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Developing a Course Resource Package and an Online Resource Centre for Teaching Modern Chinese Society

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Developing a Course Resource Package and an Online Resource Centre for Teaching Modern Chinese Society

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Abstract

China has experienced dramatic social changes since late 1970s, after adopting market-oriented economic reforms and the “Open Door” policy. What has happened to the main social institutions in China in the past two decades? We have carried out a teaching development project consisting of:

- 1. a course resource package including*
 - (a) a comprehensive bibliography;*
 - (b) a selection of video programmes, internet links, and major academic journals in the field of China studies;*
 - (c) a reading package containing selected readings on Chinese social institutions and their changes, and*
- 2. an on-line teaching resource centre on China studies containing those elements. The project aimed to enhance students learning and faculty teaching in China studies.*

Key words

Online resource centre, modern Chinese society

Introduction

China has experienced dramatic social changes since late 1970s, after adopting market-oriented economic reforms and the “Open Door” policy. What has happened to the main social institutions such as political, economic, education, health care, religion, and family institutions in China in the past two decades? Why have social institutions undergone such

dramatic changes? Where are they heading in the new century? Those are important theoretical and practical questions. However, in both Hong Kong and the United States, there has been no systematic and comprehensive teaching resource site focusing on Chinese social institutions and their changes. Many students have reported difficulty in finding relevant information

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for coursework and research projects on Chinese social institutions and their changes. This project has been set up to deal with this problem.

Aims and Objectives

To meet the needs of teaching and learning about major social institutions in China today, we aimed at producing a set of teaching and learning aids under this teaching development project. The intended products of the project include

1. a comprehensive bibliography;
2. a selection of video programmes, internet links, and major academic journals in the field of China studies;
3. a reading package containing required and recommended readings on Chinese social institutions and their changes.

An on-line teaching resource centre on China studies focusing on main social institutions will be established, to contain these elements.

Results/Findings

There were several stages in selecting the materials to be included in this teaching aid package. We first asked an assistant (a Ph.D candidate in the field of sociology) to do a literature search through the library network. Then, the Principal Investigator and Co-investigator went over the list and made suggestions about deletions or additions of certain items. After the list was finalized, we asked another assistant (an M.phil student) to compile and format the

final product. Finally, we asked a technician to set-up a homepage for the package.

The project has produced the following teaching/learning aids:

1. A comprehensive bibliography for the study of major social institutions in China.
This bibliography contains the entry of 378 books and 287 academic journal articles, written between 1980 and the present. These books and articles are sorted under seven topics: Family, Education, Religion, Economic Institutions, Political Institutions, Health care system, and Legal system. There is also a general background section, which lists books and articles on the general social development in China since 1949.
2. A list of China-related social science journals. This will help students find the most current articles on a topic that they are interested in.
3. A list of China-related videos. This will help students learn about China in a fun way.
4. A list of useful internet links. This will help students search for the most updated information on China-related issues.
5. An on-line resource centre: <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~sosc1/soc/aboutus/drruan>
This resource centre contains Items A

to D above, and students can obtain the information they need from school or from their home.

6. A reading package with selected articles. Articles will be provided with this package to save students' time to locate relevant articles for their courses or research papers.

All of the above is available to students currently taking Dr. Ruan's course, *SOC 2690 Understanding Chinese Society in Hong Kong and in the Mainland*. Other students also have free access to them by simply logging on HKBU Sociology Department's homepage.

Discussion

One can learn about China in many ways and from various angles. However, Chinese social institutions and their social changes are a key aspect that students of China should not miss. However, in both Hong Kong and the United States, there has been no systematic and comprehensive teaching resource site focusing on Chinese social institutions and their changes. As the interest and need for learning about China grow, more China-related courses are being set up at HKBU and at other universities, and more students are taking these courses. This project was initially designed to meet the needs of students taking *SOC2240 Modern Chinese Society*, which is a required course for all sociology majors (about 60 students), and is also attended by 40-60 students from several schools on campus and international

students every year. But, the project has positive implications for many other China-related courses and students as well.

Enhancement on Teaching and Learning

The project enhances teaching and learning in the following ways:

1. The project will immediately benefit students who take *SOC2240* (and *SOC390* taught by Co-investigator Dr Wang Xun at his university in America) by providing updated information on Chinese social institutions. Furthermore, the information is on-line, and therefore, students can access it anywhere and at any time. Since 2006, Dr Ruan has begun to teach two more courses on Chinese Society: *SOC 2690 Understanding Chinese Society in Hong Kong and in the Mainland*, and *EDUC4940 China and Chinese Culture in Global Society*. Therefore, an additional 60 Master Level students and 40 undergraduate students will directly benefit from the project in the future.
2. The project benefits students beyond *SOC2240*. They can still use the teaching resources developed by the project for their research projects and papers in other classes and for their honours project - a major task before their graduation. And students from other classes will benefit too, as the online resource centre is open to everyone.

3. Other faculty members can also use the course resource packages and the on-line teaching resource centre in courses on China such as *Chinese Family & Kinship*, *Women in China*, and *Population of China*, as well as courses offered by other departments.
4. Students and scholars from other universities and in other countries can also use the on-line resource centre for their courses on China.

So far, the feedback from the students have been very positive. Some of them are our current undergraduate students or post-graduate students; some have graduated, but they still find the resource centre helpful to them. In general, students think that the resource centre is quite informative and useful. In particular, they like the on-line feature of the resource centre since it makes it easy for them to search for information from home, workplace or school. Towards the latter part of the semester when students begin to write papers or to prepare for class projects, more of them may make use of the resource centre. We shall continue to collect student feedback.

Conclusion

Under this project, we have developed teaching/learning aids for the study of major social institutions in China. We hope that these aids will help students in their search for useful information for their classes and their papers on contemporary China. These teaching/learning materials will

be updated periodically.

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