



## **China: Challenges in promoting Magna Charta Universitatum fundamental principles and values**

*Host: Professor GUAN Naijia, Nankai University*

*Rapporteur: Professor Dimitris Tsougarakis China*

Professor Guan described the overall picture of Higher Education in China, the entrance exams system (Gao Kao), and the role of the State in general. She also described the history, organization of studies, and achievements of Nankai University.

The participants explored three main aspects: the role of the State with regards to the University, the organisation of Studies, and the role of the University within its area or province.

Concerning the role of the State, Professor Guan stressed that the Government provided funding (although the Universities also charge fees) and general directions, but left a lot of space for independent University decisions without the need of government approval. As an example she provided the fact that the University has its own decision-making procedure to establish new departments, without prior or retrospective approval by the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, the Ministry, realising the market need for more vocational (“blue collar”) workers, has initiated a policy of transforming a number of Universities into vocational schools, with no postgraduate studies and with degrees that were not equivalent to Bachelors degrees. Underlying this process seemed to be a problem of quantity vs quality, in other words the quality of studies in some of China’s more than 2800 universities.

Concerning the second point, namely the organization of Studies, Professor Guan mostly referred to Nankai University. The system of studies provides 4 years undergraduate, 3 years Masters and 3 years PhD degree courses. Participants were impressed and commented on the length of the Masters courses. The teaching staff (Professors) are divided into three categories according to the amount of teaching and research they are doing: 1. 70% Research and 30% teaching, 2. 50% Research and 50% teaching, and finally 3. 30% Research and 70% teaching.

Quite a lot of the discussion concerned the values of the University and the values that the University promotes to its students. Professor Guan spoke about “leadership”, “internship” and “campus culture”. The latter mostly referred to University “patriotism” which was instilled into the students, but it was obvious that patriotism in general also constituted a very strong aspect of the university and state ideology present in the campus.

Finally, concerning the role of the University in its province, here again it was obvious that there was a University culture of “ties” and reciprocal “offers” to the region. The University considers it their moral obligation to provide services to the region, because the region, or the provincial government, also provides various services to the University. The example that was cited was the new campus area that the Tianjin provincial government offered Nankai University free of charge with all the infrastructure ready for use. In return, Nankai established a small campus near the city of Tianjin, dedicated to economics and entrepreneurship, which are disciplines required by the mainly commercial activities of the harbour city.

In conclusion the discussions at this Table offered a useful insight to both the Chinese Higher Education System and to Nankai University as a specific case in this system.