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Abu Dhabi charting a new course

Khaleej Times Online - Abu Dhabi
December 29 2009

The advancement of education, particularly higher education, is an integral part of the 'Abu Dhabi Vision 2030', which aims to reduce the emirate's reliance on the oil sector as a source of economic activity and focus more on knowledge-based industries.

To realise this vision, it is imperative for the future leaders of the country to have access to quality education at home that would enable them to compete in this global economy.

To equip the young Emiratis for higher education, the Abu Dhabi education sector has amended its curriculum to put more emphasis on English language as the medium of instruction. The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) recently hired a thousand native English-speaking teachers from Canada, the UK, the US, Australia and New Zealand to teach English, Math, Science and IT in English language at public schools across the emirate.

"English is the international language of business and science and is central to Abu Dhabi achieving its vision of economic growth and diversification. We need to improve the quality of schools in Abu Dhabi so that our students perform above the international average and support the workforce with the right skills. To this, we need to make some fundamental changes across the entire system now," Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, director-general of ADEC, had said earlier.

And to bring quality education to the UAE capital, the government has partnered with several international institutions.

In May 2006, under the patronage of General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Paris Sorbonne University officially opened its first overseas campus at Umm Al Nar in Abu Dhabi. It provides courses in arts, languages and social sciences.

Two years later, Paris Sorbonne University - Abu Dhabi (PSUAD) relocated to a new, purpose-built campus on Al Reem Island following a special ground-breaking ceremony on January 15, 2008 officiated by French President Nicholas Sarkozy.

In partnership with Agence France-Muséums, PSUAD will be offering a Master's degree in 'History of Art and Museum Studies' starting next academic year. The scope of the programme includes History of Art, Archaeology and Museum Studies.

This year, two major launches happened with the arrival of two renowned names in Abu Dhabi's higher education landscape.

INSEAD, the leading international business school, launched its world renowned Executive MBA (EMBA) programme for the 2010-11 academic year in October. The EMBA aims to attract executives, family business owners and entrepreneurs who wish to advance their management skills on its campus in Abu Dhabi.

In December, Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed was again the official figure that launched the downtown campus of the New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD).

According to officials at NYUAD, the new campus will be comprehensive, degree-granting, liberal arts and sciences college with select graduate and professional programmes and an institute of advanced research.

It will admit its inaugural undergraduate class of 100 students, drawn from the top high school students around the world, in August 2010.

The downtown campus will house all major academic cultural activities for NYUAD until the completion of the residential campus at Saadiyat Island in 2014.

Asked why NYU chose to establish its satellite branch in Abu Dhabi, Hilary Ballon, deputy vice-chancellor of NYUAD, told Khaleej Times, "We were interested in building a comprehensive programme, and Abu Dhabi was interested likewise in our vision of creating a superior institution. It's really about common goals, common commitment to creating one of the outstanding universities in the 21st century.

"We are developing a liberal arts and science programme which stresses a broad education across a range of field. It is not a technical training. It is not focused on building a set of skills, it's teaching people how to think."

John Sexton, president of NYU, echoed Abu Dhabi's vision when he said, "Preparing the next generation of global leaders requires a new approach to higher education."

By bringing in quality institutions in the emirate, the government emphasises its intention of becoming a hub for higher education in the region.

As for the local universities, they have made several advancements of their own in terms of introducing new programmes in their respective curriculum as well as establishing research centres.

The United Arab Emirate's University (UAEU) in Al Ain started offering the Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) programme this year.

The Khalifa University of Science, Technology and Research (KUSTAR), meanwhile, will in future offer degrees in Engineering, Logistics and Management, Life Sciences and Homeland Security. The university is also developing an international centre for research and development to ensure that research becomes an integral part of the university.

Zayed University celebrated last week the graduation of the first class in its Graduate Certificate in Diplomacy and International Affairs. The class included 23 male and female students. The programme seeks to create the next generation of diplomats who has adequate knowledge and understanding of world affairs and ready to contribute to the development of the UAE.

Zayed University is also currently developing its new campus at the Capital District which covers an area of 213,000 sq m that could accommodate up to 6,000 students. When completed in 2011, the new campus will comprise state-of-the-art academic and research facilities designed according to the highest international standards.

Noting the prime importance of education in the development of the country, Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, said in October, "The UAE education sector is working to be at par with the universities in other parts of the world... to this effect, we are reviewing and refreshing all programmes in our universities because education is of prime importance in the development of the UAE."

He added that the UAE is bringing into the country the best courses from around the world and incorporating them in the universities here.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?col=§ion=theuae&xfile=data/theuae/2009/December/theuae_December819.xml

Sri Lanka IIT strengthens ties with Deakin University

The Sunday Times - Sri Lanka
December 27 2009

The Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the prestigious Deakin University of Australia. SLIIT's close ties with Deakin, established in 2000, spans a decade of teaching excellence between the two prominent institutions. Those present at the signing of the MoU included Chancellor S. Karunaratne, Dr. Mahesha Kapurubandara (Dean, Student Affairs), Dr. Koliya Pulasinghe (Dean/Postgraduate Studies and Research), Dr. Theekshana Suraweera, and Deakin representatives - Associate Professor Dineli Mather and International Marketing Manager, Glen Meehan.

Elaborating on Deakin's experiences working with SLIIT over the last ten years, Chancellor S. Karunaratne stated that the close collaboration has been strengthened over the years, resulting in an affirmation of that bond through the signing of the MoU. There has been a consistent increase in the number of SLIIT students each year at Deakin, due to its curriculum and to the presence of a strong Sri Lankan community in Melbourne and the delightful coastal suburb of Geelong, the main hubs for Deakin's IT Campuses. Deakin's IT Campus in Geelong is known to be the second largest university in Victoria.

Deakin's curriculum, excellent facilities and flexible courses allow students to structure their degree in a manner expedient to their career goals. SLIIT students will benefit from unique course units offered for Information Technology, which provide a thorough grounding in computing skills, with primary focus on theoretical and technical knowledge necessary to enable graduates to keep pace within the constantly changing field of IT. Deakin creates a pathway for SLIIT students to follow the courses offered at this prestigious university, where they are presented with a multitude of choices as to the manner in which they can structure their degree, be it a specialised niche degree (three years), a research-based Honours degree (four years), or a Master's degree in IT and relevant fields of specialisation.

"One of the main attractions for overseas students is the small community-based atmosphere within Deakin", elaborates Dineli Mather. "This informal atmosphere and supportive study environment facilitates open discussion and arms students with the skills necessary to enhance their career aspirations, progressively empowering them to improve their marketability to meet the demands of the IT industry". Moreover, Deakin provides career development learning workshops in order to assess and improve students' generic skills, encouraging them to gain practical experience and guide them through a career path. The internship programmes at the IT campuses at Deakin further develop students' skills - in place of following one unit during a semester, they are encouraged to gain practical experience within the work environment.

Mather further states that SLIIT students perform exceptionally well at Deakin. "Their English skills are very good and they possess a solid technical background". Within the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of SLIIT students being accepted for the Master's and even PhD programmes at

Deakin. Career-focused and professionally aligned, the institution's newly revised degrees and curriculum, areas of specialisation and globally recognised industry certifications allow students to gain an edge within a fast evolving and demanding IT environment.

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/091227/Education/edu04.html>

Going down under with a purpose

The Phnom Penh Post
December 23 2009

Promising Cambodian graduates and young professionals are heading to Australia to hone their skills

HUNDREDS of Cambodian students have left the country to study in Australia over the past 15 years. Some of them have entered Aussie universities as tuition-paying students, but a select group has received scholarships to study in postgraduate programmes abroad through the Australian Leadership Awards, Australian Development Scholarships and Endeavour Awards. Upon their return to the Kingdom, members of Australian Alumni Association (AAA) have been making waves in various positions within the public and private sectors. The impact of AAA members has been particularly critical in ongoing efforts to change the landscape of Cambodia's private university system.

Hundreds of Australian alumni gathered last Thursday along with Australia's Ambassador to Cambodia Margaret Adamson to say farewell to the 2010 recipients of the Australian government-funded scholarships.

The 38 students who will be heading south include representatives of various ministries, universities, private companies and civil society groups.

The students have varying goals for their studies, and they have all developed specific plans for how they will use their time in Australia to improve Cambodia upon their return.

"I will study technological development in order to help integrate technology into Cambodian schools and universities as they continue to develop," said Sidaroth Kong. Not only do the students have experience and skills within their field of expertise, they also have soft skills and high English proficiency, which will allow them to integrate easily into an English university.

