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English News

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## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS NEED TO FORM REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

PENANG, 10 June 2015 - "There is a strong need for Australia, ASEAN and China to establish a regional knowledge network to promote knowledge dissemination and sharing among the higher education institutions in the countries involved," said Professor Anthony R. Welch in his talk entitled "Australia, ASEAN, China: Towards a Regional Knowledge Network?" in the Higher Education Public Talk Series 2015 organised by the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) here today.

He said, this involved the formation of higher education partnerships which will take into account factors such as the ease of mobility for international students, the treatment and recognition of foreign languages and utilising education as an aid.

Welch is a Professor of Education from University of Sydney, Australia who specialises in national and international policies and practices in higher education and in cross-cultural analysis and research, and has extensive international experience on higher education reforms, international students and internationalisation in the Asian region.

He began his talk with a brief introduction of the Australian education scenario and the relationship that it has established with its surrounding neighbours, namely ASEAN countries and more currently China.

Welch said that currently in Australia, the education sector ranks the highest in the service industry. Therefore, there are plenty of opportunities for the sector to expand not just internally but also outside of the country.

"This is partly due to the economic growth in Asia, where China, India and Japan play a major role in the economic boom. At the same time, this has also spilled over to the ASEAN region, being the area with the seventh largest economy in the world, having countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore, among others.

"In Malaysia, with USM being the only APEX University in the country, such a network could be established within the region through the existing educational linkages," he said.

"At the moment, Singapore and Malaysia have transformed themselves into Edu-hubs both at the regional and transnational levels. Therefore it has led to an important change in the educational landscape in the area. The move by these two countries has made it clear that international education is now seen as a big industry," added Welch.

Meanwhile, the Director of IPPTN, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Munir Shuib said that higher education in this region has no doubt expanded in the last decade hence it is essential that we stay abreast of the international efforts and external relationships that form the current higher education patterns and networks, and as we work towards realising a regional knowledge network, we must stay vigilant and be proactive in facing the pertinent challenges.

“This is the current trend in networking in this region and such a network involving Australia, ASEAN and China can be truly advantageous to the nations as well as its citizens especially those involved in the education sector,” added Munir.

“Establishing a network is easier said than done. Therefore, at least for ASEAN such a network can be possible with a combination of “skilled hands, good heads and big hearts” practiced among the member countries,” he said in his closing remarks.

IPPTN’s Higher Education Public Talk Series is an annual event held to promote the sharing of knowledge in higher education as well as strengthening leadership and capacity building in higher education policy research, and fostering networking among international higher education stakeholders.

Also present at the talk were Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs) Professor Dato’ Dr. Ahmad Shukri Mustapa Kamal, lecturers and the university staff and students. - Text: Hafiz Meah Ghouse Meah/Photos: Mohd Fairus Md. Isa



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