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EDITORIAL

It is amazing how China in just a few years established a national network of Radio and Television Universities that influence one fourth of the world's population. Using modern satellite technology, the country leap-frogged decades of advanced development in industrialized countries.

This week's article, by Runfang Wei, describes how this system is organized. A more comprehensive description of China's Radio and Television Universities is to be published in a Monograph by our Center this fall. For more information, I also recommend Fuwen Gao's article: "The Challenge of Distance Education in China" in the upcoming issue (Vol. 5:2.) of The American Journal of Distance Education.

Runfang Wei is Professor at Jiangsu Radio & Television University, Nanjing, People's Republic of China. Currently, she is Visiting Scholar at the Pennsylvania State University. She accepts comments or questions via Bitnet: FXW5@PSUVM or Internet: FXW5@PSUVM.PSU.EDU. In a note to me, she says: "Any questions concerning distance education, adult education, vocational education, continuing education and public education in China will be greatly welcomed."

CHINA'S NETWORK OF RADIO AND TELEVISION UNIVERSITIES

Runfang Wei

The national network of Radio and Television Universities in China was set up in early 1979 to meet the growing demands for urgently needed qualified manpower and for adult education which the conventional education system could not satisfy. These universities now play a vital role in China's educational system by providing access to higher education for a large number of people through distance learning.

This network of distance higher learning has made great strides in the last decade. Enrollment of degree students amounted to more than 1.73 million, while graduates totaled over 1.18 million since 1982. Additionally, millions of single-course and post-tertiary continuing education students have been served. The total number of Television University (TVU) degree graduates between 1982 and 1989 is 40% of that of conventional universities and colleges in the same period of time throughout China. In 1986, the number of graduates majoring in economic management amounted to more than 200,000, which is 1.2 times the number of those graduated from conventional universities and colleges over the 39 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China. (China TV Education Journal No.12 1989)

Organization Structure of the TVU System

The system for the organization of Radio and TV Universities parallels China's system of central and regional governments and is a five-tier structure. The Chinese Radio and Television University (CRTVU), at the highest level, is under the direct leadership of the State Education Commission. The Provincial Radio and Television Universities (PRTVUs), at the second level, are under the auspices of provincial, autonomous regional, or municipal governments. Their branch schools, at the third level, come under prefectural or civic governments. TVU work stations, at the fourth level, are run either by urban district or rural county education bureaus or a particular industry. The lowest tier of this structure are the TVU classes which the students attend. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Administrative & Academic Organization of TVU System

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| State Education Commission | CRTVU |
| Provincial Education Commission | PRTVU |
| Prefectural/Civic Education Bureau | Branch School |
| District/County Educational Bureau | Work Station |
| | TVU Class |

There is no political, administrative, financial or personal relationship between each of the five tiers of the television universities; relationships between each tier are limited to the academic scopes. Only the provincial-tiered TV universities have the right to award degrees, diplomas and certificates.

Relationship Between TVUs and Governments

Television universities are directed by governments at each corresponding level. The governments control the annual budget appropriation, political and administrative personnel appointments (mainly those of university presidents and vice-presidents), development of specialties (major areas of study), yearly plans, and policy-making in relation to the operation and development of TVUs under their direct auspices.

Before 1986, China's TVUs were regarded as an autonomous system of distance education, at each level relatively independent of their parallel governments. Such was the case even between CRTVU and the Ministry of Education (State Education Commission after

1985). The CRTVU was one of the universities directly governed by the Ministry, but the only one which had no Ministry department or section directing the operation of the CRTVU. The University interacted directly with the Minister of Education, who also had the title of president of CRTVU. Under this arrangement, the CRTVU exercised some governmental functions, such as policy-making and overall planning, control of unified admission standards, preparation and approval of the detailed specialty programs, coordination of the enrollment plan, control of the student record procedure, etc. This was also the case for TVUs at local levels.

