

## D2L Learning Management System in America: It's Character and It's Inspiration Towards Online Education of China

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### Abstract

After 1990s, online education becomes popular all around the world. Along with the development of information technology, online education starts to affect traditional education and learning methods. In this era which is new media frequently used while interaction and participation, it deeply changed the learning activity essence and form. America, as one the example of mature online education, used D2L learning management system in higher education not only to broaden and deepen the students knowledge, but also to provide students with multi-skill training opportunity. It emphasize the research and course teaching interaction as well as its parallel development, improved students learning quality in higher education. This article, through character analysis of D2L learning management system in America, try to inspire China's online education with D2L's successful experience. Also try to propose a feasible suggestion to improve China's higher education online environment, form a new model of China's online education.

**Key words:** D2L learning management system; Web based education; Higher education; Inspiration

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern online education or distance education, mainly rely on developed digital audio, video technology to

accomplish literal, picture, sound output at the same time, accomplish convenient, efficient interacted education. As a brand new modern education method, it's been acknowledged and facilitated by many countries and regions. According to the current web based education development globally, China's web based education still at the beginning stage, although there is some progress on digitization and acknowledgment of online education, but online education still restricted by environment, technology and other elements, can not able to break through the old model structure and bottle neck system. In contrast, online education in America gradually accomplished to reach lifelong, all citizen education. Development of online education is not only beneficial to China's experience of online education also it's inspirational to China's higher education upgrading as a whole.

### 1. MODE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF US HIGHER ONLINE EDUCATION

As the most developed country on education in the world, US not only owns all kinds of high-end colleges, but also leads the world on it's online education. According to the statistics, In US almost 90% Universities launched online education, and most of them are public schools, Full-time enrollment in school students accounted for over 30% of the total number of students. Large-scale development of higher online education and great quality enhancement of on line education is inseparable from the government, Universities, and society's strong support. The US government in the early 1990s worked out the "information superhighway" strategy, also increased capital investment for long term education of America, actively opened distance education courses, continue to develop online education and other resources; Universities, as the main implementation body of the online education, recruited more students through online education while promoting

the progress of online education with unseen competition; Some U.S. Communication network companies promoted further development of modern distance education. Substantial economic support from society to web based education, has opened up more space for the development of Universities online education.

Online Education in American Universities are came into being with the development of science and technology. Due to people are no longer satisfied by the traditional one-way propagation teaching mode, an interactive learning behavior came to surface. Focus on practical social environment, emphasizing network learning to apply their knowledge, provided an opportunity for the rapid development of online education. Supporters of online education in the United States believe that online education is not only about advanced electronic science and technology, but it's also a representative of energy, passionate, humane modern education. It gives a broader definition to the field of non-traditional classroom teaching, through a network of virtual teaching and transmission of multi-channel information, integrated the curriculum consulting, curriculum content, network technology, network service and network support to accomplish distance learning. Meanwhile, online education in American Universities has the synchronous and asynchronous nature. Synchronization is that online learners could interact at the same time through network, could have face to face discussion through online video, also could express written ideas and opinions. During that, professional teachers will undertake a comprehensive review and study the effect of feedback to encourage cooperative learning; However, the asynchronous nature is independent from the other learner autonomy. Especially for those learners who have health problems or bear some social responsibility and can not regularly participate in academic exchange activities, this type of education will undoubtedly bring great benefit to them. Within the flexible time limit and relatively stress free environment, they could learn the courses repeatedly, listen to the academic reports and online courses to complete the learning task without worrying about individual learning situation will effect the overall progress of the class. For online education, whether it's synchronous and asynchronous nature is largely dependent on self-motivation, self-discipline and effective written communication.

Online education of the modern American Universities help students planning their stages of learning through providing learning platform, to provide students with additional learning resources to meet the different needs of students diverse information demands. Desire2Learn (D2L) is one of the network learning management system commonly used in American Universities, it can provide "anytime,anywhere" face to face course, the various disciplines of reading materials, multimedia files