It is yet to be seen what sort of impact this year's crop of talent will make on Cambodia's development, but there are members of the AAA throughout Cambodia who are redefining quality in the fields of medicine, agriculture, academia and development.

Australian alumni Tia Phalla, vice chairman of the National Aids Authority, gave the keynote speech for the evening's event. He has been working to build up the capacity of Cambodia's HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, which have garnered international attention for their effectiveness. Also in attendance was Chhour Y Mengwas, who returned from Australia in 1995 and is now the director of the National Paediatric Hospital.

The youngest-ever recipient of the scholarship, Pheakkdey Ngoun, who was 20 years old when he left for Australia four years ago, is now on his way to study in America on a Fulbright Scholarship in order to develop a plan for how to ensure that Cambodia's involvement in carbon-credit programmes provides a maximum benefit to Cambodian people.

Along with a number of other countries (see sidebar), Australia's embassy has contributed to the UN millennium goals by providing scholarship for students to develop themselves in order to return to build the capacity of their home country.

The impact of these graduates can be felt in many of the countries' development initiatives, including the booming private university system. While many universities are still plagued by low-quality education, unqualified professors and improper management practices from lecturers up to presidents and rectors, a group of young Cambodians has returned from Australia with a vision for what universities in Cambodia could be.

"In Cambodia you are taught to copy your teacher and do what they do," said Kieng Rotana, who is the president of the AAA, founding president of the Cambodian Higher Education Association and current vice chancellor of Pannasastra University. "In Australia we were taught to discover our own ideas and engage in critical thinking."

Kieng Rotana founded the CHEA along with Ich Seng and Ban Thero, who are chancellor and vice chancellor of Mekong University, as well as Meas Renrith, who is now vice rector of Build Bright University.

CHEA was formed as "a group of educators who could work together to form ideas for how to deal with problems and improve Cambodia's education system".

Ich Seng says that his vision for Mekong University was largely influenced by his time in Australia.

"We wanted to re-create the picture we had of Australian universities in Cambodia," he said. In the school's first year, many of the students weren't ready for a curriculum that involved critical thinking and academic responsibility.

"We challenged students with difficult classes and created an atmosphere where cheating and corruption were absolutely out of the question," said Ich Seng, adding that Mekong lost over 50 percent of first-year students because they couldn't or didn't want to manage the academic pressures.

Now Mekong is producing some of the country's future leaders, particularly in the field of business.

One of the departing fellows, Chheng Sokunthy, is temporarily leaving her post with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. She hopes to return with the skills to help develop an oversight capacity for her ministry over the country's higher education system.

"I want to help improve quality and management as well as the student experience for higher education," she said.

While they are in Australia Cambodian students provide a great benefit to their host country, "Having unique perspectives at Universities in Australia makes the experience more enriching for everyone", said Australia's Ambassador to Cambodia Margaret Adamson.

However it is upon their return that the benefits of the program truly take hold; as the next generation of Cambodian leaders re-enter their country with a vision for the future and skills to make turn their vision into reality.

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2009122330388/Education-and-Career/going-down-under-with-a-purpose.html>

Study at University in South Australia, UniSA programs

YouTube.com

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spzed4xUUhg>

Aussie dollar's surge takes toll on foreign students

The Sydney Morning Herald

December 18 2009

I decided to do my PhD in Australia in the, now debunked, belief that it would cost me less than other countries. I have been here for six months and I now think that this education is going to be more expensive than almost all other destinations I had on my application list. The rent of the dormitory I'm living in is clear evidence of this.

However, my initial wishful thinking has nothing to do with the early tuition and daily cost calculations. Instead, it has much to do with a surge in Australian dollar in the past year.

On October 10, 2008 and right at the time of my calculation for getting a PhD degree in Canberra, one Australian dollar was exchanged for only 65.46 American cents and it was at that moment that I was enthusiastically preparing my research plan for Canberra's Australian National University.

Today, if I take one American dollar to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the bank employee gives me only 0.9420 Aussie cents. When I exchanged some \$3000 recently, this rate was 0.9689 AU cents for one US dollar.

Having kept all my previous savings in American dollars, the increasing value of Aussie dollar has caused me to lose more than one-third of the value of my savings in the last semester.

I don't know that what percentage of foreign applicants have been dissuaded recently to apply for an Australian university because of the rise of dollar, but the current situation is not welcome for those already here who have to buy Australian dollar to pay their tuition fees and daily expenditures.

The worse is that tuition fees are due for an annual 5 per cent increase starting from next February. In addition to that, my 2010 dormitory contract indicates that because of a 4.2 per cent increase in the rent I will be forced to pay \$325.75 dollars more next year for the rent and internet connection.

In this situation, foreign students like me have to keep an eye on their tight budget by trimming regular spending on foods and drinks, cutting vacations and costly extracurricular activities, and trying to find a part-time work in an already competitive job market.

Here, the Australian Government's role becomes crucial. The Government could force universities not to increase tuition fees and the rent for accommodation housing foreign students. Given the increased value of the Australian dollar, it is not irrational to expect the Government to intervene and order all universities to reduce tuition fees for foreign students.

Higher education is Australia's third largest industry and the interventionist role of the Government in such critical moments seems unavoidable. More importantly, the global financial crisis and the economic downturn have hardly hit many middle-income families in the developing world and they could one day easily afford to send their children to Australia for a tertiary education.

Not all foreign students arrive here with a fat banking account or a rich family they can rely on. Taking foreign students for granted may not pay back in long term.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/aussie-dollars-surge-takes-toll-on-foreign-students-20091218-12r4.html>

Australia: A jewel in Monash's crown?

University World News
December 20 2009

Although Professor Ed Byrne only took up the post as Monash University's eighth vice-chancellor in July, he has twice visited its South African offshoot in Johannesburg and is convinced it will come to be seen as "the jewel in the Monash crown".

"I believe the campus in South Africa will train many of the African leaders of the future and it may well turn out to be the most important thing Australia has done as far as education is concerned for the African continent," Professor Byrne says.

He returned in November after travelling to Johannesburg with almost the entire Monash council, part of a scheme for the council to visit the university's overseas offshoots every few years.

"We spent a very thorough few days speaking with staff and students, meeting with government leaders and the heads of other academic institutions," Byrne says. "It was clear that support for the

campus was very high while the students felt their education was superb. I think the campus is a major contribution from Australia to the region, especially as quite a high proportion of the students come from other sub-Saharan countries outside South Africa."

Yet the prospects for a campus on the other side of the Southern Ocean were not always so bright. In the late 1990s, when former vice-chancellor David Robinson was pushing ahead with his plans to establish a Monash outpost "on every continent", academics in Melbourne were threatening rebellion.

Facing cuts to their numbers and watching as millions of dollars went on establishing the Johannesburg campus, academics held protest meetings and called stop works. All to no avail and eight years on, according to Byrne, Monash has spent A\$130 million (US\$115.5 million) creating a higher education showpiece that now enrolls nearly 3,000 students and expects to more than double that number within five years.

But Jeffrey Bender, Monash branch president of the National Tertiary Education Union, is far more cautious about the future of the campus although he says that staff, while strongly opposed to its establishment, now accept it as a fact of life.

Bender says the South African government wants the Monash campus to offer a more comprehensive suite of programmes such as engineering and science. That would cost money and the union would question any plan that included pouring millions more into the South African offshoot.

Despite charging students fees, even though many are on bursaries and scholarships, the Johannesburg campus still runs at a loss that Monash must make up each year, he says. Had not fee levels been substantially increased for commencing students next year, it was likely the campus would continue to lose money "into perpetuity".

But Byrne says the annual loss is declining and, as enrolments expand, he expects it will move into surplus: "The present three schools - humanities, IT and business - are thriving, a health school is about to start and we will extend that to other schools in due course," he says.

"We have research strengths within the existing schools and have set up a water research node in line with Monash's strength in Australia while our accident research centre has a node in Johannesburg and the and new health school will have a research node in global health."

Located in Ruimsig, a burgeoning suburb 25 kilometres north-west of the Johannesburg city centre, the campus is architecturally eye-catching. Its main buildings are located along a paved avenue while around the perimeter of the 40-hectare site, student accommodation quarters are being built that currently hold some 850 students.

"The schools here are extensions of the faculties in Australia," says Professor Simon Adams, deputy pro vice-chancellor in charge of international affairs. "And we are subject to the Australian quality assurance agency and to the quality assurance authority here in South Africa."

Adams is one of only three Australian academics working on the Monash campus as the majority of staff are locals. Yet the students are drawn from 44 countries and most are from outside South Africa.

