Chapter 15
Technology Enhanced Learning in China

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ABSTRACT

This case shall reveal technology enhanced learning in China in light of technology enhanced learning in the United States of America. As China has depended on radio and TV to deliver its educational programs to the masses, web technologies have not been used like its counterparts in North America (e.g., the United States of America). As a result of this dependence upon radio and TV, unique issues and challenges have emerged in the Chinese educational settings. Although this chapter focuses on one case related to a typical university of foreign languages in northern China, this case can be considered as a generic one as the issues and challenges of this case are similar to those as revealed in all other universities across China's educational settings.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

As soon as Chinese communists came to power in 1949, China began to model after the Russian educational model (Wang, 2004-2005) in terms all levels of education including its distance education. The main characteristics of China's education—national, scientific, and popular—according to Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (1979), derived from a major essay by Mao Tse-tung published in January 1940, called "On New Democracy" (p. 217). It is worth noting that Mao followed the Soviet's leadership even in directing the future of China's education. Towards this end, the future course was set as follows:

The culture and education of the People's Republic of China are new democratic, that is, national, scientific, and popular. The main tasks for raising the cultural level of the people are: training of personnel for national construction work; liquidating of feudal, comprador, fascist ideology; and developing of the ideology of serving the people. (Kaplan, Sobin, & Andors, 1979, p. 217)

This future course or national policy has affected the establishment of various kinds of universities and colleges in China. At the very beginning, a few universities of foreign languages were set up in China's major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. These universities were built in order for China's youths to learn from advanced science and technology from especially industrialized nations such as the United States. At the same time, China's leaders at the time were so afraid of the West's so-called "democratic individualism" which was considered a key threat to the Chinese people and one that had to be rooted out through education (Wang, 2008, p. 68). Between 1949 and even 1975, education in China had to strike a forthrightly nationalistic policy (specifically with respect to China's enemies), emphasizing not only the inherent attributes of the country, its people, and its leaders, but also China's commitment to revolution and its Marxist-Leninist ideals, especially the Soviet's ideals as paraphrased in Mao's essays. To ensure that China could follow the Soviet's ideals, political study was thus placed at the focal point of curriculum development for all levels of schooling, including distance education with technology.

As China was tasked to educate and train people to hold aloft the red banner of Marxist-Leninist ideals and Mao-Tse-tung thought for its seemingly national construction, its limited universities and colleges could not provide an open door policy to all students who wished to receive a college education. Prior to its infamous Great Cultural Revolution launched by Mao in 1966, more universities and colleges were established.

One of the eight universities of foreign languages was set up in Northern China. For the sake of this case study, I would like to call it XX University of foreign languages in Northern China. XX University was established in 1964 under the leadership of the late premier, Zhou enlai who passed away in 1976. The very first departments of this university were the department of Russian, department of Japanese and department of English. As the Russian educational model was modeled after at the time, the department of Russian became one of the key departments at the XX University from the very beginning. Although the university has a physical campus in a major city in China, its students, faculty and staff members were sent to "learn from the peasants" in the countryside. Students were engaged in heavy farm work in order to learn to appreciate physical labor. To the outsiders from China, this was considered a movement towards alleviating China's unemployment for urban youths. But the leaders at the time would not admit this. XX University was first sponsored by the central government in Beijing and later the central Beijing government (Ministry of Education) delegated its authority to a provincial ministry of education. The university has been under the jurisdiction of that provincial ministry of education for years. In other words, it can be considered a state funded university in Western terms.

In its present form, the XX University seems to be comprehensive as Curriculum encompasses English, Russian, French, Korean, German, Spanish, Arabic, Italian, Chinese, Chinese Literature, Teaching Chinese as a Second language, Art Design, Tourism Management, International Economics & Trade, Computer Science & Technology, Information Management and Information Systems, Computer Software Engineering, Journalism and Music Studies. Still compared with a large comprehensive university by the standards in the United States, XX University can be considered a small liberal arts college although the university is tasked to educate and train over 10,000 full time and part time students. Noteworthy is the fact that its adult and continuing school is rather like a university as the school has thousands of learners from inside the province and outside the province. The school has its own president and vice presidents and other administrative leaders.

As its curriculum indicates the XX University engages in producing scholars/teachers who will serve primarily as foreign language workers who

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