



AMBASSADOR’S CLEMENCIA FORERO UCROS REMARKS PANEL ON EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND COLLOQUIUM 2015

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QUESTION 1. WHAT ROLE CAN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS PLAY IN SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FOR LATIN AMERICA NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?

The development of a knowledge based economy represents spaces, opportunities and challenges that Latin American and Caribbean countries must urgently face. Alicia Barcenas, General Secretary of ECLAC, gave recently a lecture in June 2015 in Brussels about the situation of education, innovation and the formation of human capital in our region and going through it I think she mentioned relevant topics where we have to advance, as follows:

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- Formation of human capital , specially of researchers
- Creation of synergies among universities, enterprises, centres of research, public sector and civil society
- Strengthening of institutional networks that foster innovation
- Strengthening of innovative and research capacities
- Strengthening of English proficiency

These are topics where we can partner with Australia to meet our needs, taking into account that we have to foster innovation and promote further development of our scientific and technological capacities. It is shown in the InCitesTM, Thomson Reuters of 2014 that Australia engaged in 2012 in important fields of research collaboration in that order with Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia in the fields of Physics, astronomy, astrophysics and ecology amongst others topics. From this data it is evident that we have already engaged in scientific collaboration and joint publications paving the path for deeper engagement.

Within the member countries of the OECD, Australia is recognized to be one of the countries with higher and better standards in education. A concrete example of how the Australian experience can contribute in supporting education needs in Latin America has to do with the internationalization of education.

Latin American countries are starting to acknowledge the internationalization of education as a priority and not simply as a marginal activity.

In this respect Australia and its universities have an important experience from which we can learn in the following aspects:

- Internationalization of academic programs
- Qualification and recognition of titles
- International accreditation of institutions of higher education and their programs
- Development of programs of innovation and research
- Knowledge Exchange through academic mobility

The internationalization process of Latin American Universities is being fostered by several associations of Universities in our region such as UDUAL which is the Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, comprising 200 Universities of the region .They are active in promoting the regional space in terms of higher education, although they need to be more dynamic in terms of internationalization outside the region. Mercosur and its associated members are also dealing with the issue of internationalization in Latin America.

In the case of Colombia, as we have entered a process of negotiations to access the OECD, we have started to modernize and internationalize our

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education system, in order to reach higher international benchmarks and standards. Colombian universities have been bold in the creation of a network of Universities, called “Challenge your Knowledge”, which includes 20 high ranked higher education institutions supported by our Ministry of Education, Procolombia, Icetex, Colciencias. Through this network we are looking to generate better conditions for the development of human capital, the strengthening of our innovative capacities, the promotion of the mobility of researchers, the foster of academic missions in order to highlight Colombia as a destination for students. I am sure that the Universities included in the “Challenge your knowledge” network could an efficient counterpart for academic exchange with the Australian Universities.

Another important factor to support Latin American institutions to meet their needs is the collaboration in the vocational education sector, between the TAFEs and similar institutions that we have in Latin America. Recently Argentina marked a good example with the setting up of collaboration between the Victorian Government and the Argentinian San Luis Province for the development of a vocational education institution there which focuses in the labour needs in the region as well as to strengthen research and innovation. In the case of Colombia we have engaged with Skillstech from Queensland and our corresponding Institution at the national level SENA – The National Training Service, which has training centres across the country.

QUESTION 4. HOW CAN WE WORK COLLABORATIVE TO DRIVE APPLIED RESEARCH IN AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST TO ADDRESS OVERLAPPING NEEDS AND INTERESTS/SYNERGIES?