and other quality resources, convenient, fast, and efficient "one-site-all" service to break the traditional mode of teaching and learning which is similar to China's social networking platform but also has its own distinctive characteristics. According to their personal preferences, users could change settings, such as changing the font style and appearance of the interface, select the language and region, set the browser permission and etc.. In selecting courses, students can learn about the relevant information and content profiles of the optional courses on the course home page, and schedule the starting and ending time of the elective courses according to their own needs. Students also could use D2L learning system "instant message" feature, communicate instantly with classmates and professional teachers. Person to person, or by a group of academic discussions, gets learning feed-backs, to facilitate self-assessment of learning outcomes. Students can also choose interested links from the rich learning resources, download learning materials for free. For teachers, curriculum goal must be clear, in what manner to conduct interactive learning and what mode students could learn must be clear too. Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of the course, improving the efficiency of student learning, teachers need to design methods of the course, focus on layout of the course and the appropriate academic tasks to ensure that students achieve the best effective learning within the best effective time. Teachers could supervise students learning process according to the class list, by viewing students browsing history could track the students follow-up to the courses and studying progress. Teachers have the right to manage class size and according to students learning progress could communicate with them by email on it. In addition, D2L learning system structured schedule is also an effective tool for teachers often used for course management, which includes notification of important lectures, assignment completion and submission deadlines, exam, online meeting schedules and etc. It's true that, D2L learning system in American Universities are realized the true meaning of the interaction between teachers and students on the same platform.

Research about online education in US Universities found that, the new network technology is the most fundamental driving force of online education achievements. The basic way of teaching methods that teachers formed in traditional classrooms are no longer applicable to online education, network technology is changing the way of teaching and learning. Teachers do not have to do too much preparation before class, students can develop a different way of learning skills and interaction in a free environment. But also need to realize that, the lack of face to face communication is difficult to teachers to grasp nonverbal cues from students such as irritability or frustration, that may lead to the loss of learning motivation or desire to learn. Therefore, the

combination of the necessary traditional education and online education is much more helpful to improve teachers teaching methods and students learning outcomes.

## **2. ANALYSIS OF ONLINE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES**

College online education is an integral part of the modern education system. Compared to other forms of education, online education with its distinctive features facilitates the development of education. From the development of China's college online education could tell that, although it's an upward trend overall, but there are still many urgent improvement to do and problems to solve during the development process.

### **2.1 Problems of Online Education Development in Chinese Universities**

#### **2.1.1 Lack of Support, Lack of Acceptance Lead to Limited Space of Development**

Due to a variety of factors such as curriculum set, assessment criteria, ideas, etc, online education is substantially lagged far behind from the traditional education. People minds are deeply rooted and accommodated to the traditional face to face classroom teaching method, the quality of online distance teaching always was questioned. Moreover, it's way too uncertain that students non-human supervision, self-study could meet or exceed the inherent teaching achievements. Online education with innovative features designed to cultivate students comprehensive quality, but still can not touch through the fundamental rigid examination system. Most people are not yet recognized online education, this inevitably lead to the development of college online education became flashy and lack of stamina. In addition, Universities and corporate support and co-ordination of national policies are also a key of online education development. In China, there is not a relevant education policy that focus on building online education yet, the state's investment on online education is relatively insufficient, with no enthusiasm from society to online education lead to lack of financial support for online education which caused imperfect software and hardware devices of online education, difficult to implement an innovative education mode transformation.

#### **2.1.2 Imperfect Network Support, Irrational Structure of Educational Resources, Single Form**

Mutual communication and interaction between teachers and students that online education required, needs advanced technology, complete network support, also needs networks to provide a large number of recent academic data. Nationally, many Universities have established their own campus network, but mostly due

to the constrains of network technology it is difficult to create a true sense online education environment. In terms of the construction of educational resources, with too much emphasis on hardware facilities while ignoring the supply of applicable software resources, so many hardware facilities became a kind of decoration, limited its function. This misallocation of educational resources and structure of online education has led to imbalance of funds for online construction, greatly reduced the utilization of hardware facilities, resulting in a waste of resources. Meanwhile, the immature network technical support could only provide a single form online education resource. The application only applied as courseware sharing, a small number of online courses, not regularly updated courses exercises, digital library, and other forms, etc.. Features of online education such as interactive learning, a rich variety of learning resources generally can not be reflected.

#### **2.1.3 District and Regional Difference Caused Limited Coverage, Uneven Development**

The imbalance of regional economic development determined the fundamental imbalance in the development of online education. Investments differs from region to region, from school to school, even the distribution of the most basic network equipments can not be guaranteed. In some economically developed coastal areas, almost all the colleges covered by online education, online learning resources are diversified, information is rich and updated, interactive mode of teaching and learning can be implemented throughout the learning phase. In such an environment, students ability to digest, understanding, practice and innovation ability are significantly higher than the national average; while for economically backward areas, because of the shortage of funds to network construction, popularize of network is imperative. Due to geographical isolation, blocked transportation, poverty and other factors, a considerable part of school-age young people are can not get a opportunity to get in college, also can not be able to get more learning resources through network, online education is a luxury for them. This kind of polarization made the online education needs to breakthrough this bottleneck, also testing online education that whether it truly upholds universal character or not.