"One of the things that really attracted me as you walk around the campus is the powerful sense of being part of an African university with a multitude of languages," he says. "From a professional point of view, it is very rewarding to work in that environment."

Although students pay fees, Adams says the university is not a private for-profit institution but rather "a private university with a public purpose": "We will not repatriate funds that are generated here back to Australia but will continue to invest resources in developing the campus."

"That is different from the business model of say Bond University which set up a campus here but pulled out of South Africa, or the other private providers whose aim was to generate income for their parent organisations."

Byrne's belief the Johannesburg campus will be a training ground for Africa's future leaders may be occurring already. Adams says students who graduated from the university three years ago are now playing key roles in governments, agencies and non-government organisations across the region.

"What we're trying to do here is not educate them so they can then leave for other countries but to help transform the places they come from, to go back to their own countries and make a difference," Adams says.

"That's why we have such a strong community programme, a strong volunteer outreach scheme and I think that changes the students' mindset - it's connected to what they do academically and it becomes addictive to the Australians who come here as well."

The community outreach approach extends to bringing youngsters from the nearby Zandspruit settlement in the university bus to the campus each Saturday. There they take classes in mathematics, science, computing and art run by up to 700 university student volunteers. Academics also work with the settlement's community organisations to help improve conditions there.

"People come here from the [Melbourne] campus and it's like 'Wow!' they suddenly find themselves involved and working in the local settlement, doing things that are connected to teaching and research," Professor Adams says. "It restores your faith in what education is all about. If education isn't to change the world and make it a better place, then what the hell is education for?"

* Australian universities operate almost 900 programmes in overseas countries although 70% are in Singapore, Malaysia, China and Hong Kong. Thirteen universities have established offshore campuses or study centres while the remaining 24 have arrangements with existing institutions in the host country to prepare students for study in Australia, or they run degree courses under the Australian university's academic control.

A decision by the University of New South Wales to create a campus in Singapore proved costly when the campus suddenly shut down in June 2007, after only one semester. It was among Australian higher education's worst business failures and led to the university facing a \$17.5 million loss on the venture.

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20091218101501305>

Vietnam: Persuading overseas students to return

University World News
December 20 2009

The Vietnamese government is attempting to tackle its ongoing brain-drain problem by persuading students who went overseas to study to return home. Some four million Vietnamese now live and work in 101 countries around the world, including a large number of tertiary-level students in America, Australia, Canada and Singapore.

In the past year, the number of higher education students studying in the US increased by more than 46%. While 87% of these are undertaking undergraduate or postgraduate courses, the remainder are involved in other types of study or training programmes that are not readily available in Vietnam or are not of a sufficiently high standard.

A conference attended by 900 Viet kieu, or overseas Vietnamese, was recently held in Hanoi aimed at persuading the diaspora to return. The conference, the first of its kind, was sponsored by the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese and focused not only on improving young people's knowledge of their own country but also on attracting the overseas educated Vietnamese back home.

Overseas Vietnamese are a valuable asset to their country even though they live in other countries. Because of their close ties to their families and their country, many are working to improve the situation back home. As Dr Lynn McNamara, acting Executive Director of the Vietnam Education Foundation, says: "Vietnam will always draw them back."

Many Viet kieu are making their own mark, not only in their adopted countries but, like Professor Do Dinh Chieu, in their home country as well. The professor, a physicist from the north of Vietnam, divides his time between lecturing in France and Vietnam, as well as working with Vietnam's science institutes, the Ministry of Education and Training, and, increasingly, with the Vietnam Physics Institute in preparation for the construction of Vietnam's first nuclear power plant.

Although the Hanoi conference was a first, it is not the first time the government has tried to encourage overseas Vietnamese to return or, at least, participate in helping build the country indirectly. In 2007, an amended Nationality Law meant that a greater number of overseas Vietnamese were able to hold dual citizenship.

A visa exemption scheme also came into law making it easier for overseas Vietnamese to purchase houses in their adopted countries and, as well, government offices were established overseas to continue supporting citizens. Yet, while many young people expressed their desire to return home, this has not occurred.

During New Year celebrations this year, State President Nguyen Minh Triet declared the Viet kieu were "an inseparable part of the Vietnamese nation and that the Party and State create the best possible conditions for them to return and contribute to the homeland".

Dr Bui Kim Hai, a Vietnamese-born Belgian citizen and family doctor who has been living and working outside Vietnam for 40 years, says: "Most Vietnamese overseas want to make a contribution to the development of their homeland. The younger generations of Vietnamese overseas are acting as a bridge between Vietnam and the outside world."

Bui returns frequently to Vietnam to work with the poor and has also been responsible for implementing many assistance programmes with the assistance of the Belgian government. Not all overseas Vietnamese, however, are staying away. Children born to Vietnamese parents living overseas are gradually coming back to discover their roots. Curious to know where their parents came from and what kind of life they led in their country of birth has long drawn the second generation back to their parents' homeland.

Some may not enjoy the experience, others say they find it strangely comforting and stay on. Nhan Nguyen, born in America to Vietnamese parents, is a case in point. A lecturer at the RMIT International University in Ho Chi Minh City, Nguyen originally came for six months but, liking what he saw, decided to stay on.

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20091218104647839>

Chinese students bring bonanza to Western economies

GlobalTimes.cn
December 14 2009

It may be too early to predict that China will play a lead in saving the world economy in this chilly winter, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that China is bringing breeze to the cash-strapped international education in the West.

Soaring interest among Chinese students has led to record foreign enrollment at US universities, AFP quoted an annual report by the US Institute of International Education released in mid-November as saying.

China was "the key driver of growth," with the number of Chinese students heading to the US increasing by 21 percent this year to 98,510.

"Chinese families tend to be smaller and put aside great resources to invest in their children's educations," said Rajika Bhandari, director of research for India's Institute of International Education. The Christian Science Monitor reported that, unlike in the past, more of those Chinese students are undergraduates – not graduate students – as wealthy Chinese families pay for the international gold

standard in education for their one child. The average annual cost of studying in the US is estimated at 270,000 yuan (\$39,500).

Attracting Chinese students is a business worth pursuing. The average tuition fee for a Chinese student in the UK is 20,000 pounds (\$32,480), while that fee for a UK or EU student is only 7,000 pounds (\$11,368), partly subsidized by the British government, because those students' families often pay taxes in the country, according to The Guardian.

Chinese students are the largest group of overseas students in the UK, although the annual cost is as expensive as 300,000 yuan (\$43,944).

Apart from the US and Britain, Australia has been the third-largest overseas destination for Chinese students.

Australia has almost 150,000 Chinese students, a quarter of the country's 610,000 overseas students, and as a group they fund an estimated quarter of all Australian university teaching, according to The Australian newspaper. Chinese students contribute 22 percent to the Australian overseas educational industry, which is worth A\$16 billion (\$12.3 billion) annually.

The revenue generated by the education industry is so big as to being only second to exportation of oil and coal.

Engine for economies

The surge of Chinese students offers a potential boon to English-speaking destinations both economically and politically, especially when their fiscal budget is suffering in the financial downturn. As English-speaking countries are the most popular with Chinese students, "the victory of English" has brought huge economic benefits to major English-speaking countries, according to the British Cultural Committee.

There's growing disposable income in China, but there aren't enough good universities to meet the demand, according to USA Today.

According to the British International Student Business Committee, many colleges would be closed and educational infrastructures would be shabby without overseas students, who allegedly contributed 4 billion pounds to the economy in Britain.

A land agent company in Luton, England, told the Global Times that some old houses suspended for renting have become popular recently as more Chinese students come.

"International education means domestic economic development," Allan E. Goodman, president of the US Institute of International Education, told The New York Times. "Foreign students bring \$17.8 billion to this country. A lot of campuses this year are increasing their international recruitment, trying to keep their programs whole by recruiting international students to fill their spaces."

Many large public universities are devoting new resources to building up their share of international undergraduates.

Western governments also lend a hand to the enrollment of Chinese students. The US began to approve more visas for Chinese students. Australia attracted students by offering them permanent residency once they are enrolled.

Many Chinese students told the Global Times that they came to English-speaking countries in order to study in an environment of English and accept the rigorous education.

Still, some of the students found difficulty in adapting to the English-language environment, since many colleges attract students by setting lower entry requirements.

It is not surprising to find ads for essay-writing services in Chinese newspapers in London.

Some rich Chinese students in the US also changed local residents' impression of them. Yan Hong, who is in charge of global recruitment for Pasadena City College at the University of California, is worried about Chinese students from rich families. "They put great efforts into choosing world-tier luxuries and first-class cars, but not on their studies.

