

Comments made at the Memorandum of Understanding (UoM) signing ceremony between National Tsing Hua University and University of Liverpool

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Dr. Stephen Holloway, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dr. Eann Patterson, Dr. Ahmed Elsheikh, and Dr. Leszek Gasieniec, three distinguished faculty members, all from the University of Liverpool, my colleagues Dr. W. C. Wang, Vice President for International Affairs, Dr. K. Y. Cheng, Dean of the College of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Dr. R. A. Doong, Dean of the College of Nuclear Science and Dr. H. Hocheng, Dean of the College of Engineering: I represent my boss Academician Lih J. Chen, President of National Tsing Hua University here this afternoon to welcome our distinguished colleagues from the University of Liverpool and to sign this Memorandum of Understanding.

From my discussion with Dr. Holloway, I am very excited to meet a fellow Niels Bohr Institute “alumnus.”

During the second half of the 20th century, majority of students from Taiwan who went abroad to pursue advanced degrees did so nearly exclusively in one country: United States. It is therefore not a surprise that sometimes “Globalization” in Taiwan higher education institutions is synonymous with “U.S.-nization.” Such a skewed and incomplete globalization approach is now not only obvious, it is also acutely felt on campuses throughout Taiwan’s educational infrastructures. There is now palpable interest from Taiwan’s universities to connect with universities in Europe and other parts of Asia and North America. NTHU’s profound interest and intention to develop meaningful and sustainable interactions with one of the best universities in the United Kingdom, the University of Liverpool, is another manifestation of this new “reach out to the world” by us in particular, Taiwan’s universities in general.

It is well known that British higher education institutions have a long and glorious history since its founding in the fledgling stage of the last millennium. In 1196, Oxford was created. For the past 800 – 900 years, United Kingdom, despite being a small population country (maybe it is not small compare to Taiwan, but certainly it is small compare to Mainland China, India and even United States) dominated the intellectual world. Today, the so-called Russell Group, in which University of Liverpool is a founding member if I am not mistaken, is world renowned. It

included not only Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College of London, but also the “Red Brick Universities,” which were founded mostly in the middle to late 19th century.

My personal interaction with British universities literally started at the beginning of my scientific career. From 1972 – 74, I had the privilege to be a Science Research Council postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Theoretical Physics of the University of Manchester. Because of my research interest at the time, I was able to interact with colleagues in Oxford University, University of Liverpool and of course, Daresbury Laboratory.

As I recall, for me to go from Manchester to Daresbury, I had to take the Manchester – Liverpool local train and get off at Warrington, which is a small town in the middle of these two cities. I recall saying to myself often in those days that “I am halfway to Liverpool!” So, Dr. Holloway, little did I realize that it would be some forty years later and in Taiwan, nearly seven thousand miles from England, would I come to “palpable contact” with Liverpool!

I went to United Kingdom because it is well known for its work in nuclear physics, my interest at the time. For example, I choose the Department of Theoretical Physics of University of Manchester to start my postdoctoral career primarily because of my admiration of the work of Sir Ernest Rutherford, who as you know, did pioneering work in the University of Manchester on radioactivity. University of Liverpool is also known for its nuclear physics work. After all, a faculty member of this university, Sir James Chadwick, discovered neutrons. His work, just like Rutherford’s, transformed the world!

Two outstanding nuclear physicists at your university: Peter Twin and John Sharpey-Shafer, discovered the stunning phenomena known as nuclear **superdeformation**. Peter and John, together with their outstanding Liverpool team, were able to develop a very sophisticated experimental detector to measure nuclei with extraordinarily high angular momentum. This measurement gave new insights into the structure of nuclei. In the 80’s and 90’s, the Liverpool team’s work was heralded as one of the most important discoveries of nuclear physics.

To end my welcoming comment, let me say that it is no exaggeration that one of the fundamental reasons why British universities lasted so long without deterioration is its clear separation from Government control. Indeed, British higher education system is fully autonomous. The autonomy gave each and every individual British higher education institution the ability, the structural stability, and most importantly, the dignity, to seek its own destiny. The rise and fall of a British university has essentially no one to give credit to, or blame, as the case may be, but itself. This freedom from Government control has made British universities a shining and envious example even in today's extremely competitive Global landscape.

Thank you so much.