#### **2.1.4 Moral Problems of Network Threatened the Quality and Credibility of Online Education**

Network security and network pollution are the problems that college online education must solve. Traditional teaching is mainly dependent on the face to face interaction between teachers and students, a holistic education as a collective, creating relatively pure, civilized campus culture. On online education, a fundamental change has occurred in the form of educational organization. Students have more freedom of speech, relatively flexible learning options, diverse information available to browse, with the existence of

numerous and complex virtual tempting “moral trap”s. In addition, the network also showed its moral hazard such as email privacy infringement, disclosure of personal information, etc.. This will push the online education to the brink of the education system. Possible moral decline of college online education makes the less recognized online education worse which leads to online education quality and credibility crisis.

## **2.2 The Necessity of the Development of Chinese Universities Online Education**

### **2.2.1 Promote College Online Education Is the Premise of Education Popularization and Education Equity**

China has a huge population base that is incompatible with the lack of educational resources, proportion of the population that able to receive a higher education is less low. Especially the school-age population in rural areas, they have very strong demand for higher education, but opportunities are not many. The general sense is to compensate this vacancy by junior faculties which not only seriously affected the overall quality of higher education, but also did not play a positive role in expanding the coverage of higher education. The rise and development of online education paved a new road for popularization of higher education. Online education with its resource-saving advantages is providing more learning opportunities for students, enable students have an equal access to higher education in a relatively free environment. Meanwhile, the popularity of network knowledge and skills at remote, poor areas is the inevitable requirement to promote better higher education,

### **2.2.2 Develop College Online Education Is the Premise of Changing Traditional Learning Mode and Improving the Quality of Education**

Face to face teaching have been practiced for a long time and became a fixed pattern, the information resources are designed for public not according to students individual rational planning. Moreover, most Chinese college teachers are teach students in a collective manner, students always pay over attention to taking notes rather than the training capabilities of independent thinking, and often due to psychological factors such as self-confidence to express their view, ask questions resulting in the quality of the course have been affected. College online education essentiality is the result of network technology and traditional teaching combination, which are face to face teaching and online teaching all together. On the base of classroom networks, further improve of online education, could effectively enhance the interaction between teachers and students, could create more learning resources. Through online education platform, students will have an opportunity to express their ideas, to explore the interests, stimulate enthusiasm for learning in order to promote the quality of education.

### **2.2.3 Promote College Online Education Is the Premise of Establish and Implement a Life-Long Education**

Today, higher education resources can not meet the growing demand for education, life-long education is a timely idea as a pursuit of a wide open education. It requires unrestricted education objects, equal and fair access to education, quality education resources, rich, sound and safety management system, which is not possible if solely relies on traditional school education. Thus, college online education became primary means of life-long education. Flexible forms of online education on the case of spatial and temporal separation breakthrough the hinders such as student's age, gender, income level, social status, etc.. So that helps to popularize the education. Also, with the advanced network technology achieve the purpose of sharing resources. Meanwhile, students choose their desired courses through online learning platform, which is helpful to improve students comprehensive ability. College online education fits with the ideology of life-long education, which indicates that college online education will have a long-term impact on the start and development of life-long education, but also promotes the progress of education in China.

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## **3. INSPIRATION OF US COLLEGE ONLINE EDUCATION TO CHINA**

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### **3.1 Intensify Policy Support to Improve Online Education With Higher Attention to Related Subjects**

American education informatization strategy contributed to the rapid development of college online education, economic capital support from government to online education has played a pivotal role in policy practice. Coupled with the mass media online education campaigns, further enhanced the social influence of online education in Universities and society. In China, the development of college online education needs proper guidance of national policy and the necessary financial support, also needs to expand the coverage of online education through financial transfer payment, to meet the poverty-stricken populations demands for higher education. In general sense, if the the regulation, the economy, the concept could give a strong support to online education, it gives a dynamic to online education development. Meanwhile, the publicity, authority and value of policies improve the degree of attention of related online education subjects. To promote online education at Universities need close interaction, cooperation between school administration and students departments, needs elite high-tech support as well as teacher-student interaction. Universities should take policy goals as their orientation, fully aware of the

far-reaching significance of online education towards education reform and innovation, in order to actively play a dynamic role during the implementation of online education. In addition, to establish a sound college online education system, requires schools and social forces work together. Enterprises in a free market environment, could strengthen the healthy competition among colleges to establish online education, enhance the online education publicity, absorb idle funds extensively from the community to seek greater development space for college online education.