'Carleton University'

The late Chinese writer Qian Zhongshu created "Carleton University" in his novel "Fortress Besieged." The term "Carleton University," from which Qian's character Fang Hongjian purchased his fake PhD diploma, is now used by Chinese to mean an illegitimate academic institution or diploma mill.

Actually, there are many "Carleton" universities in the real world. They're the ones that aim simply at earning money by recruiting overseas students.

The Ireland International University, shut down last year in the United Kingdom, was a case in point. Its claim of being of independent "accreditation" was shown to be by a body of its own creation, while its governing council, by the admission of its honorary chancellor, did not exist. Nor did the claimed campus in Ireland, which was in fact a mailbox.

Other universities trick by having analogous names. For example, the "University of Leads" and the "University of New Castle," cheat students with a slight difference in the spelling with "University of Leeds" and "Newcastle University."

After thousands of foreign students studying in Australia were left shocked and angry after the collapse of four private colleges in Melbourne and Sydney in early November, 15 more Chinese students in Australia have been exposed to an uncertain future as two more colleges were shut down last week by a state regulator.

Australia's troubled foreign education industry has seen 11 colleges suddenly close since May, when the government started a crackdown on privately run colleges.

The Chinese Education Ministry published an alert in mid-November, warning Chinese students against enrolling in "unstable and risky" private Australian colleges.

"Students should be cautious and not choose education providers that mainly enroll international students under a short-term business model based upon education as export," the ministry said.

Thousands of such colleges have sprung up to attract students from China and India especially.

"Colleges and universities should be the cradle for elites," Ma Qingyun, dean of the Southern California Institute of Architecture, told the Global times. "That's their social responsibility."

Ma said his college offers scholarship and working opportunities to distinctive Chinese students. "We are not attracting Chinese students' wallets."

"The exportation of Chinese students suggests China's growing power," Ji Hong, with the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times. "Chinese students studying in Western colleges are also a strong support for the prosperity of Western economies."

"Studying abroad is a necessary step for China to blend into the global community," Chen Zhunmin, a counselor at the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles, told this reporter. "The bankruptcy of some colleges won't stop the trend of studying overseas."

"Chinese students should take a cautious look at those colleges that betray the mission of an educational institution," Zhang Yiwu, a professor at Peking University, said, adding that Chinese people need to value their own language and culture as well.

<http://business.globaltimes.cn/world/2009-12/491504.html>

Adelaide Hostels More Than Just Lodgings For Malaysians

Bernama.com - Malaysian National News Agency
December 13 2009

Two hostels in Adelaide are making an effort to provide international students, especially Malaysians, with more than just a comfortable environment to study in.

Adelaide International Village managing director Hassan Salleh said the residents of Bradford and Highgate lodges also received guidance to help them settle into everyday life in the South Australian city.

Johor-born Hassan has a lot of experience in this area -- he has been looking after Malaysian students for about 40 years.

The 250 international students staying at his hostels come from many countries, with the largest representations from China, India and Malaysia.

"Our service goes beyond just providing a room for a student to study and sleep in," Hassan told Bernama.

"We believe we help to prepare them for their stay in Adelaide and to deal with people in their everyday life."

A support service was provided to help students tackle any day-to-day difficulties that they might encounter, he said.

Hassan has also started a programme teaching parents how to better prepare their children for a lengthy period of study overseas.

Some students were unable to do basic housekeeping work, such as keeping their rooms tidy, cooking healthy and nutritious foods, doing their laundry, and even switching off electricity when not in use, he said.

While he maintains that the hostels provide a safe environment, Hassan also encourages families to teach students to be streetwise.

Hassan said the lodges' operators encouraged a friendly atmosphere that enriched the student experience, and friendships made there often continued long after the students had graduated and returned to their home countries.

"The other philosophy we exercise at our hostels is for all residents to develop caring attitudes towards each other and towards the environment, such as the careful use of electricity and disposing of their litter in the proper way, including recycling."

Many students stay at the lodges for the entire duration of their studies in Adelaide, often occupying the same room from arrival to graduation.

The likeable Hassan enjoys watching the transformation the students undergo during their stay.

"When I first see a student arrive to perhaps undertake foundation studies, he or she is shy and timid and quite young, just barely 17 or 18 years old. As the years progress and as they develop their personalities, the transformation into mature and confident young men and women -- it never ceases to amaze me."

Sharing the students' achievements with their parents is also one of the highlights of his job.

"Sometimes whole families arrive to attend their graduation ceremony and the families' faces are filled with pride. It makes one's job a satisfying experience," he added.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=461917>

Australia's place as 'study spot' in peril

The Age

December 13 2009

AUSTRALIA is a huge quarry. It's also a nice place to take a holiday and, perhaps, get a university education.

That is how many of our Asian neighbours perceive us, says Ian Fraser, head of RMIT International College, who warns that Australia cannot continue as a factory for foreign graduates.

"If we want to have a future that is not reliant on digging things out of the ground, we have to show we are interested in what our neighbouring countries have to offer our universities, beyond just their student fees," Dr Fraser said.

"As a society we're not willing to invest in universities and in research. It may be a political hot potato, but we should be inviting countries such as China to set up campuses here, in partnership with Australian universities."

An international trade specialist and former associate dean of business, Dr Fraser is retiring after 34 years at RMIT, where he has seen huge changes to university funding models, from a system almost entirely funded by the public during the Whitlam era, to the reinstatement of a user-pays model under Hawke, and its expansion under Howard.

Falling public funding has also meant universities are now dependent on fees paid by foreign students, which account for up to a third of their income.

Dr Fraser said the election of the Rudd Government had promised "rosier times", but inadequate indexation of Commonwealth funding and last month's withdrawal of promised infrastructure funding had dented his hopes.

Partial deregulation from 2012 will also feed the addiction to foreign student fees, Dr Fraser said. Undergraduate places will be offered according to demand from 2012, which is likely to boost student numbers. But fees will remain capped, making it hard for universities to finance growth in buildings and staff.

Dr Fraser said that as a consequence universities would have to work harder to increase their revenue from international students.

Programs such as RMIT's international college - where each international student is supported by a local mentor and receives intensive language and academic schooling - had helped attract and retain overseas students, he said.

But in the longer term, Australia needed to reassess its relationship with foreign universities. "The Federal Government wants to regulate the industry as if it's the only stakeholder, but countries such as China are already major players."

Chinese students account for about a third of foreign students. While Australia's reputation among Indian students has suffered after a series of assaults and the closure of a dozen dodgy training colleges, Dr Fraser said China's relationship with Australia was also at stake.

He said the collapse of the Chinese-owned Meridian College in Melbourne and Sydney last month could damage Australia's reputation, and it is believed that the Chinese Government is reviewing the information about Australia on its study website.

In the wake of such damaging publicity, Austrade last month assumed responsibility for marketing education overseas. But Dr Fraser said education should not be promoted as a purely economic industry alongside "people selling coal and wool".

Instead, he said education was more about partnerships, both financial and intellectual, and China was an ideal stablemate.

"Obviously, in the world of the future, innovation and research and brain power is really going to be very important and China knows that.

"Because we have this critical mass of Chinese students already in Australia, there's the potential there to really have some strong relationships with universities in China and fit in with their international strategy since we don't really have one of our own.

"It used to be a case of what can Australian universities do for China. Now it's becoming what can they do for us."

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/australias-place-as-study-spot-in-peril-20091212-kppy.html>

Senior official calls for enhancing int'l Chinese language education

ChinaView.cn

December 11 2009

A Senior Chinese official Friday called for promoting Chinese language education via Confucius Institutes around the globe.

State Councilor Liu Yandong told the fourth conference of Confucius Institutes that the institutes had become an important brand of international Chinese language education and a platform for educational and cultural exchanges.

The conference was attended by university heads from 87 countries.

Liu, also president of the Confucius Institute headquarters council, said different culture should respect and learn from each other and seek common grounds while shelving differences.

"Languages as carriers of culture and communication tools are bridges for different civilizations," she said, adding the Chinese government always encouraged cross-cultural communication and advocated the study of other nation's languages.

Liu said the Confucius Institutes should innovate and localize teaching methodology and strengthen overseas cooperation.

On Friday evening, students of the Confucius Institutes from 22 countries including Japan, Thailand, Mongolia and Australia staged a performing art show, featuring Chinese songs and dances, as well as Peking Opera.

Li Changchun, a Standing Committee member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, watched the show and praised students' performance.

He also visited a Confucius Institute exhibition.

