

Engaging students who want to 'make a difference'

GENERATIONAL SHIFT:

Different times, challenges and struggles

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HIGHER education providers around the world have been seeing new challenges and opportunities emerging in their sector, and have been grappling with how best to address them.

The Asean Economic Community and the Australian State of Victoria decided to let experts from the respective regions share their ideas and experiences through the Victoria-Southeast Asia Higher Education Forum, which was held recently in Kuala Lumpur.

Co-hosted by the Victorian Government Business Office in Malaysia and the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges & Universities, the forum served as a common platform towards developing and enhancing higher education cooperation, capacity-building and partnership between Victoria and its Southeast Asian counterparts.

One panel, moderated by Taylor's University deputy vice-chancellor Dr Pradeep Nair, comprised Dr Elizabeth Lee, senior executive director of Sunway University & Sunway Education Group; Dr Melissa Banks, director international of Swinburne University of Technology; John Molony, pro vice-chancellor international of Deakin University; and Zaim Mohzani, co-founder of Nation Building School.

Lee made the emphatic point that Gen-Y and Gen-Z students are "not drifters, but explorers", and that young people today "no longer subscribe to the status quo".

Gen-Y member Zaim described

Millennials like himself as individuals who may feel self-entitled but are also collaborative.

"It is time for teachers to ask what we want to study, and then engage the learner," he said.

"We are open to ideas, but we must always ask why, we need to incorporate technology and most importantly, we want to make a difference."

Nair said that graduates today are struggling to find work that they like, while employers find many job applicants lacking skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, grit and persistence, creativity and yes, curiosity too.

Banks agreed, saying that graduates today also need to be able to thrive in very different sectors.

"Those who demonstrate leadership and adaptability will do best," she said.

Zaim added that it is no longer just about grades and transcripts, as employers care more about how well-rounded the individual is.

Said Lee: "Knowledge never ends, and we can only teach so much. Educators' role is now more about nurturing the students rather than stuffing them with facts and data. When students need more information, they can always turn to Uncle Google."

"Our Education Ministry got it right when they decided to emphasise character over education."

Molony said that Deakin has made a genuine commitment to communicating with its students, and has invested in personalising its student portal.

He said Deakin University is the first university in the world to utilise

IBM Watson to enhance the quality of the student experience, by transforming the way students get advice and answers to questions.

"Students will find themselves being drawn into the conversation, as the analytics will reveal their preferences," he said.

Banks said that Swinburne's Online University has even influenced the university's on-campus curriculum in the way content is delivered and created with students.

"Students today have many distractions, but when they see the relevance of what is being taught to them, where real-world projects are involved, they will be keen to learn," she said.

Higher Education Ministry director-general Datuk Professor Dr Asma Ismail delivered the keynote address at the event, which also saw leading local institutions of higher learning, including University of Malaya, UCSI University and the ICAN College, separately ink a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with top Victorian higher education providers.

The collaboration between internationally-recognised higher education leaders in science, technology, innovation, business and design allows Malaysia to strengthen its readiness for the Asean Qualifications Reference Framework and raise its global competitiveness.

These MoUs offer new pathways for qualification, academic research and mobility for diploma, degree and postgraduate students.

Victoria's Minister for Training and Skills, Steve Herbert, witnessed the signings between representatives from the various organisations.

NEW PATHWAYS

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

The Partnered PhD agreement will facilitate research collaboration between researchers and joint supervision of postgraduate students in areas of complimentary strength. The partnership will also facilitate leading experts from both universities to collaborate on new research projects and joint publications. Postgraduate students who graduate under the agreement will be presented collaboratively-awarded degrees from both Swinburne and UM.

RMIT UNIVERSITY AND UCSI UNIVERSITY

The two institutions will cooperate in establishing closer links in the areas of academic partnership; student and staff mobility; joint research with RMIT's School of Engineering and the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies. Collaboration around the creation of vocational education qualifications relating to health, aged care, disability and nursing with opportunities for dual certifications is being considered.

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND ICAN COLLEGE

Credit transfers into the Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Accounting and Bachelor of Business Information Systems (Faculty of Business & Law) offered at Swinburne University of Technology.

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Dr Elizabeth Lee, Sunway University & Sunway Education Group senior executive director



From left) John Molony, Melissa Banks, Pradeep Nair, Elizabeth Lee and Zaim Mohzani.