

By His Excellency Ambassador ZHANG Junsai

“Australia and China: New Directions in Learning Connections”

Address at The Forum of The China Education Centre

The University of Sydney

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Dr. Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of The University of Sydney,

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Ladies and Gentlemen -

Thanks for Dr. Spence’s warm introduction.

It’s my great pleasure to attend today’s Forum of the China Education Centre. The University of Sydney, founded in 1850, is Australia’s first university and one of the world’s top 50 universities as well. As an elite university, it enjoys a reputation for research excellence. I believe I will benefit from my communication and discussion with you.

The University of Sydney has strong links with China. It was the first in Australia to introduce the study of Chinese language in award programs as early as in 1956. In 1972 when China and Australia established diplomatic ties, it founded the China Education Centre. And in 2005, it held a graduation ceremony for its Chinese students in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the

first time ever that any foreign university has done so. All three explain that the University of Sydney has played an active and important role in the educational exchanges between our two countries.

Today the theme of my speech is “Australia and China: New Directions in Learning Connections”. Confucius once said, “*To gain new insights through reviewing old material*”. Therefore, I’m going to review briefly what has happened in our bilateral educational exchanges and cooperation since the two countries have had diplomatic ties.

The biggest change is that more and more Chinese students are coming to study in Australia. I have personally witnessed the above changes. In 1991, when I was a Consul in the Chinese Consulate -General in Sydney, I found few Chinese students here. But nowadays, I can see Chinese faces in almost any Australian university.

According to the Australian statistics, there are more than 100,000 Chinese students in Australia, which is the largest group among international students in Australia. To be more specific, among four international students here, there is one from China. As far as I know, the proportion of Chinese students in the University of Sydney is even higher. Probably one in three international students is Chinese.

We have achieved outstanding results in China-Australia cooperation in running schools. By the end of the year 2007, there were three schools cooperatively-run by Chinese and Australian educational institutions, which accounted for 9% of all Chinese-Foreign cooperatively-run schools. There were 56 educational projects jointly-operated by educational institutions of our two countries, which accounted for 36% of all Chinese-Foreign cooperatively-run educational

projects. More than 30,000 Chinese students benefited from those schools and projects. Compared with other countries and regions, Australia is clearly one of the leaders in this regard.

We have also expanded our cooperation in cultivating high-level talents. In recent years, The China Scholarship Council has signed quite a few agreements, such as PhD Research Fellowship Programs, with the University of Sydney, ANU, CSIRO and other Australian institutions. Those programmes involve fields including energy, resources, environment, information, space, nanotechnology, oceanography, new materials etc.

From the Australian side, people are increasingly interested in learning Chinese language and culture. According to statistics, there are 569 schools in Australia which have Chinese language courses, with nearly 1,000 Chinese language teachers, and more than 100,000 Australian students studying Chinese. In the last four years, the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne, the University of Adelaide and the University of Sydney have all established Confucius Institutes. And there are three more to come. Last year, nearly 1,500 Australian young people studied in China.

Our educational exchanges and cooperation have produced win-win results. For China, when Chinese students finish their study in Australia, lots of them go back to China with their capability enhanced. Some even establish their own business. They not only make contributions to China's development, but also become important bridges between our two countries, to help increase mutual understanding and friendship among our two peoples.

For Australia, Chinese students studying in Australia bring green income worth billions of Australian dollars. After graduation, many Chinese students choose

to work in Australia for a few years or settle down. They join the Australian labour force to ease the labour shortage, and they enrich the Australian culture as well. In fact, they have helped Australia's economic and social development.

Ladies and Gentlemen -

The reason why we have made remarkable progress in our educational exchanges and cooperation is closely related to four drivers:

Firstly, China's opening-up. This year marks the 30th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up. Thirty years ago, proposed by Mr. Deng Xiaoping, China opened its door to the world. Chinese students were encouraged to go overseas to learn advanced science and technology and management principles and methodology. At that time, it was the Government which funded students in going overseas. But as the Chinese people were getting richer, more and more Chinese families became able to afford to send children out themselves. According to the statistics compiled by China's Ministry of Education, from 1978 to the end of 2007 2.21 million Chinese students studied overseas. The scale became 168 times larger than that of 1978.

Secondly, Australia's advantage in the education sector. Australian education is renowned in the world for its excellence and quality. China can learn a lot from Australia, especially in areas like business, accounting, agriculture, biomedicine, energy and mine exploration, new materials etc. Besides, Australia is a safe and multicultural country, and people are easy-going, which are attributes also attractive to the Chinese students. Therefore, following "US fever", "Britain fever" and "Canada fever" in the early period, Australia in recent years has become the new study hotspot for Chinese students.