It is a priority to promote collaboration amongst our universities and research centres in order to share knowledge and skills and thus contribute to the growth of our economies and also to the development of our countries. I will mention a few points that are needed as a fundamental basis to support schemes of research collaboration in areas of common interest:

- Signature and implementation of Agreements with individual Universities and research centres that include possibilities for applied research
- Agreements with Associations or Groups of Universities or Groups of Universities: in the case of Australia, The Group of Eight and Universities Australia
- Definition of areas of priority for applied research is always useful but should not be restricted to the topics defined. Countries should include the priority areas of investigation they are interested in
- In order to identify the needs in applied research, platforms such as research funds established by the Australian Department of Industry and Science with China, India and Europe are important references and maybe an example for Latin America in the future. All these funds

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have dedicated and increasing financial support from the Australian government and are adequate spaces for the identification of common interest and hence for the definition areas of collaboration that would lead to practical and innovative results for industries and governments. In this respect, the 2008 Agreement of Chile with the group of Eight Universities is an excellent example. It is both comprehensive and specific in its goals and objectives, highlighting the need to strengthen human capital development and promoting scientific and technological research and innovation. It establishes priority fields for joint research programs in the areas of Mining, Offshore technologies, Biotechnologies, Energy, environmental issues amongst others. It is not only a manifestation of good will but in a way a plan of action with specific financial commitments for both parties.

- Different stakeholders can get together to promote applied research useful for the sustainability of a specific industry, such is the case of CSIRO Chile where industries, government, foundations and universities get together to solve practical problems crucial to the mining industry.
- Similar schemes could be used in the fields of tropical medicine and agriculture that are of interest both for Australia and some Latin American countries.
- I would also like to mention the Agreement between Universities Australia and Colciencias, the Colombian research institute, to co-finance doctorate studies, where the Australian Universities that have adhered offer reductions in tuition fees for PHD programs and Colciencias will cover both the agreed fees and living expenses, tickets and health insurance costs. After the signature in 2014, the first group of 16 students under the Agreement is already in Australia, one of them studying currently at the University of Queensland. Language proficiency can also be an obstacle for the researchers so in the case of doctorates in Australia, some Universities under the Agreement we have just mentioned offer tuition fee scholarships for English training.
- Possibilities for internships, postdoctoral and sabbatical years need to be encouraged.
- We need to acknowledge that states like Victoria, already offers Doctoral Scholarships aimed at Latin American students only starting in 2016. Seemingly, at the university level, some institutions, like University of Queensland have some scholarships only eligible to Latin American students. It would be good to have more policies in that regard from the state government level.
- Latin American governmental agencies also offer possibilities for researchers and experts worldwide to have a fellowship to conduct

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research in Latin America, such is the case of Icetex in Colombia, where economic grants are offered to finance international researchers in graduate programs in Colombia with a high scientific content. In the case of Argentina the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research has several programs that allow fellowships and joint research in Argentine with support by the government, also there are exchanges with international research centres and the National Institute of Agricultural Technology and the Industry Technology Institute. In Chile the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research has programs for international cooperation establishing associations and alliances with foreign entities dedicated to science and technology. Uruguay has an agency for innovation and research in charge of research promotion and innovation, which supports the exchange of both domestic and foreign experts.

In Brazil, CAPES, the Brazilian government agency in charge of promoting high standards for Higher Education in the country, has funds for international joint research projects. The PGCI (Portuguese acronym for 'International Cooperation Program') aims to fund joint research projects and academic partnerships in all areas of knowledge, and also foster exchanges between Brazilian and foreign higher education institutions and research centers. The grants can support "Work missions" (7-20 days) or "Research missions" (3-12 months) covering transport, health insurance and some living costs. To apply, candidates must submit projects linked to a Brazilian institution. CAPES also supports short, medium and long term visits by foreign professors to Brazil.

QUESTION 7. FOR THE WHOLE PANEL. WHAT ROLE MIGHT TECHNOLOGY PLAY IN FOSTERING NEW PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS/STRENGTH PARTNERSHIPS, AND ENCOURAGE NEW MODES OF DELIVERY AND ENGAGEMENT?

We have identified that there is no sufficient dissemination of information about scholarships and internships available to interested Latin American students as well as available fellowships and scholarship available for Australians.

Austrade, through its office in Chile has proposed to the University of Queensland a Careers' Fair for Latin American Scholarship recipients studying in Australia in order to support these students to secure internship programs at companies in Australia or in the offices based at the student's home country. This fair is aimed also to support graduate employment as well as applied research opportunities. We think, this could be a very relevant

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event and could set up a benchmark. However, we need a more sustainable and long term program and in this respect, I would like to propose to the audience the setting up of an electronic platform with the financial support of COALAR's grants that can provide, in an unified manner, all the updated opportunities available both at the national and the regional level in Australia as well as overseas in terms of scholarship and internships. The stakeholders of this platform would be the interested companies, both the federal and state governments, universities and research centres.

