

A deeper understanding

By **H.E. YUAN GUIREN**

MINISTER OF EDUCATION, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



YUAN GUIREN graduated from Beijing Normal University (BNU), majoring in Philosophy. Over the course of his career, he has held a number of senior positions including Executive Vice President of BNU, Assistant Mayor of Beijing, Director-General of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission, and President of BNU. He was appointed Vice Minister of Education in 2001 and assumed his current position as Minister of Education in 2009.

The State Visit by the Chinese President Xi Jinping to the UK is an important milestone in our bilateral relations and has historical significance on their future development.

Both China and the UK enjoy long histories and splendid culture and are committed to the development of their countries and the wellbeing of its people. Since 2004 when the two countries established comprehensive strategic partnership, cooperation in all fields and at all levels has been continuously expanded and strengthened. As an important component of China-UK people-to-people exchange and bilateral relations, our educational cooperation currently covers a wide range from basic education to higher education, of various forms and at various levels. Remarkable achievements made from such cooperation have extensive and positive influence among the public and plays a vital role in promoting China-UK relations.

Firstly, student mobility has been continuously enlarged. Chinese students take the UK as an important destination for overseas study while coming to study in China is also an increasing trend in the

UK. The Chinese government plays an active role in promoting student mobility and increasing Chinese Government Scholarship every year. In 2014, China announced the decision to send 10 thousand students to study in the UK for the coming 5 years. In the single year of 2014, China sent 2400 students and scholars to the UK and received 224 students from the UK, all sponsored by Chinese Government Scholarship. By the end of 2014, Chinese students in the UK have exceeded 150 thousand. To encourage studying in China, the UK government has decided to support 80 thousand students to study or work as interns in China from 2013 through 2020 with the launching of "Generation UK". The number of UK students studying in China has reached over 6 thousand for the year of 2014, showing quite considerable growth. The two countries will continue to encourage and support young people to study in the other country which not only benefits their own personal development, but also injects continuous momentum to the long-term development of China-UK relations.

Secondly, cooperation programmes have been effectively implemented. In basic education, secondary school students in Shanghai scored high in their first trial in PISA and hence drew global attention to China's basic education. China and the UK then decided to select and exchange maths teachers from Shanghai and the UK since 2014. In vocational education, the Shadowing Programme provides access for principals of secondary vocational schools to go to sister schools and gain first-hand experience by working side-by-side with their counterparts. The pilot of the UK's modern apprenticeship programme and cooperation in developing curricula are also going on to enrich the whole range of vocational education cooperation. In higher education, the two sides support the training of high-calibre talents and cooperation in scientific research by implementing the China-UK PhD Candidates Partnership Programme. The China Scholarship Council has also initiated joint scholarships with leading UK universities including Russell Group



HRH The Duke of Cambridge opens the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre in September 2014


members to send excellent Chinese students to study in the best UK Universities.

China-UK cooperation in joint schools started early and progressed smoothly. The Ningbo-Nottingham University set up in 2004 and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University established in 2006 are among the first batches of joint schools approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education and have now become successful examples in this field. By the end of August 2015, 17 China-UK jointly run education institutions and 240 joint programmes have been established in China. Meanwhile, Chinese universities are accelerating their pace of internationalisation. This September, the Chinese Language School of Beijing Normal University-Cardiff University was formally established. It represents a positive exploration by Chinese higher education institutions in setting up joint education programmes and schools in developed countries, and also another highlight in China-UK educational cooperation.

Thirdly, collaboration in language teaching and learning has been closer and deepening. Language is a carrier for culture and means for exchange. China has the largest number of English learners and UK has the largest number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in Europe. Both countries attach great importance to the collaboration in language learning and teaching. The UK government has been determined to substantially increase the number of learners of the Chinese language and also to improve the learning quality. The Headquarter of Confucius Institutes in China will also continue

to support the Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in the UK.

Fourthly, policy exchange has been conducted on a regular basis. Since 2004, the Ministries of Education of both countries established a regular dialogue at ministerial level (i.e. Education Summit). Every year, both sides hold meetings to have in-depth exchange on the latest developments in each others' educational reforms, and jointly decide the annual cooperative plan to provide guidance in promoting China-UK educational collaboration. In 2012, the China-UK High-Level People-to-People Dialogue was formally established. The Education Summit, as the thematic dialogue under this People-to-People Dialogue framework, enriches the content of the Dialogue and hence facilitates the People-to-People exchange of the two countries. During the 3rd meeting of this People-to-People Dialogue and Education Summit in 2015, 24 agreements and MoUs were signed in the field of education.

As an old Chinese expression goes, "amity between people holds the key to sound relations between the states and can be achieved through their connection of hearts and minds". On the new historical turning point, exchange and collaboration in education will have a wider space and more promising future than ever. The Chinese Ministry of Education is willing to join hands with the UK to further expand and deepen existing cooperation, promote understanding and friendship between young people, and push forward win-win cooperation in education so as to make contribution to the development of the China-UK strategic partnership. 

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A teacher from Clover Hill Community Primary School in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne visits a school in China while working for the British Council