

From 7th to 16th November 2012, a delegation of 9 Chinese higher education researchers visited 5 UK higher education institutions and attended a higher education forum in London, which formed the first stage of the 3-year programme of UK-China Study of Higher Education Policy for Promoting Diversity.

Co-organised by British Council and National Centre for Education Development Research of Chinese Ministry of Education, the programme was designed to achieve the aims of the 2010 UK-China Framework on Educational Co-operation Partnership signed by Michael Gove MP, UK Secretary of State for Education and China's Minister of Education, Yuan Guiren during the 5th Education Summit.

The study covers the four main research areas as follows:

- How the current higher education system comes into being and how well the system adapts to the needs of society and the economy;
- Roles that government and the market have to play in promoting higher education diversity;
- Policy making and measures taken, especially analysis of efficiency of funding allocation and evaluation;
- Positions set by different higher education institutions - how universities integrate with the society and economy, including strategy and practice.

The delegation visited five UK higher education institutions including Open University, Harper Adams University College, University of York, University of Warwick and University of Southampton, which represented different mission groups.

They also attended a forum on the theme of higher education diversity and had a lively and in-depth discussion with their UK counterparts. The forum was co-hosted by British Council and UK Higher Education International Unit, and discussions were made around the importance of a diverse HE sector, distance learning, research-intensive universities, teaching universities, local and specialist institutions.

The delegation was very well received by their UK hosts all of which presented their own missions and features which formed a diverse scene of the UK HE as a whole. The forum particularly provided them with a good opportunity to exchange thoughts and ideas with their UK counterparts in an intensive way. According to the survey result, most of the delegates thought it was a fruitful and quality visit and strongly agreed that their expectations were met.

The findings of the research will inform the policy making in China. They will publish a report of this visit in their Research Update, which is distributed to departments of MOE, key HE research institutes and provincial education commissions. In April/May of 2013, there will be a reciprocal visit to China paid by the UK researchers as the next step of the programme. In 2014 Chinese researchers will visit the UK gain to gain further understanding of diversity issues in higher education sector. At the end of the 3-year programme, a book about all key findings will be published in China with contributions from the project hosts and participants from both countries.

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