Should Ph.D. Programs Be Offered in eLearning Mode?

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Abstract - As of the year 2012, the number of eLearners has reached one billion. eLearning at all levels are gaining more and more popularity. Ph.D. programs in eLearning mode have been offered in most advanced countries. However, there are a small percentage of educators who are skeptical of eLearning. For example, in Thailand, a Subcommittee in the Ministry of Education has recommended that no Ph.D program in Thailand can be offered in the eLearning mode. Several educators who are pro eLearning hope that the authority in Thailand and other countries with educators against eLearning would not allow their own countries to be underdeveloped in eLearning. In the other direction, India with a few billion people unable to read and write, educators are hoping to use eLearning to help more people to be able to read and write. This paper presents information on Ph.D. programs in eLearning mode in the US, UK, Australia, and in eLearning universities, to try to change the mind of those against Ph.D. in eLearning mode to make their countries benefit from eLearning.

Keywords - Ph.D. in eLearning Mode, Online Ph.D. in Developed Countries, Educators Against eLearning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sloan Consortium (sloanconsortium.org) is committed to “Quality Online Education”. As shown in Figure 1. Online Education is the same as eLearning.

Fig 1. Sloan Consortium

From a few sources including YouTube uploaded 19 Jan 2012, the number of eLearners worldwide has reached 1 billion, including: University-level eLearning, K12 eLearning, Corporate eLearning [1, 2, 3]. The main purpose of this paper is to convince the small percentage of educators who are skeptical of eLearning that all levels of eLearning including Ph.D. level should be promoted. The authority in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in Thailand have said that Thailand could become the eLearning Hub of ASEAN. As such, Government agencies should serve as the eLearning facilitator and not the eLearning bottleneck as some agencies are doing either unintentionally
or intentionally.

It has been said that the concept in Thailand differs from that in the USA. In Thailand, it is assumed that most people are crooked and so the Government must draw circles for them to operate inside. In the US, it is assumed that most people are honest and so, they are allowed to do what they think is appropriate. Only if and when they misbehave, they would be punished.

The Board of Trustees of the educational institutions in Thailand are supposed to have the authority to approve academic programs including eLearning programs. To promote of the idea of Thailand becoming the eLearning Hub of ASEAN, once the BOT of educational institution in good standing approves the curricular, the institution should be allowed to start recruiting students rather than having to wait months and months for the authority to have time to look at the curricular. When the first student graduates, the authority can verify whether or not the program has been operated properly.

From <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_India>[4], the percentage of literacy in India in the year 2011 was about 74% resulting in a few hundred million Indians who could not read and write. A lot of educators in India are hoping that eLearning would be developed to solve the problems.

This paper presents examples of Ph.D. programs in eLearning mode in the US, UK, Australia, and in eLearning university to try to change the mind of those who are against eLearning from blocking the eLearning progress of their countries to promoting the usage of eLearning to allow their countries to benefit from eLearning.

2. THE CONCEPT OF ONLINE PH.D.

Searching Google for “Ph.D. programs in e-learning mode”, 70 million entries found, as shown in Figure 2.

As an example of online Ph.D., let us consider the case of Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology [5].

Searching Google for “Phd in eLearning Methodology”, 2.25 million entries were found as shown in Figure 3.

The first 5 entries on the first page of the result of searching Google are about the Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology. Thailand is the first in the world to offer Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology (Ph.D. eLm). The curriculum was drafted at the College of Distance Education of Assumption University (AU). The College was founded by the senior author of this paper who served as Chairman of the Board and CEO until he resigned from AU to become President Emeritus and CEO of Srisakdi Charmonman Institute of eLearning at Siam Technology College where the same Ph.D. has been approved by the Board of Trustees.
The Ph.D. eLm was approved by the AU BOT in May 2006. The Ph.D. eLm has applicants from 30 countries such as USA, UK, Canada, Germany, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, and etc. The Ph.D. eLm is completely online. Potential students find out about it by searching Google. Potential students can ask questions and get answers thru the Internet. Application is filed thru the Internet. Result of application is announced thru the Internet. Registration is done thru the Internet. Advising is done thru the Internet. Assignment is given and handed in thru the Internet. Presentation of report is done thru the Internet. All examinations are done thru the Internet. Submission of papers to IEEE or ACM or other publications is done thru the Internet. Final defense is done thru the Internet. Diploma can be sent thru the Internet. However, if any student wishes to visit Bangkok, he is most welcome.

3. ONLINE PH.D. IN THE USA

Searching Google for “Online Ph.D. in the USA”, 424 million entries found as shown in Figure 4.

