

***The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) presents***  
**Rethinking higher ed: Beyond {the buzzwords}**  
**November 7-8, 2013**  
**Sheraton Centre Toronto**

**Day One**  
**November 7, 2013**

**Welcome Address**

*His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada*

Like those at the HEQCO, Governor General David Johnston has spent a long time consumed by how people absorb knowledge. The theme of this conference was perfectly suited to this, as he believes buzzwords cloud our understanding of higher education, and can prevent us from taking constructive action.

His Excellency declared that although he doesn't know how higher education will evolve over the next generation, he knows that it is already becoming flexible, fluid and unpredictable. Teachers and students both are reevaluating their roles and considering new uses of technology to enhance learning. Innovation not only in technology, but also in society and government, is helping to redefine education.

But there is no single individual, group or region that can provide the answer to how higher education will transform. The pace and extent of change is too rapid and profound, and higher education is too complex. What we need is to work across disciplines and barriers of various kinds in order to achieve this understanding: a process that he calls the "diplomacy of knowledge."

The Governor General pointed out that his installation speech, "A Smart and Caring Nation: a Call to Service," laid out a key pillar of learning and innovation. An important question we must answer is: how do we ensure equality of opportunity and excellence in learning? Canada has set a high standard in this, but the job is not complete. While we excel in ensuring equality of opportunity for the majority of Canadians, for example, there exists a significant part of the population that is marginalized and is not attaining or exceeding the educational levels of their parents. Why is that the case? Why do so few Canadian students choose to go abroad and so few foreign students choose to study in Canada, when compared with some other countries? We can and must do better.

University executives need to reach out and give staff and students the opportunity to teach and study abroad. Deans should help make the most of new learning technologies. Teachers must travel and teach widely—both in person and online—and forge innovative connections. Governments should encourage intelligence and innovation in universities. Everyone involved in education must spark some creative and constructive chaos! Even students themselves have turned the tables, helping educators rethink how they do things. This conference is a great way to inspire all of these possibilities, to move beyond the buzzwords to explore fresh ideas, to work collaboratively and innovatively, to find the smart answers needed to make higher education more enriching, rewarding and fulfilling. In short, we must all become teachers even as we remain learners.

To read the full text of the Governor General's speech, please visit  
<http://www.gg.ca/document.aspx?id=15401>.