There has been a trend toward decentralization and separation of governmental functions and academic functions since 1986. At each level, local TV universities are now viewed as local institutions under local governments, not as affiliates of the CRTVU. Governments at various levels monitor the operation of TVUs under their auspices. In the SEC (State Education Commission, formerly Ministry of Education [MOE]), a department called "Bureau of Media Education" supervises and directs the work of the CRTVU, and sometimes plays a part in coordinating affairs for the CRTVU and PRTVUs. Local TVUs are becoming more independent from the CRTVU in administrative and academic fields. For example, PRTVUs, through their collaboration, can offer their own majors and courses, not being confined within CRTVU's major choices and related specializations. This change shows that China's TV universities no longer operate as a unified system, but rather as a relatively decentralized network with many links that enjoy some autonomy in their development.

Administrative and Academic Responsibilities of TVUs

The administrative and academic responsibilities of TVUs at each level are stipulated in The General Act for Radio and Television Universities issued by the State Education Commission under the Central Government in 1988.

The CRTVU prepares general majors and curricula of national interest. It produces and distributes course outlines, course-books, and radio and TV programs for these core courses. CRTVU develops and schedules national examinations and sets marking standards. It trains teachers, technicians and administrative staff, and conducts research in education.

The PRTVUs are responsible for detailed educational programs, majors and specializations, as well as curricula for local TVUs. They control and supervise local programs, and they produce course outlines, course materials, and radio and TV programs for local courses. The PRTVUs develop and schedule examinations for provincial courses and supervise the examination and marking procedures. Further, they prepare detailed stipulations in teaching, administrative, examination, and student record areas to ensure the quality of education. They also enroll students, keep student records and issue degrees, diplomas, and certificates. The PRTVUs conduct research on distance teaching and promote the interchange of experience about running local TVUs and teaching affairs. They train teachers and direct teaching and administrative work done in branch schools and work stations. Finally, they provide counseling and help to students with personal, moral, and ideological problems.

TVU Branch Schools oversee all aspects of teaching/learning activities, such as viewing TV programs, tutorials, laboratory work, tests and exams, field study, etc. They carry out the stipulated procedures in teaching, administrative, examination and student record areas, and they establish and direct TVU work stations and TVU classes. The TVU Branch Schools provide counseling and help students with personal, moral, and ideological problems. They issue course certificates and conduct the detailed teaching and administrative work for courses.

TVU Work Stations recruit part-time tutors. They organize classes, tutorials, laboratory work, and field studies. Further, they register students, collect tuition fees, and distribute course materials to students. Finally they provide counseling and help students with personal, moral, and ideological problems.

TVU Classes prepare class timetables each semester. They organize the viewing of course programs, oversee tutorials, laboratory work, and field studies. They supervise students' self study out of class and maintain contact with the work units to which their students are attached. Finally, they arrange students' administrative, physical, and recreational activities.

Types of Degrees

TVU students major in specialty areas that lead to a degree. For students to successfully complete these degree specialties (majors), they must have (a) obtained the required number of credits; (b) passed all the examinations of those courses required by the degree program; and (c) finished the courses in a given time span. There are two types of degrees: a Three Year Degree and a Two Year Degree. Both of the degrees are equal to those awarded by conventional two- or three-year specialized colleges and institutes.

A Three Year Degree Specialty. These degree specialties are designed primarily for those full-time students who must finish their study in three years. Since 1968, most students of this type of degree specialties are recent middle-school graduates. The rest are job-released adults. Part-time students who enroll in these degree specialties may be allowed to finish their study in four to six years.

A Two Year Degree Specialty. These degree specialties are designed for full-time students of Humanities who are either working adults or recent middle-school graduates. Most of the working adults who take these degree specialties choose to study in their spare time and they generally finish within three years.

The Specialty and the Curriculum. Before 1986, when China's television universities were generally considered a system, the Central Radio and Television University offered national-unified specialties for local TVUs with very limited flexibility. During the first five to six years' of TVU's development, local needs associated with economic and social development were not emphasized enough. All specialties, including those associated specialties and their related teaching programs, were prepared by the CRTVU and approved by the MOE.