Official statistics show 282 Confucius Institutes and 272 "Confucius classrooms" have been set up in 88 countries and regions as of November, since the first one was established in 2004.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/11/content_12633620.htm

International Education Round Table

Media Release: David Bartlett

December 09 2009

The education experience for international students will be greatly improved through \$1.2 million of funding to attract more overseas learners to Tasmania.

The announcement was made at today's International Education Round Table, a high level industry group, established to create a new vision for international education in the state.

Premier and Minister for Education & Skills, David Bartlett, said a number of innovative initiatives would provide a supported and enriched experience for students travelling to Tasmania.

"The \$1.2 million over a three year period from 2010 will see the development of an international scholarship program, consisting of twelve scholarships each year.

"A new welcome program for all international students will make all the difference to students travelling to Tasmania – and this will consist of a welcome desk, a community mentor/buddy program and a welcome pack.

"A central contact desk or hotline will mean international students have an accessible and immediate source for advice, referral and advocacy whenever they should require it.

"And an industry awards program will be designed to celebrate and promote international education in the Tasmanian community."

The initiative would also see a revitalised and updated international education website; and resources allocated for international education agents to visit and experience Tasmania for themselves.

"This will allow education agents to become champions for the state, and be better equipped to sell the fantastic educational and cultural experiences Tasmania has to offer," Mr Bartlett said.

The Round Table was established in December 2007 to develop a strategy to market the state as a key international education provider, and increase student numbers in Tasmanian schools over the next decade.

It consists of key international education leaders from around the state.

"The Round Table has been incredibly busy over the last two years.

"As a result of its five-year strategic plan for international education, Government Education & Training International (GETI) was formed – which brought together under one banner the disparate arms of government international education in the state.

"International education units in the Department of Education, Economic Development and TAFE Tasmania were brought together to form GETI, which is now housed within the Tasmanian Polytechnic," Mr Bartlett said.

International student numbers have grown despite the global economic downturn, from 3,948 in 2007; to 4,149 in 2009; and 4,701 year to date for 2009.

"The purpose of the Round Table and GETI is to increase student enrolment numbers and fee revenue for the state, while encouraging excellence in education for international students," Mr Bartlett said.

"I believe the benefits to the Tasmanian community that come from a successful international education program go far beyond the monetary.

"This includes enhancement of cultural diversity in the community; assisting Tasmania in developing a global focus; and providing many international links and partnerships for us with the rest of the world.

"Tasmania is an extremely safe and welcoming place for international students to come to study and experience another culture – there is great potential for growth in international education in this state."

<http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=28689>

Overseas students given check-up

The Australian
December 09 2009

Bruce Baird's interim report of the review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 gives only broad indications of the review's thinking.

On many points the interim report just identifies an issue without saying what action is contemplated. But there seems to be medicine for almost everyone involved in Australian international tertiary education.

Baird notes that the Howard government encouraged migration-driven international student enrolments in 2001 by allowing graduating international students to apply for permanent residence while still in Australia.

The government further encouraged the link between immigration and study in 2005 when it added several trades to the Migration Occupations in Demand List, allowing students to count completion of additional vocational education programs towards their migration application. This encouraged migration-driven enrolments away from longer and more expensive higher education programs towards shorter and cheaper vocational programs.

It also led to big falls in international enrolments at some higher education institutions such as Charles Sturt University, Central Queensland University and the University of Western Sydney, and an explosion in enrolments in vocational education institutions, particularly private providers.

On January 1 this year the Rudd government introduced the Critical Skills List, which gives priority to migration applicants with qualifications in one of eight professions and four trades.

Students and graduates relying on the Migration Occupations in Demand List are increasingly frustrated because their applications now have a lower processing priority.

Baird doesn't suggest that the link between studying and migration be broken or even weakened, but he does say it will be crucial for future immigration changes to be handled sensitively and communicated well in advance, and grandfathered where possible and appropriate.

He also suggests that the government consider improving its pre-departure briefings of international students.

The review found support for a national international student consumer advocate to provide information to international students and for dispute resolution.

State and territory governments will have to make several changes, according to Baird. He notes that their monitoring of providers has been tightened so they no longer allow providers to enrol international students well above the capacity for which they have been approved and for which they have adequate facilities.

They may have to cede authority to regulate tertiary education to the government since the review reports widespread support for national regulation of international education to reduce duplication and overlap and the complexity and confusion caused by multiple regulators approaches to implementing ESOS.

Baird says state and local governments should regulate international student accommodation more effectively to reduce overcrowding and substandard housing.

The Victorian and NSW governments are encouraged to re-examine travel concessions and the review is considering whether more action may be needed to reduce exploitation by employers.

Baird says a continuing national police response is needed to demonstrate that Australia takes seriously the safety of international students.

For a start, reliable statistics are needed on crimes against international students.

All institutions will have to take more responsibility for the actions of their agents, which in any case is consistent with their legal obligation. Baird is considering whether education agents in Australia should be accredited.

The review is considering requiring institutions to provide information on programs, social support and the cost of living, which would be published on a central website.

This would be time-consuming for institutions, but it is surprising how difficult it is to get complete and comparable information on students' study and living costs. Institutions could reduce the burden of collecting and providing this information by co-operating regionally. Institutions also may be asked to help students more in obtaining suitable accommodation, which would also benefit from regional co-operation.

Baird suggests that institutions do more to promote international students' social engagement with domestic students and the general community. This has been an issue for Australian international education at least since Drew Nesdale's and Patricia Todd's journal article in 1993 on intercultural contact between international and domestic students.

The issue has become even more difficult since then because domestic students are reducing their engagement on campus as they spend more time off campus during the semester in paid employment. And of course the Howard government's policy on voluntary student unionism and the present impasse over student services funding is not helping.

Nonetheless, it is an important issue both for international students and domestic students generally to which universities will need to invest more in thinking, policy development and support services.

Private providers are likely to have to meet more stringent conditions for registration, such as establishing their financial viability and possibly providing a bank guarantee.

Owners and managers will have to meet a stronger test that they are a fit and proper person. The review is considering whether the diversity of a provider's students may be a factor in registration and compliance monitoring.

Baird proposes that regulation be more closely related to providers' risk, which may be indicated by their financial standing, educational experience, affiliations, agents and the diversity of their students. This will dampen the sector's entrepreneurial exuberance, but students have an understandably low tolerance of risk in their education.

Slower growth or even a somewhat reduced size of international student enrolments will be worthwhile if it preserves the sector's long-term health.

Gavin Moodie is a higher education policy analyst at Griffith University who writes regularly for the HES.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/overseas-students-given-check-up/story-e6frgcjx-1225808381316>

A Chinese lesson for educators

The Business Spectator - Australia
December 08 2009

While much media airtime has been given to the damage to Australia's educational reputation on the international stage from attacks on Indian students, of far greater concern is the impending failure of more private colleges, which could eat into our scorecard overseas, especially in our biggest international student market – China.

The markets for Chinese and Indian students in Australia are very different. In the year to October, there were around 149,000 Chinese students enrolled in educational institutions in Australia and

117,000 from India. But of all the international students at the top eight Australian universities, one third are Chinese. Only around 3 per cent are from India.

Education industry insiders tell Business Spectator that Chinese students tend to want a good quality education as their first priority and residential status as a secondary benefit. They are helped, to a degree, by China's one-child policy, which means families can pool financial resources for that one individual and pay for universities. However, the situation is reversed for Indian students, many of whom seek residential status as their primary objective. This is the reason that such a large number of Indian students are at private colleges – like Meridian, the college bought by Cayman Islands-based SinoEd Group that shut its doors earlier this year after going into voluntary administration, leaving thousands of students in the lurch.

But after years of complaints about the apparent ease with which a student visa can be obtained for those whose main intent is not to study, government officials are finally clamping down, which will result in future contractions in the flow of students from markets like India, and of course some from China and other countries. This means that more Australian private colleges are likely to fail in the coming months – some estimates put this number in the dozens.

While the Indian market for international students has been gripped by a recent spate of assaults on their students in Australia, this doesn't concern the Chinese populace. Partly because they're not being targeted in the same way and partly because historical cultural divisions between India and China means there's not a lot of love lost between the two nations.

But Chinese citizens are terrified of losing the hundreds of thousands of dollars they pay for their children to come and study at Australian institutions, if those institutions close their doors, before or during the period of study. Australian officials who recently visited some Australian students on exchange were baled up by Chinese parents wanting to know whether the reverse part of the exchange would take place. Given that the arrangement had been put in place by an Australian university, the differences were explained and they were assured that the exchange would be completed in full.

