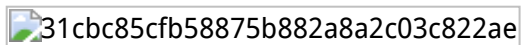


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English News

04
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INSIGHTS INTO TRANSFORMING THE UNIVERSITY FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE WORLD

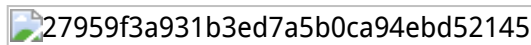


TOMSK, Russia, June 2015 – Representatives from various universities around the world converged at Tomsk State University (TSU) Russia to share insights on challenges faced in transforming their respective institutions in order to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Addressing the theme “The University in the changing world”, the delegates were top management representatives from universities in Malaysia, China, India, Vietnam, Laos and the United Kingdom which had MOUs with TSU who had been invited to the conference as part of the Russian university’s 137th birthday celebration recently.

TSU Rector Professor Dr Eduard V. Galazhinskiy outlined challenges faced by TSU as a top university in the Russian government’s Project 5-100 where five Russian universities aspired to be placed within the Top 100 in global rankings by 2020. In his presentation, innovation was touted as the key to the future as well as the transformation of a university.

Galazhinskiy observed that universities which succeed in converting knowledge into the economy contribute to development of society as a whole. Innovation from universities, he added, can be customised to the needs of industry and can also arise in response to demands of enterprise. In this way, TSU’s innovations to date have brought development to the Tomsk region.



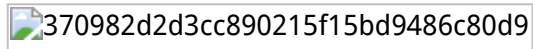
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Professor Dato’ Dr. Muhamad Jantan meanwhile described USM’s experience of evolving through the changing environment. Muhamad pointed out that Malaysian education policy was closely linked to economic development as a whole, hence the direction of public universities was often determined by the federal government which continues to represent a major source of funding for Malaysia’s research universities. As such, USM was in the process of strategizing for its future in order to excel and remain competitive while continuing to adhere to developmental needs of the nation.

Associate Professor at the Faculty of Physics, TSU, Filimonov S.N provided some insight into cross-border and cross-cultural collaboration by sharing his experience working on a research project involving researchers from Germany, Japan and Russia. Among the challenges faced (besides the linguistic barrier)

was the difference in composition of each research team.

As a result of this difference, interaction was primarily between principle investigators in the case of the Japanese team but in contrast the German team assigned postdoctoral and PhD candidates to work with the established academics who made up the members of the other two teams.

Nevertheless Filimonov deemed the collaboration as a fulfilling experience for the Russian researchers who served as the link between east and west, bridging theory (German team) and laboratory experiments (Japanese team).



Of particular interest to many delegates at the event was the presentation by Deputy Warden at Goldsmith's College, University of London Professor Jane Powell on recent transformations in English universities in response to the UK government's changes in policy on state funding. Traditionally viewed as leaders in the education field, English universities have since resorted to raising local undergraduate student fees as state funding for universities was abolished in 2012.

With the new policies, students have become increasingly involved in and have more influence on the direction of programmes of study at English universities thereby resulting in low-demand programmes being scrapped while existing programmes were modified as a response to students' needs.

According to Powell, feedback from students has been positive and enrolment has not shown a significant decline despite the steep rise in student fees. She pointed out however that the British government continued to fund courses that it deemed important such as language studies even if demand for such courses was low.

The half-day conference revealed some common areas which pose challenges to universities include funding, rankings and sustainability of the institutions. Cross-border collaborations in research and post-graduate programmes as actively pursued by TSU are seen as measures that can be taken to enhance competitiveness of universities as they increase international visibility of the universities' areas of expertise and enhance international student enrolment - two key strategies required for universities to remain relevant in a fast changing world. - Text: Dr Nurul Farhana Low Abdullah



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