



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

A Time of Opportunity

Lord Dearing

Chancellor, University of Nottingham

1998 Menzies Oration on Higher Education

Article from UniNews, 9 October 1998

Tertiary education is the great growth industry, the Chancellor of the University of Nottingham, Lord Dearing, told a packed audience in the Wilson Hall this week.

Delivering the University's 1998 Menzies Oration on Higher Education, Lord Dearing said that mass tertiary education would not just be for 18-year-olds for three of four years, but sustained throughout working life.

A member of the University of Melbourne Council, Lord Dearing recently chaired a major Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Higher Education in the United Kingdom.

In the Oration, he outlined opportunities available to those with vision and enterprise: the growing practice of postgraduate and lifelong learning; the progressive emergence of the global corporation and of the global economy; the development of higher education as an internationally tradable service industry, and the emerging opportunities from communications technology as broadband networks are adopted over the next decade.

"We need to find ways of reducing dependence on the state with its insistent pre-occupation with the cost minimising, rather than with the pursuit of excellence, which is fundamental to a university like Melbourne, seeking to provide Australia with a university in the first rank of the world's institutions, " he warned. "Government funding will not achieve that."

Concerned with powerfully supplementing - not replacing - the state as a major source of finance, he favours a partnership approach - a partnership in which the university is the prime partner, with the client company as a partner with much to offer in shaping learning programs and in providing learning opportunities.

He sees Universitas 21 - inspired by the University of Melbourne, with its 17 participating universities across the globe - as a collaborating network whose geographical spread matches that of a global corporation. It's a model, he believes, likely to be followed by others.

Another model others will heed, he said, is the University of Melbourne's new private university - providing postgraduate education in carefully selected disciplines. He describes it as a "visionary response both to the opportunity to work with the world of work to enrich the range of its own learning, and develop a major new source of funding in the growing world of life-long learning".

Lord Dearing had some words of warning to Australian universities on recruitment of international students. "Never compromise on quality or standards for short-term advantage; focus long-term strategy on what the client country will not be able to do, realising that its capability will be increasing and that to secure the opportunities at the

upper end of the learning range, partnerships, or carefully controlled franchises may be a necessary part of the strategy for the early stages of higher education.

He wants graduates to be proactively encouraged to see themselves as potential entrepreneurs, as makers and shakers, rather than as employees, aspiring to an honoured place in a corporation, a public service, or a profession.

To facilitate this, he proposes scholarships after graduation for students to develop business projects within the framework of the resources of the university; the provision by the university of nursery units for nascent enterprises; and the provision by Government, through the university, of equity risk capital for well conceived projects and enterprises.

Lord Dearing also canvassed the concept of individual learning accounts, funded in part by the individual, in part the state, and in part by employers - an account which at times will go into deficit on the basis of income contingent replacement, and at other times will be in credit.

Stepping into another controversial area, he suggested, that as we progress to mass higher education it should no longer be expected that all university academics engage in research, and that many will seek the enrichment of their teaching through scholarship.

The advancement of knowledge has long-ceased to be the preserve of the university, he said, predicting that any sizeable institution will have the capability to interact fruitfully with its local community in fostering the development of new processes and products.

Turning to research in the arts, humanities and social sciences, he identified theatre, film, television, radio, music, the graphic arts, design, photography, anthropology and archaeology as economically relevant areas of study.

He warned that if universities do not develop new thinking on how to achieve their purposes in higher education others from industry and commerce may well enter the market, drawing on the lessons they have learned to become learning societies themselves, and acting in partnership with the media industries.

Lord Dearing does not see effective governance and leadership of an institution in opposition to proper academic freedom, or to the maintenance of the academic integrity which characterises a university. "Perhaps one of the most desirable subjects for future research is of the elements that make and unmake a university institution..." he mused.

Article from UniNews, 16 October 1998

Lord Dearing on the world's top 50

1998 Menzies Orator, Lord Dearing, is well-qualified to offer some thoughts on the characteristics of a university that aspires to be among the 50 world ranking universities in teaching or research.

Chancellor of the University of Nottingham, Chair of the recent Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in the United Kingdom, and international member of the University of Melbourne Council, Lord Dearing outlined the following characteristics in his Oration at the University last week.

"First, it will be international in outlook and practice, to enrich the quality of all it does, and to benefit the students whose world will increasingly be international in its range. Universitas 21 is a powerful and wholly welcome recognition of that - and I might add

that the University of Nottingham, of which I am Chancellor, is a committed member of this Association of Universities.

"Second, it will see the need for life-long learning as a major opportunity to broaden the base of its funding and reduce dependence on government; to enliven its teaching and to provide new opportunities for collaborative research.

"Third, in support of those two it will see in communication and information technology a major opportunity for achieving its purposes, and through national and international partnerships with universities and businesses, it will seek to develop world-class teaching materials as well as real-time teaching and research through broad-band communications networks.

"Fourth, it will recognise the need to concentrate research resources to establish world-class facilities in chosen areas; it will be active in seeking collaborative research; it will see research as an important and growing basis for generating income through contracts, patents, and through helping researchers to engage in the commercial development of their work. It will be wholly professional in this aspect of its work.

"Fifth, it will aim to be world-class in the business of the management of learning and teaching.

"Sixth, it will see itself in partnerships with its local community.

"Seventh, it will recognise that to respond fully to the opportunities open to it, and to be in the first rank of the world's broadly based universities it needs critical mass.

"But above all it will be true to the values of the historic university, a centre for reflective thought, part of the conscience of society and, if need be, an outspoken champion of the characteristics of a democracy. It will see itself as part of the conscience of society holding a mirror up to society so that it cannot conceal from itself when conscience should be leading it to respond to the needs of all its citizens and indeed of mankind. Above all it will be true to the great tradition of the university, in the words of the poet John Mansfield, with which I concluded the introduction to our UK review of higher education:

It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honour thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning and will exact standards in these things.

"To realise opportunities it will be innovative, have a clear vision of its chosen destiny, and courageous in its leadership.

"It must ever be so."