Differentiating between failing private colleges and Australia's universities is a key challenge for the Australian government and one they are facing head on. Australian Education International, the overseas arm of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, has been working overtime, with numerous announcements being put out to Chinese media organisations. The Chinese government has also been helpful in this regard, although they may not want to publicise the collapse of Meridian too much, given that the owner was, in fact, a Chinese national.

Despite a rising Australian dollar, especially against the US currency to which China's renminbi is pegged, Chinese student numbers are expected to rise, with strong demand already showing in the pipeline. Chinese GDP forecasts are back to healthy levels, meaning wealth is on the rise, as is the ability to pay the sky-high cost of sending your child to an Australian university on full fees, not to mention the higher living expenses.

According to international student placement company IDP Education's report Global Student Mobility: An Australian Perspective Five Years On published in 2007, between 2005 and 2025 Chinese enrolments in Australian higher education will more than double, with an annual compound growth rate of around 4 per cent. While India doesn't yet have the same level of personal wealth as China, it was also expected to post massive growth in student numbers in Australia, with an annual compound growth rate of 4.7 per cent, but the tighter visa restrictions that have emerged are likely to stymie this growth trajectory.

To prevent further damage to Australia's reputation, the Australian government must move to immediately assess the situation of the remaining private colleges. Behind closed doors, the academic community has long been criticising the government for bowing to pressure from private business in allowing so many privately run colleges to open their doors. These colleges are now finding that their business models are not viable, as the flow of students dries up. If the government wants to minimise the damage to its relationship with China, and indeed India and other nations from which our international students hail, such as Korea and Thailand, they need to contain this threat and then minimise its fallout.

<http://www.businessspectator.com.au/bs.nsf/Article/Counting-the-educational-costs-pd20091207-YH8EF?OpenDocument&src=sph>

China alerts students on dodgy Australian colleges

The Australian
December 07 2009

China is directing its booming student trade away from "unstable and risky" private colleges in Australia, warning that those who intend to study here should enrol only in accredited universities and TAFE colleges.

An alert published by the Chinese Education Ministry and disseminated throughout China contains an explicit warning against Chinese students enrolling in private Australian colleges. Thousands of such colleges have sprung up to attract students from China and India especially.

But the collapse of several high-profile operations has damaged the reputation of the Australian higher education sector, triggering a charm offensive by politicians to convince students Australian education has been cleaned up. But in an escalation of Chinese warnings about Australia's \$17 billion education industry, the Education Ministry has re-issued a list of providers that students are approved to study at.

"Students should be cautious and not choose education providers that mainly enrol international students under a short-term business model based upon education as export," the Education Ministry said.

In a further blow to belated efforts by Australian authorities to toughen regulations protecting overseas students, the Chinese government branded private providers "unstable and risky -- even if they have been approved by local authorities".

As the Australian government foreshadowed an upgraded regulatory framework to protect students from dodgy providers, the Chinese government said "students shall choose Ministry of Education-approved education agents" and declared the rest illegal.

Australia has almost 150,000 Chinese students who make up a quarter of the country's 610,000 overseas students and as a group fund an estimated quarter of all Australian university teaching.

The alert was described as "significantly influential" by Australia's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/china-alerts-students-on-dodgy-australian-colleges/story-e6frgcjx-1225807521174>

NZ Journalists For Singapore, Hong Kong And Manila Internships

Voxy.co.nz - New Zealand
December 07 2009

Three young New Zealand journalists have been awarded Asia New Zealand Foundation media scholarships to undertake temporary internships at three distinguished Asia-based media organisations next year.

The three journalists are Pushpa Jabin (TVNZ), Jono Hutchison (TV3) and Amanda Fisher (Fairfax Media).

Ms Jabin will join CNBC Asia in Singapore, Mr Hutchison will be placed at the International Herald Tribune bureau in Hong Kong and Ms Fisher will undertake an internship at the Philippine Star in Manila.

Pushpa Jabin is a news producer on TVNZ 7. She is a graduate of the University of Otago, majoring in communications, and has a background in business reporting.

Jono Hutchison is a reporter on TV3's Sunrise programme and a graduate of journalism and communications studies from AUT University.

Amanda Fisher is a graduate of Massey University's school of journalism and is employed at the Dominion Post newspaper.

The three annual scholarships are offered by the Asia New Zealand Foundation (www.asianz.org.nz) to give promising young journalists opportunities to test their journalism skills in a region that is becoming increasingly vital to New Zealand's future interests.

The internships are made possible through the support of the International Herald Tribune in Hong Kong, CNBC Asia in Singapore and the Philippine Star in Manila.

The deadline for next year's scholarship applications will be October 29, 2010.

<http://www.voxy.co.nz/business/nz-journalists-singapore-hong-kong-and-manila-internships/5/32431>

Working hols deal inked with Canada

The Standard - Hong Kong
December 07 2009

Hong Kong has signed a new deal that will allow 200 young people to work their way through a 12-month stay in Canada next year.

The "stay-and-work" deal takes to six the number of countries with which the territory has inked such deals.

Schemes are already in place with New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany and Japan.

So far, more than 9,450 Hong Kong youngsters have taken part while about 1,280 young people from New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and Germany have stayed and worked in Hong Kong.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Matthew Cheung Kin-chung and Stockwell Day, Canada's minister of international trade, signed a memorandum on the scheme at Government House yesterday.

Present were Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

A total of 200 places are available on each side next year. Successful applicants will be allowed to stay up to 12 months for holidays and work to finance their stay.

Hong Kong University Students' Union vice president (external) Martin Kok Hiu-tin welcomed the move, saying it will help broaden the horizons of young people during their overseas stay.

"It is always good for young people to be exposed to different cultures and meet different people," he said, adding that it would be good if more countries could join the exchange scheme.

The final-year law student said it would also be interesting to stay in developing countries that have completely different lifestyles from Hong Kong.

"Personally, I would be interested in staying in less developed countries which have a completely different judicial system from Hong Kong and the Commonwealth countries," Kok said.

The scheme is available for Hong Kong residents aged between 18 and 30 and holding SAR or British National (Overseas) passports.

Details on visa application are available at the Canadian consulate general website (at www.hongkong.gc.ca).

Canadian applicants may contact the Hong Kong Immigration Department by telephone on 2824-6111 or download the necessary information from the department's website (www.immd.gov.hk).

http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=11&art_id=91553&sid=26332226&con_type=1

Lessons learnt abroad

The Star Daily - Malaysia
December 06 2009

It is not the learning alone, but the total experience that lures our students to foreign shores.

WITH the strong value of the British pound and the Australian and the US (United States) dollar against the Malaysian Ringgit, one would think that local parents will refrain from sending their children abroad for studies. However, this does not seem to be the case.

There are already about 23,000 Malaysian students currently studying in Australian institutions of higher learning, over 13,000 in the United Kingdom (UK) and another 6,000 students in the US.

These numbers are poised to grow even further despite the bleak economic outlook. StarEducation spoke to education consultants, counsellors, students and parents to find out the “pull” factor and what attracts the ever increasing number of Malaysian students to foreign universities.

With so many institutions to choose from, Tony Tan, managing director of education consultancy Studylink says that he always asks students what they are looking for when they decide to study in another country.

“Some people may want to live in a city, but others may like to be in a quieter place. Of course, the cost factor plays a big role as well when deciding on where to go.”

Tan says that he has met many businessmen and executives who can afford to pay for their child’s education abroad, but when it comes to the crux of the matter — that is on deciding on the institution itself — they rely on word-of-mouth from friends and relatives, to get a better idea and to be assured.

Unfortunately, this may not always be the best option for the student, as university rankings may be misleading at times, especially when a student is already interested in a particular course.

“Instead of looking at the rankings, what is more important is for students to know what they want, and find a suitable institution that best fits their needs,” he says.

Parents and students often enrol in an institution based on the university’s ranking, but often end up feeling shortchanged as they do not experience what they had hoped for.

Studying Down Under

One of the most popular study destinations amongst Malaysians is Australia.

Australian Education International education counsellor Louise McSorley says, “Australia is a popular choice amongst Malaysians because of its close proximity to home.

“Parents may also feel more comfortable and assured knowing that their child is only a few hours away by flight.”

She adds that there may also be a sense of familiarity amongst Malaysian students, because there are already many Asians in Australia and students may be able to assimilate better into the community without going through too much of a culture shock.

For Conie Wee, 22, a pharmacy student in the University of South Australia, her decision to study in Adelaide was made after careful consideration.

“Coming from Kota Baru, I wanted to experience studying in a different environment while still living in a laid back place.

“I decided to come to Adelaide in Australia, because apart from the environment, I also felt I was more used to the Australian education system as opposed to the US education system. The UK was not an option at all as it was quite expensive at the time I applied for a place in university.”

