U21 report on The Future of International Higher Education Workshop

1st November 2014

On Saturday 1 November, the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) hosted a one-day workshop on the future of international higher education which it sponsored jointly with the U21 secretariat.

Over 60 people attended the workshop, primarily coming from the Asia-Pacific and Australia/New Zealand regions. The guest speakers were all from U21 partner institutions in Australia (University of Queensland and the University of Melbourne), New Zealand (University of Auckland), Singapore (National University of Singapore (NUS)) and mainland China (Shanghai Jiao Tong and UNNC). Additionally, Hong Kong University’s Professor YANG Rui, a leading expert on international education, delivered the keynote speech. Attendees were from UNNC, University of Nottingham UK (UNUK) and University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNMC), as well as from Shanghai Jiao Tong and Ningbo University. Post doc students and a couple of administrators from UNUK and UNMC were sponsored by their institutions. Most of the attendees were either Early Career Researchers (ECRs) or PhD students, and there was much networking, especially among the latter.

After Professor Fintan Cullen of UNNC’s welcome to the delegates, the workshop was kick-started by a thought-provoking speech by Professor YANG Rui on the need for east Asian universities to develop pedagogic and administrative models which draw heavily on cultural and intellectual resources from their own countries rather than solely from the so-called ‘west’. This was followed by two sessions in which invited speakers from U21 universities presented on ‘virtual learning and education’ (Shen Wei from Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Paula de Barba from the University of Melbourne) and on ‘the future of higher education’ (GAO Yuan from the University of Melbourne and Rose Martin from The University of Auckland).

The afternoon was devoted to three simultaneous break-out sessions on ‘virtual learning and education’, ‘entrepreneurship and education’ and ‘equality of education’, led respectively by NUS’s Stephen Wee Hun Lin, UNNC’s Felix Arndt and the University of Queensland’s Edobor Michael Erhabor. These near-two-hour sessions were all well-attended and contained some lively discussions, some of which were stimulated by the morning presentations.

The host institution, UNNC, found this a very productive day, with the benchmarking discussion inspired by GAO Yuan’s paper being particularly timely for the planning process that is presently going on at UNNC. The virtual learning sessions were attended by various members of the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Office at UNNC so a lot of information gathering and networking ensued for our UNNC community during the course of the day.
It was suggested that perhaps in the future UNNC could organize with U21 a more administration-led session on the challenges of internationalization.