

**Event:** Report on Festival of Learning (Vietnam)

On invitation from Bournemouth University & the British Council (UK)

**Date:** April 1-5, 2019.

**Breda delegation:** Miguel de Bravo Madrid; Simen Kooi; Nova van Schijndel; Rose de Vrieze.

**Introduction:** The Festival of Learning (FOL) addresses some of the more urgent challenges facing Vietnam and the UK. Its 2019 theme focuses on a trilateral relationship among university, industry and student engagement. Furthermore, it seeks to explore how industry and universities collaborate to prepare graduates (throughout Europe and Vietnam) for their future careers. It also creates a platform for researchers, educators, policymakers, enterprises and students in Europe and Vietnam to engage in a week-long programme of knowledge and interactions. To this end, keynotes, lectures, panel discussions covering topics ranging from business, extra-curricular activities, volunteering and media practice were presented. More importantly, Skills Development, which is seen as a major global challenge for economies worldwide, was featured throughout the conference. Effective collaboration practices among universities, industries and students aim at preparing graduates for the world of work (WoW). It is particularly for this reason that BUAs was invited to provide valuable insights on these topics from within the broader European perspective.

**Day one** featured a visit to the MB Bank in Hanoi. In her keynote address, **Mrs. Que Tran**, from the bank's Management Team stressed the importance of collaboration with the Foreign Trade University (FTU), which supplies most of its executives. The need for qualified graduates, particularly those with an entrepreneurial mindset is becoming more pressing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This need is exacerbated by the growing dependence on digital technology and innovation. Vietnam has been growing significantly, and the country is fortunate to have a relatively young work-force. However, staff turnover is alarmingly high and procedures need to be in place to maintain the appropriate workforce. My first performance was in the first panel discussion. This discussion examined the skills gap in Europe and Vietnam. I presented the NTG's views on Digital, Green and Social skills. I stressed the need for encouraging our students to reflect on the importance of these topics while they consider their future careers. Furthermore, I emphasized the importance of cross-cultural diversity within higher education (in the Netherlands / Europe) and the need to promote cross-cultural awareness among our students' body. We live and work in a multinational/multicultural society and students need to be encouraged to examine theirs' and others' cultures seeing that they are going to be confronted with such issues in the present and future workplace. Issues such as giving and receiving feedback is a matter that needs to be addressed from a cross-cultural perspective.

The afternoon sessions dealt with skills development, stimulating university-industry partnerships and student engagement, while looking into how universities and industry can collaborate to develop work-ready graduates in Europe and Vietnam. These sessions focused specifically on education and employability, with considerations for the qualities that young people in Vietnam need in order to succeed in their chosen field. **Dr. Lois Farquharson** (BU) questioned the roles universities play in

educating future talents in Vietnam, and how this balance resonates between knowledge-based learning and practices.

**Day Two:** featured a visit to the Foreign Trade University (FTU), Hanoi. After the welcome formalities, from both FTU and BU there were Ignite presentations (5-minute presentations) on curriculum-based engagement. This was followed by World Café workshops on curriculum-based engagement. The afternoon panel discussion examined Internationalisation and student development for the world of work. BU has a World-Forum student competition, in which students compete for numerous prizes. This is done to stimulate student engagement in curriculum development. **I personally believe this is a very exciting way to stimulate students to be a part of our curriculum design at Breda University (AS).**

The afternoon sessions featured the Global Talent for the World of Work Forum (#WoWForum). These sessions which were highly dynamic and interactive. They offered a diverse format for engaging students, academics and industry representatives from Vietnam, UK and other countries represented at the GFOL. Speakers were invited to share their experiences of enhancing student employability, through ignite presentations. **Dr. Bray** presented his views on the industry fellowship that he held for five years with the UK-based grocery chain Waitrose. Two highlights of his brief presentation underlined the benefits that fellowship, academics and industry partnerships can bring both to the university and the sponsoring company. Additionally, he stressed the importance of such relationships in engaging students' curriculum to ensure currency of course content and relevance to contemporary industry demands.

**Ms. Rebecca Hindley** inspected the influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution with machine learning, artificial intelligence, robots and automation and its increasing impact on employers' skills shortages. Her interactive session explored the 'soft skills' identified as integral to the success of the graduate. Furthermore, **Dr. Karen Thompson** raised the 'red flag' on the unprecedented human catastrophe facing our society: global warming, population growth, increased consumption, pollution and competition for scarce resources. She highlighted the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted by all member states in 2015. In this report, a blueprint was provided for peace and prosperity for people and planet. She also indicated that Higher education can play a vital role in this by preparing both developed and developing countries for the future and integrating awareness of sustainable development practices within HE curricula.