Fortunately for her, fitting into the study environment in Adelaide was smooth sailing, as she was lucky enough to meet people who helped her find her footing.

“All I had to do was to ask, and the people around were more than willing to help.”

Living in Adelaide turned out to be a pleasant experience for C. Kughan, 21, who believes that the greatest advantage one has in studying in the city is the fact that it is close to home.

He adds, “I love the laid back culture and the beaches here are beautiful!”

As for living costs, both Conie and Kughan say they spend about A\$1,200 (RM3,740) per month on living expenses, including rental.

But over in the state of Victoria, Tasha Amir, 24, who currently studies in the University of Melbourne, pays much more for her city life.

Living in a studio apartment, Tasha forks out A\$1,200 (RM3,740) for rental alone each month, plus about A\$700 (RM2,180) for food, transport, and entertainment.

In response to the high lodging cost, Louise says, “housing is getting more expensive, but it is not just the students who are paying a lot to live in the city. The economy is booming, and more people are drifting to urban areas, so it is advisable for students to sort out their lodging before they leave.”

Albeit the high living costs, Tasha’s father, Amir Hassan, who is an IT consultant says: “Studying overseas really helped me as it opened my eyes and made me see things from a different perspective. I was lucky to get a government scholarship then because my parents could not afford to send me overseas.

“Since I can afford to send my children overseas, I want them to share and enjoy that experience.”

Asked if he wants his daughter to live in Australia, Amir says he sent her overseas not only to get an education but to let her see the good and bad sides of both countries.

“No place is perfect, and by going to Australia, I hope she gains all the exposure learning about a different culture, and eventually come back to Malaysia to be an element of change here for our country,” he shares.

What about the US?

According to Open Doors 2009, an annual report on student mobility, there has been a 9.5% increase in the enrolment of Malaysian students to the US since last year. Malaysia ranks 21 in the order of countries sending their students to the United States. Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange executive director Dr James Coffman says, “More Malaysians are looking at the US as an alternative for their tertiary studies because tuition fees have not gone up as much compared to the UK and Australia. He adds that accommodation costs are much more affordable, ranging from US\$300 (RM1,020) to US\$1,500 (RM5,000) per month, although students who are keen on studying in bigger cities like Boston, New York and areas in California will be incurring higher rentals and expenses.

Student Edeleen Lunjew, who is currently doing her undergraduate studies at North Dakota State University majoring in Psychology, decided to try the best of both worlds.

Taking a 2+2 American Degree Programme in a local private college, she managed to get some experience studying locally, and moved to the US in her final two years of study.

Wanting to experience what her parents experienced, Edeleen says that she decided on going to the US as her parents had lived there while her father was pursuing a Masters degree.

Edeleen pays US\$290 (RM980) each month on rental and bills and about another US\$300 (RM1,020) for other expenses.

UK still attractive

According to the British Council, Malaysians are present in all parts of the UK, although most students prefer larger cities like London, Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham and Liverpool due to familiarity.

There has also been a sudden increase in the student intake last year due to the weakening of the British Pound.

Statistics from the British Council's Higher Education Student Data showed a jump in numbers, from 11,870 students in 2007, to 13,390 students in 2008.

University of Portsmouth Masters degree student Kingston Liu, who lives in a student dormitory that costs £85 (RM475) a week, says he spends about £500 (RM2,790) to £600 (RM3,350) each month on his total living expenses.

Having recently completed his undergraduate degree in Melbourne, Australia, Kingston says that meals served in restaurants do not vary much from those in Melbourne, but adds that groceries, clothings and books are much cheaper in the UK.

It is also to experience a different lifestyle with the locals and international students, says this friendly and outgoing lad.

However, it is the reverse for 22-year-old Ooi Kean Shean, who says there is nothing like bringing that experience back home.

Currently in his fourth year, Kean Shean, did a twinning programme at Penang Medical College with the Dublin Royal College of Surgeons Ireland.

"I plan to start working in Malaysia, so it is much better to finish my course here and familiarise myself with the types of diseases in this region."

Although he wished he could have stayed in longer in the UK, the soon-to-be doctor says that he is happy to be back for he can now focus on his studies and "let go of the little things such as household chores so that I can focus on my studies".

Employment

For many students, the biggest reason for going overseas to complete their tertiary education is to enhance their employability prospects.

But working professionals say that a new graduate should be able to prove that he is competent and has the soft skills.

Tan says that "going overseas may help a student build his self-confidence, but that is not a guarantee that an overseas graduate would be better than a local graduate."

S. Chan, a human resource officer from a leading accounting firm, says that when hiring graduates, what matters is not so much the institution they graduate from — rather, it is their attitude and the recognition they get in their respective fields that matter.

Chan adds that for specialised fields like accounting, it is more important to be certified by an accounting professional body, and successful applicants are usually those who are able to speak and present themselves well.

Futurestep ASEAN client development leader Lee Beng Khim says that while most multinational companies may require candidates to have minimum qualifications like a diploma or a degree, the candidate's work experience typically plays an important role.

"Some multinational companies may prefer candidates from foreign universities because of the perception that they are typically more exposed to different nationalities and cultures and have better communication and interpersonal skills, enabling them to cope better in a matrix organisation."

At the end of the day, Lee says that motivation is the fundamental factor.

If a candidate has all the relevant experience but is not motivated or does not have that 'drive' to do the job, then he or she will not be successful, he adds.

<http://thestar.com.my/education/story.asp?file=/2009/12/6/education/5136979&sec=education>

Foreign students favour technical courses over universities

The Courier Mail
December 04 2009

THE number of international students enrolled in vocational education and training courses in Australia has overtaken those tackling university studies.

Enrolment data released yesterday by the federal Department of Education showed the number of overseas students studying in Australia during October 2009 had risen by nearly one quarter to 610,443, from 516,267 in October 2008.

Of the year-to-date total, 225,619 were undertaking VET courses (mainly in the area of business, commerce, food, hospitality and other services), compared with 200,909 studying for degrees or higher qualifications. The majority of the remainder – 123,754 – were doing intensive English language courses.

The October data marks a three-month trend of international VET students outnumbering their counterparts at universities and raises renewed concerns about the VET system being manipulated by some to gain Australian residency.

It also reflects continued, massive growth in VET enrolments by overseas students – up 35 per cent from October 2008 .

Dr Glenn Withers, chief executive of Universities Australia – the peak body representing 38 tertiary education institutions around the country – said universities had no concerns per se about the VET sector outstripping the higher education sector which was also enjoying steady growth.

What had been worrying was the failure by some state and territory governments to set and enforce high standards for VET providers and the Commonwealth's general skilled migration policy, which allowed students studying and working in a wide range of VET areas, including hairdressing and cookery, to accumulate migration points.

"We're worried that easy migration entry on occupational grounds linked to quick vocational courses has distorted educational quality in Australia," Dr Withers said.

He said those issues were now being addressed, having been examined by a number of reviews, including the on-going Baird Review of Education Services for Overseas Students, which released its interim report on Wednesday.

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,26440688-953,00.html>

Friendster: Asia's Social Network

TechCrunch.com
January 20 2009

Social network Friendster has over 30 million monthly visitors worldwide, says Comscore. The problem (or perhaps the opportunity) is that just 1.7 million of those visitors are in the U.S. The vast majority, nearly 28 million, are in the Asia/Pacific region.

The company's new CEO, Richard Kimber, is based in Sydney Australia. Friendster's old San Francisco headquarters have been relocated as well, and the company now has a small Mountain View office for U.S. employees. Today the company announced that they've opened new offices in Singapore and Sydney. They have existing offices in the Philippines. A majority of the company's employees are now in the Asia Pacific region, and at least 85% of new hires going forward will be based there.

There is a terrific monetization opportunity in the region over the long haul, but the company must be hurting for revenue today. Ad rates aren't anywhere near comparable to the U.S. and Europe. Luckily the company has a fresh \$20 million venture round to see it through.

<http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/01/20/friendster-asias-social-network/>

See also: Friendster at a glance
http://www.e27.sg/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/friendster_at_a_glance_june_2008.pdf

Police key to foreign student safety

The Sydney Morning Herald
December 04 2009

A NATIONAL police response is required to protect overseas students studying in Australia, a review of the international education sector says.

The review head, former Liberal MP Bruce Baird, identified student safety and many other areas of concern for the Council of Australian Governments in his interim report released yesterday.

It comes after a series of stories in the Herald detailing claims of racist violence against Indian students, shonky private colleges providing dubious diplomas, visa abuses and the collapse of educational institutions.

