

Minutes of International Education Council – 16 October

Actions

- The Secretariat to circulate the link to DfID's stakeholder database to enable Council members to register for information relating to education opportunities.
- The Secretariat to circulate information on the working group looking at priorities for international education post 2015 and the strands of activity under the education's sector's contribution to the trillion pound export plan.
- The International Student Recruitment working group to further develop proposals on promoting recruitment.

Welcome and Introductions

Professor Sir Eric Thomas chaired the meeting, as Greg Clark and Nick Boles were out of London on Ministerial business.

The Secretariat confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting were either in hand or complete.

Trillion pound export plan and education sector

The Government planned to double the UK's exports to £1 trillion by 2020 but current export growth was below the required rate to achieve this aspiration. Lord Livingston had led a process to identify what might be achievable in each sector. This concluded that the aspiration for international education was to reach £30bn by 2020. He felt it was desirable that the sector should take ownership of this ambition and drive it forward through the International Education Council. The Council agreed to do this and identified leads for four major workstrands: Colin Riordan would lead on student recruitment; Emily Ashwell would lead on education high value opportunities; Chris Ray would lead on transnational education and Dominic Savage and Rod Bristow would lead on education products and services. It was noted that there could be challenges with the following: access to, and consistent use of, data including for measuring success; factors that could influence growth but which the sector could not control; and with interpreting growth in cash terms.

Schools working group

Chris Ray (CR), as Chair of the schools working group, with Martin Ayres, Head of Inspection, Independent Schools Inspectorate and Colin Bell, CEO, Council of British International School, presented a paper summarising the work of their group. CR reflected on the complexity of this area, which covered international school students in the UK and British schools overseas (BSOs - which included the regional associations, schools and quality control). It was noted that, of the several thousand English curriculum schools overseas, 3000 had links with the UK and 100 of the

schools had BSO status, which required a Department for Education (DfE) approved inspection. According to International Schools Research, Asia and Europe had the largest distribution of international schools, which was reflected by BSO proportions. It was noted that any organisation or investor could set up a British school and many schools referred to themselves as British schools overseas, but had no clear links with the UK. The group highlighted that regional associations and the work of the inspectorates operating internationally brought value to the British brand and promoted quality. It was appreciated that the planned introduction of the State Emblem would help to address the distinction. The indirect benefits of a British education were noted, including the long term links that can be made through educational partnerships. The working group had agreed, as one of its priorities, to establish data on schools as a pipeline, i.e. how many students studying at a BSO or international students studying in UK schools end up studying UK higher education.

It was noted that the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which correlated inspections in the UK and overseas, worked to ensure that the inspections met the interests and needs of children. Better data was needed to measure outcomes to make sure that children had the same access in the UK and overseas, which would be helped by schools utilising self-assessment and evaluation.

CR acknowledged that the sum of money BSOs brought back to the UK was difficult to quantify, and suggested it included students studying in the UK, teachers spending sums of money in the UK (including pensions), the schools, exam boards and inspectorates.

The group outlined their priority to establish a sub group to look at issues such as accreditation of Initial Teach Training (ITT) overseas. Peter Drummond from DfE responded to the actions for which DfE were the responsible department. He recognised the importance of a State Emblem for BSOs and stated that officials would follow this up. PD confirmed the review of independent schools was now underway and would be complete around March for proposals in the autumn. PD agreed to discuss further with DfE colleagues the group's priority around ITT and to keep CR updated, and to facilitate a discussion if necessary.

DfID – Results of the HE taskforce

Anna French (AF) presented the results of the Department for International Development's (DfID) higher education (HE) taskforce. DfID's previous focus was on universal quality of basic education but, a demographic and policy shift and the demand for changing skills in developing countries had meant that there was now greater potential for HE activity. The HE taskforce, launched last year, considered scaling up support for education from the sector and concluded that there was a catalyst role for DfID. There was a need to engage new types of providers (state and private to increase competition) and to use new ways of providing education (e.g. technology) in developing countries, to make their systems sustainable, affordable,

significant in quality and produce graduates. It concluded that HE could contribute to economic development and growth, public services and government effectiveness and equity and could tackle barriers through innovation, system reform, access and research. DfID had a suite of potential HE interventions for its focus countries, including the HE partnerships (the call is expected in mid-2015) and were looking for UK institutions to take up the offer and the HE innovation fund, which was in development and expected to start the following year. AF confirmed that the HE partnerships would be open to a wide range of organisations that could demonstrate the objectives. It was recognised that the boundary between higher skills and higher education had become more blurred in recent years and that in many developing countries there was a particular need to upgrade skills at the technician/technologist level beyond high school but below full honours degree.

