

Duo Wei Editorial:

Wasteful Expansion - Chinese Universities Are Still building Satellite Campuses

http://www.dwnews.com/gb/Consumer/education/2008_9_30_14_12_42_604.html

Duo Wei News, Wan Yi-Zhong/ The Chinese are just getting to know more about Online Education. In November, China will host the seventh International Long Distance Learning conference, an international conference which was first held in 2002. According to State released information, State Department of Education has granted 68 universities the right to offer Long Distance Learning programs and degrees, including those elite universities such as Qin Hua University and Beijing University. "Many Chinese universities are only interested in opening satellite campuses, and the Chinese government may not give full support to online education, it is hard to believe online education will reach its growth potential in the very near future." Said Dr. Keiser, founder of Keiser University, located in Florida, USA, during an exclusive interview with Duo Wei News.

Seeing the Chinese Online Education with great potential, Dr. Keiser visited China four times in the last three years and signed a preliminary agreement between Keiser's Aviation program and Beijing Normal University to start joint programs in the high tech field.

An Associated News report about University of Illinois' Online school by David Mercer in November 25th brought Online Education to the front line: After a total of \$8.9 million investment into its brand new online school, it has only 121 registered students so far. However, university president Joseph White remains optimistic and hopes that its online school will become independently accredited with over 5,000 registered students in five years, revenue could potentially reach 10 million dollars.

What makes online education a success? As early as the mid 90's, Dr. Keiser, founder of Keiser University believed online education would become a huge market and a great educational tool, especially when more and more motivated adults became interested in receiving higher education. At that time, online education was merely a concept for corporate training programs, and he was not very confident about the supporting technology back then. Dr. Keiser told Duo Wei News: only in the late 90's did online education start to receive notoriety, but skeptics doubted whether it could deliver as effectively as the traditional brick-and-mortar method.

Entering the 21st century, improved technology such as eCollege and WebCT enabled the advancement of online education. Online learning environment seems to be no different than the traditional brick-and-mortar environment and perhaps have more favorable features: materials can be delivered in text, audio, and video – student can ‘take’ the class over and over until they ‘get’ it. Today, 67% of all US universities offer either full online courses or online assistance.

Ms. Sherry Olsen, Vice President of Keiser University’s online school – eCampus, offers her analysis to Duo Wei News: there are many advantages of online learning and those are also key factors contributing to online education’s increased popularity – lectures are stored online, students can choose a time at their convenience to enter the class, an online student can “ask” the instructor without “interrupting” the “lecture.” One of the most important advantages is that some questions are left unanswered in the brick-and-mortar settings and this will never happen in the online environment.

“It is easier for university administrators to monitor and improve quality education as well,” said Ms. Olsen, “you can not just walk into a classroom and check on what the instructors and students are doing without interrupting the lecture flow, but you can (do so) in an online environment. One of the very important and obvious advantages of Online Education is that in today’s overall economic environment with high gas prices as an obstacle, people can save on gas by taking classes online. All in all, Online Education makes higher education accessible to people who may never consider going back to school otherwise.”

Zhanjun Yang, Associate Dean of Business at Keiser University’s eCampus told Duo Wei News that there are less real time interactions among students and this can be seen as a disadvantage. It can be expensive to store all the classes as well. For example, Keiser University’s eCampus offers about 177 courses per term.

Keiser University started to offer online courses in 1999 and its online division now has more than 11 four-year degree programs, such as Accounting, Criminal Justice, Business Administration, Homeland Security, Paralegal Studies, and Education, etc. It also offers more than 29 two-year degree programs. There are over 3,200 registered students in its Online Learning arm – eCampus.



A report released by Sloan Consortium in October 2007 (*Online Nation: Five Years of Growth of Online Learning*) supports the belief that online education has an even brighter future: By the end of fall semester of 2007, there are about 3.5 million students in the US took at least one online course, up 9.7% compared to a year ago, 8.4% higher than the expected 1.5% growth rate; of all university students, 20% were taking at least one online course.

Chinese Universities' Wasteful Expansions

Compared to the 3.5 million students took online courses in the US, China reported (*China Online Learning Analysis and Report*) that there were 4 million online learners by the end of 2007 nation wide; this makes China the largest online learning country. "But when taking its population size into consideration, this is a drop in the bucket," says Dr. Keiser.

Dr. Keiser told Duo Wei News: I have visited several Chinese universities and felt that they didn't understand online learning and didn't want to know, they receive little support from the government - because most Chinese universities are state owned, this makes online education hard to prosper. I also found that most of the universities' administrators prefer building satellite facilities in different locations to attract students and grow its student population. This is not cost effective.

In fact, when US universities are developing online learning and expanding online education markets, most universities in China did not take the advanced online learning technology or the market opportunity, but rather, building branch facilities all across cities, provinces.



In the year 2005, Dr. Keiser and Ms. Olsen successfully combined online learning and traditional brick-and-mortar as a new educational method in Eastern European country Moldova. When asked about future of online education in China, Dr. Keiser believes that should China begin to promote the online learning concept, it will become a huge success: Chinese students are very disciplined and study hard; their learning outcomes will change people's opinion about online learning. Dr. Keiser also pointed out to Duo Wei News that Chinese students can be very efficient in their studies; this can lead to a reduced costs for universities.

Other factors may influence the progress of online education in China. Compared to Western countries, there are differences of how people view education, differences in way of thinking, and the differences of how information is obtained and processed, said Associate Dean of Business at Keiser University eCampus, Zhanjun Yang. It is also heavily influenced by culture differences, said Mr. Yang: Education is an individual right in the US, where it is a privilege in China, I believe this will improve as China's economy grows. However, Americans are more focused on improving their learning abilities and are more practical, in addition to personal interests; Chinese students are more diploma oriented. Students' statuses are different as well: we have professional students, where in the US universities are open to all ages, including working adults. Knowledge in China is monopolized, for example, when Google search "stock price calculation" in Chinese, there are no useful results can be found; However, when you do so in English, literally you can have millions of results, including text book version answers, academic essays, and cases. Knowledge is "shared" in the West versus knowledge being monopolized in China, perhaps this explains why education is such a heavy topic in China, and explains in part about the lack of progress of online education (in China).

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