In previous comments, it is evident that there is a wide array of scientific and technological institutions in Latin America that can offer opportunities of exchange of scientists and experts that count with governmental support and financing and who could create a two-way flow of academic mobility.

QUESTION 10. WHAT ROLE DOES LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCIES PLAY IN ENSURING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS?

10. What role does language and cultural competencies play in ensuring successful partnerships?

- According to the OECD, a second language not only facilitates contact with another person but it is also the basis to generate confidence.
- Learning a second language facilitates to understand a culture and the way to do business.
- **Regarding the importance of Spanish :**
 - 55 million people speak Spanish in the United States, and 102.6 Millions in 2050.
 - Spanish is offered in USA as a second language for study.
 - Spanish is the third more common in the internet.
 - Google, Facebook have chosen Spanish as a second linguistic group.
 - 18 million people are studying Spanish.
 - Spanish is essential in the fields of business, science and technology.
 - It is the second most widely spoken language for international communication worldwide.
 - It is the official language of 21 nations; there are nearly 350 million native speakers.
 - It is important because of the emergence of Latin America as a worldwide trading partner.

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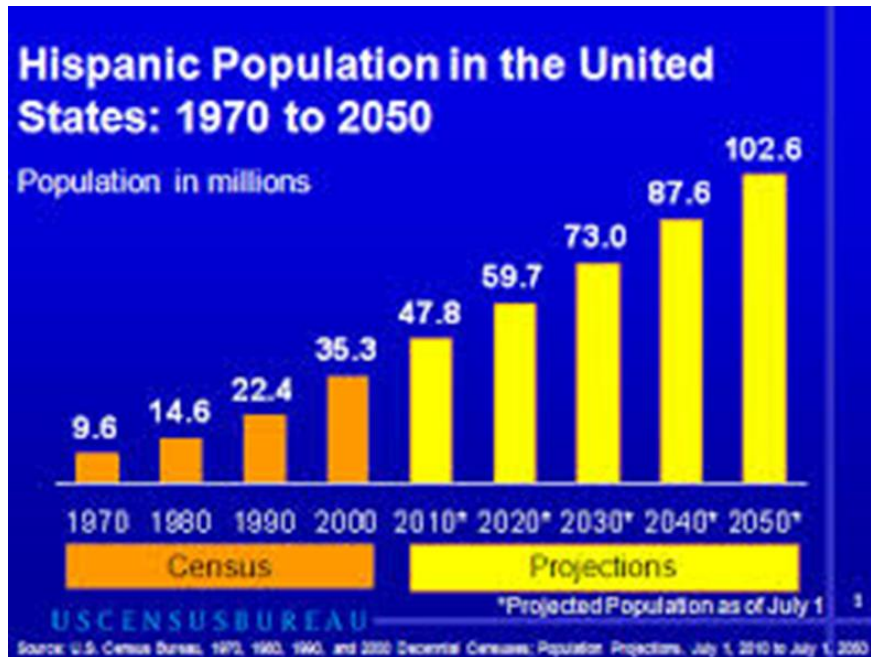


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In Colombia there is a wide offer of Spanish learning programs in 21 public and private Universities in seven cities of our country.

The Government of Colombia has an institutional framework called Spanish as a foreign language Learning Program supported in an integral manner by the Colombian Ministries of Education, Culture, Industry and Trade, and Foreign Affairs, coordinated by the prestigious Instituto Caro y Cuervo, which is also engaged in Linguistics, Literature, Philology and Humanities. It is dedicated at the same time to the training of teachers and specialists in such disciplines.

QUESTION 11. HOW TO INCREASE ACADEMIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND LATIN AMERICA AND HOW TO FOSTER PUBLIC POLICIES THAT SUPPORT THE RELEVANCE AS ACADEMIC DESTINATIONS IN BOTH WAYS?