UK-Gulf relations and the role of education

Georgina Simpson (GS), on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), summarised the importance of, and the opportunity offered by, the six Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, particularly for inward investment and energy security. Their role as vital political and defence partners was also noted. With GDP of \$1.2 trillion, the GCC states collectively represented our seventh largest export market and accounted for over £20 billion trade in goods in 2013, with the largest defence export markets. Sustained engagement has enabled an increase in investment in the UK (Qatar has invested £22 billion). In the last two years there had been 150 royal and ministerial visits to the region and the Prime Minister had set direction for future engagement with the GCC states. It was noted that 175,000 British nationals were resident in the region, with 100,000 in Dubai.

GS recognised that developing health care and education was at the centre of their agenda and the GCC states were investing heavily in education. The shift in demographics and the emphasis on the region's domestic growth reform presented significant opportunities for the UK across the education sector. With 40% of the region's population aged under 25, the GCC states were looking to increase levels of skills, employability and jobs, and to diversify from an oil based economy. GS highlighted the role of the UK in strengthening relationships with and supporting the GCC states, to help them develop as a region to engage with future leaders and for them to study, visit and invest in the UK. The cultural differences meant that relationships needed to be handled sensitively and engaged with at an individual level.

Emily Ashwell (EA) highlighted recent successes of UKTI Education, which focused on high value opportunities. Technical and vocational providers had successfully won contracts worth nearly £1.5bn in the first two waves of Saudi Arabian college contract tenders and there were three more waves to follow, with three years' worth of opportunities. Ambition across the GCC states was recognised, for example UAE had an ambition of developing 110 schools by 2020 and they would like around 40 of

these schools to be British and Abu Dhabi also presented significant opportunities in skills training, vocational education, teacher training and higher education. There was a big focus on the region and the sector should appreciate its scale of opportunities and the desire of GCC states to engage with committed long term partners.

International student recruitment working group

Colin Riordan presented the International Student Recruitment's working group paper, which included proposing a pilot in India to target the recent decrease in the number of Indian students in the UK. Colin Riordan outlined the specific proposals in the paper, including:

- 1) an integrated promotional campaign built around an "app" for potential applicants, covering the whole student lifecycle, to enable them to discover advantages of the UK system, talk to each other, see integrated offers and access services they might require;
- 2) targeted funding of outward mobility from the UK to priority countries to unlock inward scholarship packages by demonstrating support for two way mobility; and
- 3) targeted research on what would increase the UK's competitive advantage.

The value of an app in providing an opportunity to engage with students in an interactive way, and providing high quality information all in the same place, was recognised, however, there was agreement that further thinking was needed on the specific actions to address student recruitment concerns. The importance of identifying when students make decisions about where to study and targeting them at this point was noted.

Although members appreciated the power of social media, members also recognised that it could not be controlled. It was noted that the Council would need to consider the platforms that already existed to target students. Matthew Robb shared the findings of a survey run by Parthenon which concluded that students did not want universities to participate in student-led debate on social media, but to provide good quality websites, for example links on YouTube.

Council members expressed a view that the decrease in the number of Indian students studying in the UK was likely to be a result of a number of factors, including particular changes to visa policy, depreciation of the rupee and the increase in competition. The Council agreed that India was a priority country and that the working group should develop evidence to understand the decrease, engaging other Council members, in order to understand what intervention was needed and develop an informed proposal on appropriate action.

Any other business

The Council agreed to set up a working group to look at priorities for international education post 2015, which would look at what the Council had achieved so far, its impact and its focus up until 2020 and beyond.

EA reminded the Council that she was seeking feedback on how money from the core UKTI budget should be spent and whether grants for events and missions was helpful.

The next Council meeting would be on 17 February from 14:00-16:00.