**Professor Stephen Tee** chaired the afternoon's panel discussion on Internationalisation and student development for the world of work. He argues that organisations are focused on adjusting their strategies to ensure that they attract and retain the best-qualified graduates, who will become future business leaders. That is why, he claims, it is vital to adopt a global approach supported by multi-cultural underpinnings to meet the needs of today's diverse and multi-cultural marketplaces. It is here that Internationalisation can play a defining role in preparing students for this world of work.

Speakers in this session highlighted talent development for the global market and addressed some of the fundamental skills and attributes that employers are seeking. Moreover, the measures needed in better supporting employees and employers for the future workforce were addressed.

Other interesting Ignite presentations included: Co – and Extra-curriculum engagement: The Global Talent Programme – Bridging the skills gaps through a mix of extracurricular experiences and industry partnerships by Mrs. Koseva; Horizontal and vertical integration of curriculum, co-curriculum and extra-curriculum activities by Mr. Mark Ridolfo; A strategic partnership fusing education, research and industry by Dr. Phyllis Alexander; and Collaborating with professional bodies (CMI) by Dr. Lois Farquharson.

**Day Three:** In addressing the development of soft skills training, numerous ignite presentations were given. Dr. Fiona Cownie discussed student-industry co-creation in practice. She contends that co-creation strategies connect students with industry to generate valuable learning experiences and open connections which enhance student employability. Our Nova van Schijndel (BUAs) introduced Cooperative Online International Learning (COIL) at BUAs. It is an approach which enhances students' global experience and readiness for the world of work and represents a growing industry need. COIL embraces the use of digital technology to bridge the distance between countries and partners. It further stimulates the inclusion of online discussion groups, video-conferencing, class to class meetings and online work-group projects.

Dr. Mark Readman spoke on continuing professional development and the role of reflective practice in skills development. His talk examined the 'fusion' of education, research and professional practice at BU. According to him, although there have been marked success, it is evident that constant evaluation of professional development and the need for reflective practices is mandatory. At the same time, the traditional distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' skills is fading.

Mr. Simen Kooi (BUAs) delivered his ignite presentation on 'creating professional value by linking education with research, business innovation and the professional industry'. He stressed the need for educators to remain up-to-date with current industry developments in order to be able to align their programmes to the needs of the industry, and at the same time prepare graduates for the ever-changing world of hospitality. He strengthened this in his presentation of a case-study on how professional value can be created for all concerned stakeholders.

The ignite presentations was concluded by my 5-minute presentation on some of the preliminary findings of the NTG project. First, I provided some background information on the project and highlighted my part in the research. By examining the three main topics: Digital, Green and Social skills gap, I realised that there are numerous studies already being done on these pressing issues. In fact, even BU is carrying out a similar project. Dr. Phyllis Alexander has shown great interest in the NTG project and I had an extensive talk with her about the project. She is also working on an EU project of a similar nature.

In the final minutes of my presentation, I discussed the preliminary findings, which I had collected from Dineke, Tomas and Corne before leaving for Vietnam. These suggest that within the Dutch tourism education, concrete initiatives are being undertaken to design modern, relevant skills to meet the

demands of the current tourism jobs-market in the Netherlands, thus bridging the gap between education and industry. The 5 minutes went by very quickly, so I had no time to provide any depth to these findings. I guess that is why it is called an 'ignite' presentation☺.

**Day Four:** Visit to Saigon Coop Mart in Vietnam & Liberty Central Saigon Citypoint Hotel, HCM City. A panel discussion focused on the Skills gap in Europe and Vietnam. The afternoon session addressed the qualities of a good undergraduate student in Business studies and the importance of developing 'globally minded' graduates – Global Talent Programme case study.

The day finished with a tour of the Coop Market, and discussions on skills gap in Vietnam and Europe.

I visited two companies (placement, thesis acquisition) with Miguel on Monday afternoon and on Friday afternoon. Miguel promises to write a full report on these visits as well as a report on the entire Festival of Learning.

This is a brief summary on my perspectives and does not reflect those of the entire (BUAs) delegation. I believe that in future further collaboration between BUAs and BU is vital. I see a possibility not only from our current agreement, but also within collaborative research. Dr Phyllis has invited me to collaborate with BU on further research areas. I definitely believe this would be beneficial for both institutes. Moreover, the BUAs delegation wants to meet with academic board to see how we can further solidify our alliance with BU. They were incredibly nice to us: they were very inclusive in their attitude towards and at no time did we feel left out. I also believe that we should invite them to our institute in the very near future and there are numerous areas where I see close collaborative