

International Workshop on Higher Education Reforms in Shanghai, Nov 2008

Organized by the Institute of Higher Education of East China Normal University, Shanghai, the fifth in the series of international workshops on Higher Education Reforms took place between November 4 to 6, 2008. (Four earlier workshops have taken place in Vancouver, Vienna, Tokyo and Dublin). The Workshop theme 'The Internationalization of Higher Education and Higher Education Reforms' brought together some 100 participants – academics, university administrators and graduate students - who discussed developments and recent changes to university policies and organization with respect to internationalization, both in China and abroad.

Internationalization, often used synonymously with 'globalization', is not just a familiar focus of debates in the West, it is also very topical in China. The country is engaged in major reforms of its entire Higher Education system basically with three major thrusts: increasing capacity, improving quality, and making it more international. Hence China, which has doubled its student population in less than eight years (standing presently at 23 million), is now accommodating more foreign students (2.5 million) than Chinese students studying abroad. China's academic 'diaspora' is estimated to consist of 35 million researchers and other highly educated persons living and working abroad. Although for a long time seen as a major 'brain drain', many members of this diaspora have contacts and working links with colleagues in their home country thus forming an international network on which Chinese academics can draw. Internationalization occurs as well on the institutional level, For example, East China Normal University, the workshop's hosting institution and one of the 39 key universities designated to catch up with the standard of Western elite universities, has presently 82 joint degree programs with foreign universities and partnerships of other kinds with well over one hundred. One hundred of its graduate courses are currently being developed to be taught entirely in English.

A total of 54 papers were presented; several of these are contained in a Special Issue of the Journal of Higher Education, vol. 29 (Oct.) 2008 (in Mandarin). It is planned to publish a number of others in English. The program of the workshop can be accessed on the ECNU website (http://www.ecnuhe.org/workshop/p_e.pdf).

The sixth Workshop in this series will be held in Mexico City in November 2009, organized by the Department of Educational Research (Departamento de Investigaciones Educativas - NIE) of the national Centre for Advanced Research and Studies (Centro de Investigacion y Estudios Avanzados).