

UK-China Innovation and Enterprise Education Forum 17-18 March 2017, Beijing

Background

As China enters a 'new normal' of more modest economic growth, the pressure of rapidly aging population is intensified and the country is speeding up its transition into a more innovation driven and knowledge based economy. A mass campaign of innovation and entrepreneurship was launched by the central government in 2015 to push for greater creativity and business innovation.

Education is seen as the key contributor in China's economic transition. Recent education reforms in China have focused on developing world-class research and innovation, fostering stronger education-industry links and cultivating the innovation and entrepreneurship spirit of the younger generation, all aimed at boosting economic growth as well as graduate employability.

Since 2015, the Chinese Ministry of Education has made innovation and enterprise education (IEE) a national education priority and requested for it to be introduced at all HE Institutions. The Government has set out a three stage plan leading to 2020:

- 2015: Start implementing the IEE reform in all HEIs in China
- 2017: IEE popularised with a series of replicable system-level best practice identified and 'College Student Business Start-up Plan' achieved
- 2020: An IEE system well established with evident improvements in terms of student's entrepreneurial spirit, awareness and skills. The number of students involved in business start-up and practice substantially increased

To support the ambition the government has also put in place a number of measures, including

- IEE modules or course are to be offered at all HEIs and made compulsory for all university students from 2017
- Encourage all HE institutions to open 'maker spaces' to cultivate and incubate business ideas, and strengthen education-business links to provide workplace experience, leverage investment fund and provide technology transfer support
- Enhance career service to provide additional business management support to start-ups
- Enable flexible schooling to allow students to test out business ideas
- Launch national campaigns and competitions to raise public awareness and identify talents
- Implement the 'College Student Business Start-up Plan' which provides facilitated access to loan, tax reduction and subsidy for new business

While these well intended initiatives have provided strong impetus, there are considerable challenges in implementing IEE, namely

- Quality and standards of IEE courses and delivery vary as all HE Institutions develop and implements their own IEE programmes;
- Very few IEE teachers are equipped with the right level of skills, competence and business experience to lead the teaching and learning effectively

- Education business links are still to be improved to truly empower business to play a strong role in talent development

The Global Innovation Index identifies the UK as among the world's top three most innovative economics. The UK education system is features a distinctive and close alliance between government, universities, businesses, non-government organizations and associations. This is a model that China is striving to develop. Cooperation between the UK and China in this area will help institutions in both countries achieve their domestic and international objectives.



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