### **3.2 Build Blended Learning Mode to Achieve A Learner-Centered Interactive Teaching**

Under online education, blended multi-media teaching and face to face teaching has gradually replaced the traditional one-dimensional, inefficient way of teaching. Flexible character of interactive online education, gives students the freedom and initiative to learn, therefore learner-centered teaching model is appreciated.

One of the unique part of blended learning is it integrates the learning platform and social network, although it only supports internal interaction within teachers, students in Universities, but still ensured a pure network environment. In this learning mode, besides face to face teaching, online teaching is dominant. It high lights the course focus according to course goal, upload course materials, videos, review student progress based on online tracking to make appropriate adjustment to teaching methods and academic arrangements. In addition, through online communication or answering questions on e-mail, provides students with feedback on learning outcomes. To highlight the interactive learner-centered teaching, should take full account of learners cognition, learning motivation, psychological factors, individual differences. On this basis, create a vast space for their independent study. Usually, attractive course design and frequent learning interactions can enhance students enthusiasm for learning. The academic discussions within a group, carry out research projects also overcame the neglect of individuals in traditional mode of education. Therefore, Chinese college online education needs well designed curriculum, innovative teaching methods, scientific and efficient online learning platform establishment, blended learning model used in daily teaching in Universities.

### **3.3 Provide Learning Support Services to Meet the Needs of Online Education Resources**

Mature college online education is always inseparable from strong support services for comprehensive learning. To prevent inefficient learning caused by poor online education resources, designers could provide rich online support services to ensure learners get the satisfied. Currently, Chinese college online education still can not meet the students diverse needs. Therefore, the

establishment of effective learning support system is the priority of the development of college online education.

College online education should focus on high-quality teaching and high-quality teachers, to improve the overall quality of online education. Learning services with scientific and technical support should meet the individual differences of learners, should provide learners learning materials to download and multi-subjects related links, to promote the integration and sharing high-quality resources; Provide multi-channel learning communication, to create a knowledge transfer path for uneven developed higher education. At the same time, encourage social enterprise to support building online education platform, combine the online education with the free market, explore a industrial mode for online education under the premise of guaranteed social benefits. Under the competitive free markets, constantly develop new technologies, constantly improve the online education platform, constantly provide rich online learning resources, to meet the diverse needs of online education resources.

### **3.4 Construct Assessment Guarantee System That Exerts Internal-External Assessment**

The quality of college online education is a concrete manifestation of the online education, an important indicator of the degree of development of online education. The key factors to protect the quality of online education are, first complete the network security system, second trained high quality teachers. From the implementation environment of online education perspective, the quality of education needs internal construction from Universities and external supervision. Through University internal network, relevant departments strengthen course management, formulate short and long term assessment of online education, strictly standardize online education operating system, to secure online education environment; Education department as an external online education administrative entity, should establish a steering committee with professional guidance and quantitative assessment to supervise the quality of online education, timely give feedbacks about the quality of online education. In conjunction with the broad participation of all sectors of business and society, could guarantee the objectivity of multi-faceted assessment of the healthy development of college online education. In addition, Universities should also consider the self-evaluation of the student and the evaluation between students, these two kind of evaluations are beneficial for students identify their own problems, encourage students actively construct their own intellectual framework, enhance the feeling of learning achievement. From the perspective of teacher training, online education teachers must not only have a wealth of expertise but also have skills to master network. According to student's learning expectations use a variety of teaching methods and skills, render

relaxed free atmosphere of online education, mobilize students interest and motivation for independent learning, thereby enhance the appeal of online education, which leads to significantly efficient learning. Therefore, sophisticated University teachers is also important to ensure quality of online education.

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## CONCLUSION

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Developing online education is an important strategic long-term task to achieve universal education, which relatively guaranteed education equity. Successful experience of American college online education provided a reference and inspiration for China to train elites. Under the premise of steady development of college online education, strengthen online education service system, deepen international academic cooperation, promote information sharing became the new idea to Chinese online education construction.

China's online education has immeasurable potential for development under the recognition and support of the national policy.

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