My remarks to this question are based on several consultations with my Latin American colleagues when preparing for this panel. I will try to reflect their comments and therefore it is a privilege to speak on their behalf.

It is evident that international education contributes to greater people to people links, which will certainly foster scientific collaboration, trade, investment and cultural exchanges.

The Australian Draft National Strategy for education for 2015, states that education and research partners are mainly in North America, Europe and Asia. China and India being the top source of countries for international

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students. The Strategy also highlights that it is relevant not to lose sight of building relationships beyond Asia including Latin America and the Middle East.

It is important to note that Latin America has been recognized by Australia as the fastest growing region after Asia. Over 260 Australian companies are nowadays located in Latin America according to DFAT from only 24 back in 1999. As Minister Bishop's stated at her address at Latin America Down Under 2014, and I quote "it is time to translate our growing cross-cultural understanding into concrete action to support our economic and trade relations. It is time we start working together far more closely, including becoming more strategic in regional affairs". In this context the exchange in education and the academic collaboration are pivotal.

Australia is currently an important destination for students from Latin America. The numbers speak by themselves: there are a total of approximately 40.000 students from which, 21.700 from Brazil, 12.443 from Colombia, 2000 from Chile, 1755 from Mexico and in 2013 there were recorded by DFAT 1.642 from Peru, 965 from Venezuela, 553 from Ecuador and 282 from Argentina.

Our Government institutions contribute significantly providing loans and awards so that our students can study in Australia. Such is the case of Brazil, where 6000 students have come to Australia since 2012 through the Brazilian scholarship program "Science without Borders". Chile has a comprehensive agreement with the Australia's Group of Eight Universities, which grants Government scholarships to up to 500 participants selected each year. In Peru, there is a scholarship program called "Presidente de la República" through which currently 109 students are in Australia in the postgraduate level in the fields of science and technology. In the case of Mexico, through the National Council for Science and Technology there were 141 recipients of scholarships to study in Australia. Also in Colombia, two institutions, Icetex, which is a governmental agency and Colfuturo, which is a public-private Foundation, make significant efforts to financially support young Colombian students coming to Australia to improve their English or for post-graduate studies and through an Agreement between Universities Australia and our Research Institute COLCIENCIAS, a system to co-finance PhD students was established in 2014.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade manages fellowships and scholarships, as pointed out by Minister Bishop at LADU last year and I quote "In this context we are delivering on our scholarship commitments in Latin America and the Latin American region remains part of the Australia Awards Fellowships Program. This is really important because these fellowships in particular not only build personal relationships but they enhance

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business activity, offer opportunities for professional development and study tours and short courses so you get that deeper engagement that only comes from living, and working and studying in another country”.

Although we acknowledge that Latin America is included in the Department of Education and Training Endeavour Awards, our message today for DFAT is the request to reconsider the possibility of reinserting Latin America in the list of eligible candidates for the Australian Awards Scholarships, which seek to stimulate the leadership potential and strive to create a global network of talented individuals and change –makers as stated by DFAT. The list comprises today countries from Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. As a region we think that our students, as a gesture of reciprocity for the efforts made by our institutions to support students coming to Australia, should also have the possibility of competing for those scholarships with candidates from other regions. Also as a reinforcement of the relevance attributed by Australia in its foreign policy to the Latin American region.

It is stated that around 80 per cent of the Australian undergraduates who go abroad for study select Europe and North America as their destination. Our message today is that the New Colombo Plan could include in the future the possibility for Australian exchange students to go to Latin America.

Both parties, Australia and Latin America have to encourage a two way beneficial mobility of students and researchers, as our Dean pointed out during the 2014 ALABC’s Heads of Mission Networking Day and I quote “Relations between Australia and Latin America are by no means a zero sum game but a win-win situation. If they are not broader and deeper it is because of lack of mutual knowledge and because priorities for both sides lay elsewhere than with each other, but not because there are no commonalities in both character and interests, which in fact abound (...) We should do much more together”. Academic exchange in both ways is the most useful tool to promote people-to-people links, wider assimilation of each other’s culture, together with more business and investment .Also we should look forward to the creation of a network of leaders that can influence further ties of collaboration and the strengthening of links between Australia and Latin America.

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