The situation has changed a great deal as a result of economic reform. Now provincial television universities are attempting to

better serve the local development programs by setting up their own specialties in various fields and majors. According to the rules and regulations set by the central government, both CRTVU and PRTVU have the right to set up fields, majors, and specialties. CRTVU's academic fields and majors must be approved by the SEC, and PRTVU's majors and associated specialties must be approved by the PEC (Provincial Education Commission) before they can be offered.

Before the opening of a new specialty program, CRTVU or PRTVU must submit to government's education commission their feasibility study, in which the following kinds of indicators should be provided:

- a. needs analysis;
- b. target group or source of students;
- c. objectives and scopes;
- d. similar programs provided by conventional universities;
- e. materials conditions for teaching and learning;
- f. faculty conditions;
- g. methods of quality control and;
- h. financial resources.

Detailed educational plans, including objectives and scopes, period of study, curriculum, semester plan, media, assessment and credit requirements, rationale for evaluation, should be submitted and approved along with the feasibility study for the specialty program.

The Curriculum

China's television universities provide courses in a wide range of subjects at both degree and non-degree levels. These courses can be divided into three categories: 1) core courses, 2) continuing education courses, and 3) courses based on local needs. The first two categories of courses are offered by the CRTVU. At present, the total number of courses offered by TVUs both at the central and provincial levels amount to more than 400 with the possibility of 87 specialties.

Core Courses Offered by CRTVU. Core courses are subjects for which there is a sustained demand and that needs analyses have shown are consistent with the interests and educational needs of students throughout China. These are mainly foundation courses and technical foundation courses, produced by CRTVU and delivered by CCTV and/or China Education TV (CETV), and used selectively by local TVUs at various levels. There are more than 150 courses at the degree level. The subjects covered are natural sciences, engineering and technology, humanities, economic management, agriculture, and linguistics.

Continuing Education Courses. These courses are designed for those adults who have already received a higher education but who wish to broaden or update their knowledge in special subjects. Since 1986 more than 40 series of lectures and courses have been broadcast through CETV, covering such subjects as New Technology, Financial Reform, Principles and Practice of China's Foreign Trade, Auditing and Accounting, Public Transportation, etc.

Courses Based on Local Needs

People's Republic Television Universities (PRTVUs) offer courses that have been designed and produced independently or cooperatively. These courses are specially prepared to meet local economic and educational needs; a few PRTVUs produce their own degree courses when the China Radio and TV University courses do meet local needs. The subject areas include: Basic Theory of Medicine, Higher Medical Nursing, Food Processing Technology, Criminal Reform, Management for Rural Industries, English for Secondary School Teachers, Business English, Tourism English, Foreign Trade, etc.

Today's trend in preparing courses based on local needs depends on collaboration between PRTVUs. Program sharing and exchange, which can reduce the cost and the repetitive work on a large scale, have been encouraged.

Latest Development

The original goal of the radio and television universities was the provision of degree education for in-service workers, public service staff, and school teachers. Many changes have taken place since 1986, when TVUs began to provide their programs via communication satellites. Recently, TVUs offer not only degree education but also non-degree education, such as vocational and technical education, single principle education, in-service job-related training, short term professional training, and continuing education. The objectives of the radio and television universities are aimed at providing higher education for those who have failed to gain access to the conventional college and university education; providing vocational and technical education for the prospective employees in factories, companies, and enterprises; offering professional and job-related training for those in-service workers and staff members who have not had the opportunities to gain the knowledge required for their jobs; and conveying life-long education to the whole nation for the improvement, upgrading, and updating of human resources.

The future will see China's radio and television universities become more adapted to the nation's social and economic situations. The whole network will make great contributions not only to the educational cause in China but also to the development of distance education in the world.

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