Mr Baird said a national police response was required after the \$16.6 billion international student industry suffered enormous damage to its reputation from the allegedly racist attacks.

He said police needed to begin collecting reliable data on the victimisation of Indian students and other nationalities and the clean-up rate of these crimes. At present NSW and Victorian police have no mandatory requirement to identify the race or nationality of crime victims.

"We need to demonstrate that the safety of international students is being taken seriously by Australia ... and that the offenders are being caught and punished," he said.

In August the Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, appointed Mr Baird to rescue the strife-torn industry. He was charged with overhauling the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000, but was given a wide brief to examine issues such as student safety, visa rorting, the health and well-being of students, accommodation shortages and a lack of access to public transport subsidies.

Mr Baird held forums with almost 200 students and providers, from the tertiary, English language colleges and schools sectors.

He has also met provider and student peak bodies, regulators, state and territory government officials, and key embassies.

In his interim report, Mr Baird suggested greater consumer protection and stronger, simpler regulation was needed to protect the industry's reputation.

Tougher scrutiny of international education providers, giving students' access to better information and the appointment of an ombudsman to handle student complaints were among key suggestions.

Education entrepreneurs will have to pass a "fit and proper person" test to operate in the industry, the report recommends, with laws requiring individuals running education and training institutions to disclose full financial credentials and bona fides.

"I regard as essential that there are tougher entry requirements for entering this business," Mr Baird said.

"At present Western Australia is the only state [that reviews] operators' finances and credentials. There should be external accounting assessors poring over their books, we should look at their track record for teaching students.

"We should know whether these people have prior convictions, their business wound up or placed in receivership and their linkages with education and migration agents."

Ms Gillard said yesterday she welcomed the interim report and thanked Mr Baird for his work to date. She declined to comment until after the final report was handed down.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/police-key-to-foreign-student-safety-20091203-k8uu.html>

International student review interim report released

Media Release: The Hon Julia Gillard MP
December 03 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today welcomed the release of the Baird Review interim report on the legislation that governs international education in Australia and thanked Mr Baird for his work so far.

The interim report of the review of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 highlights more effective consumer protection and stronger, simpler regulation as two essential reforms needed to strengthen international education.

Key observations in the report include the need to toughen the gateway for organisations to register as international education providers, support students' access to better information, improve students' tuition protection arrangements and enhance student complaints handling and support mechanisms.

The report also discussed the links between education and migration, and the long-term sustainability of the international education sector.

The head of the review, Bruce Baird, has held forums with almost 200 students and providers, from the tertiary, ELICOS and school sectors. He has also met with provider and student peak bodies, regulators and state and territory government officials, and with key embassies.

The review received about 150 written submissions and more than 300 people participated in an online forum. The feedback will help inform the final report which Mr Baird will present to the Government in early 2010.

Mr Baird is also considering the recommendations of the International Student Roundtable and is taking into account other work occurring across governments to enhance the sector and protect international students.

The interim report is available at: <http://www.aei.gov.au>

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091203_121848.aspx

Queensland tops student growth

City News - Brisbane

December 03 2009

BRISBANE: A record number of overseas students is heading to Brisbane next year, bringing more than \$2 billion to the local economy.

The city's economic development agency, Brisbane Marketing, is expecting 80,000 new international students to study at Brisbane tertiary institutions in 2010.

The international student market is the city's largest export.

Brisbane Marketing director of export Gordon Scott said in the past 12 months the number of foreign students coming to Queensland had grown by an average of 26 per cent above the Australian average of 19 per cent.

"Students have come to enjoy the weather and go to the beach while they're studying but I think it's also to do with the economic growth in the southeast corner," Mr Scott said. "They bring a massive amount of money and new statistics show the annual figure overall for the state, in Queensland, is \$2.374 billion. Brisbane gets the lion's share with \$2.01 billion."

He said fostering positive relations between the city and the region's international students was a key plank of the organisation's Brisbane: Australia's New World City campaign.

"More broadly there will be social benefits in terms of social values," he said.

"But also we're conscious that these are the future leaders of our region so we're hoping to develop positive connections and positive business partnerships once they return home."

Thousands of students are flooding into the ultra-competitive rental market which led to reports of dodgy landlords over-populating rental properties, forcing Brisbane City Council to crack down on the number of unrelated people allowed to live in a property.

To enhance the international student experience, Mr Scott expected a flurry of student accommodation developments near universities and public transport centres in coming years.

Brisbane Marketing has joined student accommodation provider Urbanest in seeking to promote its safe, friendly and relaxed accommodation experience.

Urbanest last year opened a 713-bed block at South Bank and regional operations manager Mark Lewis said the partnership enabled the company to educate international students about the new and unique accommodation offered.

Mr Scott predicted the number of international students coming to Brisbane would remain steady in the years ahead.

<http://city-news.whereilive.com.au/news/story/qld-tops-student-growth/>

Art education at its best

The Sun Daily - Malaysia

December 03 2009

MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF ART (MIA) endeavours to provide affordable and quality education in creative arts by providing a conducive environment for students to develop their potential. Founded in 1967 as a non-profit making organisation, the institute has trained thousands of professional artists, designers and musicians for local and overseas creative industries.

All its courses are accredited by MQA. They place strong emphasis on the mastery of creative and practical skills (both conventional and digital), in-depth inquires of knowledge, conceptual development and critical thinking.

It offers the three-year Diploma in Graphic Design (multimedia and visual communication), Illustration (+ graphic and multimedia design), Fine Art, Interior Design, Industrial Design, Textile & Fashion Design and Music.

MIA graduates are highly sought after by design firms and related industries at home and overseas.

MIA underwent major renovation recently. Classrooms, studios and labs are equipped with the latest teaching equipment. The computer lab is equipped with the latest hardware including latest Apple iMac complete with CS4 software.

Air-conditioned classrooms, studios and labs are equipped with high-end audio-visual teaching aids. Its library has a large collection of books and periodicals in Art, Design and Music. Internet facilities and WiFi are also available.

The art gallery showcases students' creative works and there is a mini concert hall for music students' performance. There are student common rooms with television, game sets and reading materials.

MIA is easily accessible by public transport, and there are many accommodation options near the campus. Students have access to sports facilities such as swimming, squash, tennis and gymnasium at a nearby club.

Scholarships are awarded through the annual Nationwide Art & Design Competition, SPM/UEC Academic Achievement Scholarship, five full-scholarship awarded through Dong Jiau Zhong and two from Sin Chew Education Fund. Financial aid is also available for needy students.

MIA has links with prestigious universities and colleges in UK, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and China where MIA graduates may proceed to complete their BA programmes for a minimum of one year through advanced placement or credit transfer. This 3+1 study programme with MIA-linked universities enables students to save time and cost in their pursuit of their BA degrees overseas. With the MQA accreditation, MIA graduates may also further their studies in local universities.

New intake and Open Day

The new intake will be on Jan 4. The Open Day is on Jan 2, from 9.30am to 4pm. There will be seven talks on Art & Design.

MIA will extend its counselling hours from Dec 19 to Jan 10 (every Saturday and Sunday from 9.30am to 4pm) and Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. The MIA gallery will display students' artworks. The public is welcome to view them.

Students achievements

In 2009 alone, the students have won several interior design awards, and music and choir awards.

» Interior Design student awarded scholarship from MIECO designer's choice award 2009 (student category).

» Interior Design student awarded IPDM Student Financial Assistance Award 2009 cash prizes.

» Interior Design student awarded ida Interior Design Awards 2009 silver award.

» Industrial Design student awarded gold prize from Nando's Recycling Design 2009.

» Music student awarded second prize from the 35th National Art - Song Singing Competition – "Central Region" 2009.

ACUMA INCORPORATED

ACUMA Inc.: the Association representing campus service organisations in Australia & New Zealand
International higher education news • December 2009

» Three Music students awarded two Gold and one bronze awards respectively in the solo singing competition while another student awarded bronze award in the piano competition organised by Malaysian Youth Music Festival 2009.

» MIA Ladies Choir won the Gold award in the Chamber Choir category at the International Choir Festival 2009.

» Three recent Music graduates were offered full scholarships to continue their studies at the National University of Singapore for the July 2009 session.

» Three recent Music graduates were offered full scholarships to continue their studies at the National University of Singapore for the July 2009 session.

Contact the principal/CEO Low Bee Eng at (03) 41088100, Music Department (03) 41064697, e-mail: registry@mia.edu.my, or log on to www.mia.edu.my SMS: MIA<Space>Enquiry <Space>name as in IC & send to 36553

<http://www.thesundaily.com/article.cfm?id=40826>