Thirdly, sound development of China-Australia relations. Healthy and stable China-Australia relations enable, and add new momentum into, our educational exchanges. In recent years, we have seen frequent high-level visits and meetings. In the last nine months, the Australian Prime Minister visited China twice and we held the first round of strategic dialogue. In the first seven months of this year, our bilateral trade volume reached 33.4 billion US dollars, an increase of 43.3% over the same period last year. It's expected to exceed 50 billion US dollars for the whole year. As our bilateral relations become closer and closer, we need more and more talented persons, who have professions and know the language and culture of the other country.

Fourthly, the bilateral educational mechanism. The two governments have actively taken measures to promote our educational exchanges. In 2003, we signed the Agreement on Mutual Acknowledgement of Higher Educational Level and Degree Certificates, to facilitate our student exchanges. The two education departments set up a consultative mechanism and held meetings every 12 to 18 months in a rotative way. And up to now three rounds have been held. In 2006 and 2007, the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao invited 100 Australian young people to visit China, which increased direct links between our young people.

Ladies and Gentlemen -

As Chinese Ambassador to Australia, I'm satisfied with the progress of our educational exchanges so far. However, I'm not complacent. I believe we have both the need and the conditions to build a much closer relationship of cooperation, and to promote our educational exchanges to a new high.

Why do we have the need? With the development of globalization accelerated,

the world is getting smaller and smaller. Now, we are living in a global village. Countries and regions are more interdependent. Only by learning from each other and working together, and seizing the opportunities, and addressing the global challenges like climate change, terrorism, infectious diseases and natural disasters, can we achieve common development. To this end, education is one of the basic solutions. Since China and Australia have their own strong points, we should strengthen our educational exchanges to learn from each other and to best position ourselves in a changing world.

Why do we have the conditions? With the deepening of China's reform and opening-up, more and more Chinese students are going overseas. And Australia is still one of the top destinations. What's more, as China-Australia relations continue to develop, there will be increasing demand for our two peoples to know more about each other, thus providing a better environment for us to enhance our educational exchanges.

Why am I not complacent? Compared with the enormous development potential of our bilateral relations and the increasing demand of our two peoples to know each other, there is still room for improvement in relation to our educational exchanges.

Just as an old saying goes "*Another step over the top and you will have the panorama*" - therefore, we should do more to strengthen our bilateral educational exchanges. But how? Here are some of my personal thoughts, which I would like to share with you.

Firstly, we should further expand the consensus between our two governments and educational circles to strengthen our educational exchanges. We should view this from a strategic perspective and see it as an important way to achieve

common development and increase our peoples' well-being. For example, we may consider holding a *China-Australia Education Summit* when the time comes. Representatives from the two governments and educational circles could explore new ways and new channels in our educational exchanges. To increase exchanges between our students, the two governments could establish a *Scholarship for Outstanding Students*, to encourage outstanding students to study in the other country.

Secondly, we should connect scientific research closely with market development. The Australian educational circle is good at scientific research and has a number of notable achievements. For example, Australia has made much progress in the clean coal technology. And China has a huge market, abundant human resources and a mature business incubation mechanism. If we can combine the two factors together, we can effectively transform scientific achievements into productivity to its maximum effect.

Thirdly, we should facilitate processes for our students to accumulate working experience. Today we see a globalized labor market. And the transnational working experience is becoming increasingly important. If one has this experience, he or she is better positioned to meet the demand of the labour market. If the conditions are ready, our relevant government organs could seek to sign a *Memorandum of Understanding on Graduates' Working Experience Programme*. Its purpose would be to help our graduates to work in the other country in the short term, which would benefit their future careers.

Fourthly, we should take measures to guarantee our quality of education to protect our students' interests. Especially in the last few years, while more and more Chinese students come to Australia, the accommodation capability of a few Australian universities has become overstretched. I hope it will be

addressed properly. In addition, Australian educational institutions are welcomed to continue to run schools in China cooperatively with their Chinese counterparts.

Fifthly, all people involved in our educational exchanges should become envoys of friendship among the two countries. They travel a lot between China and Australia, and therefore have better understandings about the two countries. They should take full advantage of it, and make objective introductions about the two countries. It will increase the understanding between our two peoples, which in turn will further promote the development of our educational exchanges.

Ladies and Gentlemen -

When looking back, we are pleased to see the great progress of our educational exchanges and cooperation. Looking ahead, we will find an even brighter future. I would like to work with you, to enhance our educational exchanges and cooperation, to promote the further development of China-Australia relations, and to benefit our two peoples and achieve common prosperity.

Thank you!

ZHANG Junsai

Ambassador of The People's Republic of China

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