by the UK government in February 2008 [see VC-NET 76], it seems informed more by immediate - particularly economic - pressures, not least restricted public spending. The plan intends to prioritise 'programmes that meet the need for high level skills' and suggests that 'we need to harvest every possible economic and social benefit from research', and argues for study programmes which potentially are both more flexible and reflect business ('the key definers of the skills needs of our economy').

What widening access, and 'consolidating wider sources of income', will mean in practice have directed much of the debate already generated by 'Higher Ambition', particularly as the government has linked it to recently commissioned reviews of access to the professions (August 09), skills (November 09), postgraduate provision, and admission to 'highly selective universities' (both 2010).

It is the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, launched days after the strategy document which could, however, determine higher education policy more directly. The Independent ('Browne') Review will analyse how higher education funding is currently split between taxpayers, students, graduates, and employers, but its focus is 'the future of fees policy and financial support' for students. Given that its initial priority is to call for evidence on the impact of the introduction of variable tuition fees since 2006 and that the Review's recommendations will be announced under another government, as well as its terms of reference also including a projected analysis of 'the challenges and opportunities facing higher education', it could become both a more influential statement on one government's HE policy and the first strategy document of the next.

Sources:

- UK. Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). (Mandelson outlines the future of higher education) (3 November 2009) <http://www.bis.gov.uk/mandelson-outlines-future-of-higher-education>
- UK. House of Commons. Main Chamber Debates. Higher Education (3 November 2009) <http://services.parliament.uk/hansard/Commons/bydate/20091103/mainchamberdebates/part004.html>
- Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (Written ministerial statement - 9 November 2009) <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/written-ministerial-statement>

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## Key publications

A selection of recent publications on higher education:

- **Economic Impact of International Education in Canada: Final Report** [Roslyn Kunin and Associates (RKA), Inc. for Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada; 2009] ([www.international.gc.ca/education/impact.aspx](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/impact.aspx))  
A commissioned study which analyses international student numbers and student expenditure, calculating value for the Canadian economy. Incorporates a brief international comparison of the international education services market.
- **Higher Education to 2030: Volume 2: Globalisation** [OECD. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI); 9789264056602; 2009; OECD] ([www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?K=5KSM6VXPL1NT&CID=&LANG=EN](http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?K=5KSM6VXPL1NT&CID=&LANG=EN))  
A series of studies reviewing trends in higher education, focusing on the impact of globalisation. Mobility (student and faculty), funding, and quality are among the issues considered, with some more regionally focused analyses (eg China, India, Europe).
- **Pathways to a Diverse and Effective South African Higher Education System: Strategic Framework** [HESA; 978-0-9585086-9-10; HESA] ([www.hesa.org.za/hesa/index.php/component/booklibrary/?task=view&id=25&catid=83](http://www.hesa.org.za/hesa/index.php/component/booklibrary/?task=view&id=25&catid=83))  
Summarises HESA's perspective on the HE sector from 2010-2020. Funding, quality, 'institutional responsiveness and relevance' are among its themes. (HESA has also launched a newsletter - 'Insight' – 'aimed at initiating debate on a variety of topical issues affecting higher education in South Africa'. ([www.hesa.org.za/hesa/index.php/component/booklibrary/?task=view&id=24&catid=83](http://www.hesa.org.za/hesa/index.php/component/booklibrary/?task=view&id=24&catid=83)))

- **The Impact of Universities on the UK Economy** [Kelly, U.; McLellan, D.; McNicoll, I.; 978-1-84036-219-0; UniversitiesUK; 2009  
([www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/Universities%e2%80%99valuetoeconomyincreases%e2%80%93UUKreport.aspx](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/Universities%e2%80%99valuetoeconomyincreases%e2%80%93UUKreport.aspx))]  
A revised (4<sup>th</sup>) report analysing the sector's economic importance, recording the value of universities as businesses and employers, indirect (multiplier) effects, and the impact of international student/visitor expenditure.
- **The Nature of International Education in Australian Universities and its Benefits** [Strategy Policy and Research in Education (SPRE) Ltd. for Universities Australia; 2009; Universities Australia  
([www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/content.asp?page=/news/media\\_releases/2009/uniaus\\_media\\_13\\_09.htm](http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/content.asp?page=/news/media_releases/2009/uniaus_media_13_09.htm))]  
Commissioned study recording 'important non-economic benefits of international education', as well as value in terms of export income and jobs. Considers the effect of international education on universities' research and curricula, international graduates/alumni, diplomacy, and trade.

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The authors of this issue: John Tarrant, Veronica Lasanowski, James Ransom and Nick Mulhern, would be pleased to receive comments on the usefulness and content of this briefing. News from other Commonwealth countries, which might be of wider interest, is also most welcome. They can be contacted by e-mail on [vcnet@acu.ac.uk](mailto:vcnet@acu.ac.uk) or by fax on +44 (0)20 7387 2655.

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