



7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7)

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Higher Education Taking Action Towards the Sustainable Development Goals:
Perspectives from Asia and Europe



Interview | Conducted by James Ranstead Equity and Equality in Student Mobility



Mr. Lukas Kristen

Lukas Kristen is the President of the New Zealand International Students' Associations. Lukas is from Brazil, and is studying law at the Victoria University of Wellington Law School.

Equity and equality in student mobility is an incredibly interesting topic. Although New Zealand is positioned at the bottom of the Pacific, it is regarded very highly as a destination for international students. My home University alone, Lincoln University, has approximately 35% international students that span the continents of the globe.

This interview covered a variety of questions, and the answers have been summarised into a structured set of paragraphs below.

Equity and equality in student mobility is more than meets the eye in New Zealand. Many New Zealanders who have thought about this issue often have the view that those that are studying in New Zealand must come from wealthy backgrounds to be able to afford the expensive tuition rates (approximately 3-4 times that of domestic students).

Lukas believed that the majority of students are able to come to New Zealand through taking out a personal loan. These loans are often taken out through family, however also through worry-some sources with high interest rates. For the remainder of students, either family pay, or else a scholarship covers tuition fees (this is often the case with postgraduate study). Students attend international institutes normally with the key purpose of receiving a qualification better than that which they can receive in their home country, meanwhile giving them the international language and experience skills. International education is seen as

a personal investment, and it is normally expected that wages, when students return to their home country, will be able to cover the loan costs.

Although seen from a personal benefit angle, Lukas was also firmly of the belief that the benefits of international education assist wider communities and the wider public where these educated individuals end up residing. Lukas sees this as a key strength of education, as although those that study internationally may often come from a privileged background, everyone benefits.

In terms of equity and equality of international students in their foreign country of choice where they study, Lukas was critical of the state of affairs in New Zealand. For a very long time, New Zealand has treated international students as 'cash cows', and hasn't provided the support that domestic students receive. For example, the New Zealand Government has recently cut the budget of international student welfare support by approximately 20%. New Zealand also charges an Export Education Levy (EEL), which is several hundreds of dollars per year, most of which is funnelled back into the marketing of New Zealand institutes to attract more international students. The EEL has also recently risen to cover the financial failure of some Private Training Establishments (PTE's), which again, was judged as an unfair measure by Lukas.

International students receive an unfair level of support by their institutes, as they cater much for their dominant domestic populations. In addition to this, international students also experience significant cultural challenges within foreign countries, and have been known to experience discrimination when trying to find accommodation, or by staff of institutes.