

Forum on China-UK Transnational Education - Development and Prospects of China-UK Transnational Education

Transnational education is an important part of the China-UK education relationship. UK universities were among the earliest to partner with Chinese institutions in setting up TNE programmes, and now represent a major part of education collaboration between the two countries. This forum focussed on the latest TNE policy in both countries, discussed some innovations and responses made by UK-China TNE partners during the pandemic and cast a light on what the future holds post-pandemic.

Policy update

Updates shared by the Chinese Ministry of Education's TNE advisor:

- “Top” UK universities are invited to build campuses in China (e.g., Joint Institutes with legal entities)
- TNE will facilitate the development of China's new free trade areas such as the Hainan free trade area, the Greater Bay Area, the Yangtze river delta and Xiong'an new area – these will be new frontiers of education, areas where education collaboration will be more open to the world

Current UK-China TNE environment

UK-China TNE is well-established. Currently the UK and China have a total of 244 TNE partnerships including, 208 joint programmes, 34 joint institutes without legal entity and 2 joint institutes with legal entities.

In 2019/20, there were 453,390 students globally studying on UK TNE programmes, in 226 countries and territories delivered by 156 providers. China is the largest partner and continues to grow rapidly. The total number of students studying towards UK degrees in China in 2019/20 was 49,800, an increase of 16.3 per cent on the previous year.

Early UK-China TNE was oriented heavily towards teaching provision. As partnerships have developed and collaboration has strengthened, some institutions are now turning their focus to stronger research collaboration.

Innovation from the pandemic

- Representatives from UK-China TNE partnerships shared recent developments at their institutions, including the challenges of the pandemic and their responses.
- The pandemic forced institutions to learn how to work, teach and learn remotely and explore technological solutions for delivery.
- It accelerated an inevitable change that was already happening - the shift to industry 4.0. For the education sector and especially TNE, this will involve the

integration of new disruptive technologies such as AI and cloud computing with current classroom and campus practices.

Challenges

- Most contributors highlighted the difficulty of running international programmes in a time with restrictions on mobility. Not only was student mobility brought to a halt, but also faculty mobility.
- Lack of access to campuses disrupted classroom teaching and events including graduation ceremonies and international exchange programmes.
- The slow return to normal poses its own challenges, as staff and students adapt to the new normal.

Opportunities

- Institutions intend to continue many new practices developed as response to the pandemic after it has come to an end.
- The shift online has in some respects brought partnerships closer providing students and faculty with more opportunities to share digital space internationally across campuses.
- Blended learning was recognised as part of the solution to balancing TNE with low-carbon environmental goals.
- The international and collaborative nature of TNE partnerships has the potential to drive highly innovative developments both in research output and pedagogical practices.

Background

The 2021 China Annual Conference for International Education and Expo (CACIE 2021) was held in Beijing on 21 and 22 October 2021. The event was also streamed online for guests outside of China. This report covers one of 30 fora that took place over the two days, with this event focussing on the development and trends in UK-China TNE over the past year.

The Symposium was jointly organised by China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), the British Council and Universities UK International. Representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Education and provincial and municipal education departments contributed to the event, as well as from UK-China TNE providers.