

DeTao Masters Academy

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**The New Landscape of Internet+ Education—
the integration and innovation of online and offline education**

Importing Courses: A Developing Trend

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Introduction

It is a pleasure to participate by video in this conference on the integration of online and offline education. In this short video we shall comment on two types of partnership that enable universities to enrich their campus programmes with online courses.

Ready-made courses: The Academic Partnerships model

In the first type of partnership an external partner offers a university ready-made courses. These are usually short courses well suited to online learning. The partners either develop the courses themselves or commission them from other organisations. The course topics are usually closely related to workplace needs.

We describe this development through an example, the ‘Specialisations’ offered by the company Academic Partnerships. Specialisations are short (e.g. 4 weeks) self-contained and fully online courses.

These are commissioned by Academic Partnerships from ‘provider’ universities and offered through ‘host’ universities, often in other countries. The company manages students’ progress through the courses electronically from start to finish (registration, pacing, assignment correction and final assessment).

The host university is then notified of successful course completions and includes the specialisation(s) on the students’ transcripts, either as an integral part of their study programme at the host institution or as an optional extra.

Working with host universities has two big advantages. First, the host university can offer the Specialisation to a large captive audience of students which gives economies of scale. Second, by including successfully completed specialisations on student transcripts, the host university implicitly recognises their value as a credential.

This model is very new but a number of provider-company-host partnerships are being launched this year. If successful it will have various advantages. First, it will enable host universities to offer their students short, employment-related online courses without the necessity of acquiring the know-how and subject expertise to develop and operate such courses themselves.

Second, because the courses are managed almost entirely electronically, costs can be low if economies of scale are achieved.

Online + Onsite: the DeTao model

Some DeTao Masters are now preparing online courses that they will invite Chinese universities to integrate these into their existing programmes. This model is called Online to Onsite or O+O.

Professor Yan Jin, an expert in Design Theory and Methodology is pioneering this O+O initiative.

The O+O model is different from the Specialisation model that we just mentioned. In the case of O+O the receiving universities are expected to adapt the online course to their own teaching needs. So, for example, that student assessment will not be the same in each host university.

You can see that there are two different models emerging: the standardised model of Specialisations and the adaptable model of O+O.

We can make an analogy with cake mixes sold in a box. In the early days these were simply boxes of powder, which you mixed with water and baked. But these did not sell well because people wanted to feel they had greater input into the process.

So they changed the formula of the powder so that you had to add eggs and milk before baking. This was very successful and a huge market for cake mixes developed.

If this analogy is valid it means that the O+O model will be easier to implement than the Specialisations model.

Academics have a strong sense of possessing the courses that they teach. Many will resist replacing them with courses brought in from elsewhere. On the other hand the O+O model allows them to include high-quality online material in their teaching while retaining full possession of the course and its assessment.

However, if academic resistance can be overcome, the Specialisations model will be much easier to operate at scale, because the offering of the Specialisation courses is essentially independent of the onsite teaching in the host university.

Conclusion

It will be interesting to follow these two developments.