Sample online Ph.D. in USA in the order presented by Google search result are: St. George University, Grant Town University, Ashley University, Walden University, California Coast University, Concord Law School, Northcentral University, University of Phoenix, Utica College, Grand Canyon University and Capella University etc. Some may say that the universities in the list above are not famous but they are accredited from <bestphdonline.com/doesstanfordoffer…> [6]. Stanford University which is not a part of Ivy League (only those in the Northeastern US are Ivy League) in the year 2012, offer online Ph.D. in: Aeronautics Engineering, Astronautics Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. The top 20 online Ph.D. programs in the US are:

- Online PhD in Curriculum Design
- Online PhD in Physical Therapy
- Online PhD in Management
- Online PhD in Law, Legal and Justice Management
- Online PhD in Professional Studies in Education
- Online PhD in Humanities
- Online PhD in Healthcare Administration
- Online PhD in Medicine
- Online PhD in Pharmacy
- Online PhD in Management of Technology
- Online PhD in Forestry
- Online PhD in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies
- Online PhD in Information Security
- Online PhD in Organizational Leadership
- Online PhD in Computational Finance
- Online PhD in Hebrew Literature
- Online PhD in Public Safety
- Online PhD in Biology
- Online PhD in Environmental Dynamics
- Online PhD in Hebrew Studies

4. ONLINE PH.D. IN THE UK

Searching Google for “Online Ph.D. in the UK”, 424 million entries found as shown in Figure 5.

From <www.masterstudies.com/PhD/UK> [7], five Online Ph.D. in the UK are listed: Doctorate of Business Administration - PhD, University of Liverpool, Doctor of Education (Higher Education) - PhD, University of Liverpool, Postgraduate Research - PhD Royal Veterinary College, Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) Millennium City Academy and Doctorate of Business
Administration (DBA) London Graduate School of Management.

From <www.masterstudies.com/PhD/UK>, five Online Ph.D. in the UK are listed: Doctorate of Business Administration - PhD, University of Liverpool, Doctor of Education (Higher Education) - PhD, University of Liverpool, Postgraduate Research - PhD Royal Veterinary College, Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) Millennium City Academy and Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) London Graduate School of Management.

5. ONLINE PH.D. IN AUSTRALIA

Searching Google for “Online Ph.D. in Australia”, 21.6 million entries found as shown in Figure 6.

University may be classified as “Non-Profit” and “For-Profit”. In the US, examples of Non-Profit universities are state universities, such as State University of New York, University of Missouri, and Georgia Institute of Technology. The senior author of this paper was appointed a Full Professor at the State University of New York, Brockport Campus, in 1972 when he was 35 years old, Directors of Graduates Studies in Computer Science at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and earned his Ph.D. in Engineering Computations from Georgia Tech in 1964 when he was 27 years old.

There are about 125 For-Profit universities and colleges in the US. Examples are American College of Education, American InterContinental University, Berkeley College, Colorado Technical University, Columbia Southern University, DeVry University, Florida Metropolitan University, Georgia Medical Institute, Grand Canyon University, Kaplan University, National American University, Pittsburgh Technical Institute, Southern State University, Stratford University, Strayer University, University of Phoenix, Virginia College, Walden University, West Coast University, Western International University, and etc.

Examples of For-Profit universities are Jones International University, University of Capella, and Phoenix University.
For-Profit university may also be called “eLearning University”. All universities, either Non-Profit or For-Profit are either “accredited” or “non-accredited”. Accreditation in the US is done by the Department of Education (the term in Thailand is the Ministry of Education) or Regional Accreditation Agencies, such as North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and etc.

The same standards are applied in accreditation for either For-Profit or Non-Profit universities. The first For-Profit university to be fully accredited in the US is Jones International University and that was done in the year 1999. Most For-Profit universities offer online Ph.D. programs.

Jones International University offers online Ph.D. programs [9] such as Doctorate of Business Administration, Doctorate of Education Adult Education Leadership, and Doctorate of Education K-12 Education Leadership. JIU is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and a member of the North Central Association, one of six regional accrediting bodies in the US.

Capella University offers online Ph.D. programs [10] such as Doctor of Philosophy in Business and Technology, Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling and Psychology, Doctor of Social Work, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Philosophy Health Care and Nursing, Doctor of Public Health, Doctor of Health Administration, and etc. Capella University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA).

Phoenix University offers more than a dozen online Ph.D. programs [11] such as Business and Management, Criminal Justice and Security, Education, Nursing and Health Care, and etc. University of Phoenix is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission which is a member of the North Central Association.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sloan-C surveys 2,500 educational institutions in the US every year. The latest survey was done in the year 2012 with several interesting findings. The first finding is that the rate of growth in online enrollment is growing comparing to overall higher education enrollment which is declining. The second finding is that learning can be done in everywhere and everyday but has to keep the quality. The third finding is that 77% of academic leaders rate the learning outcomes in online education as the same or superior to those in face-to-face classes. The fourth finding is that the proportion of chief academic officers who believe that faculty accepts the value and legitimacy of online education has not increased. The fifth finding is that 69% of the chief academic leaders say that online learning is critical to their long term strategy. The last finding is that a majority of chief academic officers said that lower retention rate for online courses remain a barrier to the growth of online instruction.

There are online Ph.D. programs offered and accredited in advanced countries such as the US, the UK, and Australia. Therefore, Thailand should promote online Ph.D. programs for the benefit of the country but must enforce very strict standards by requiring publications in refereed journals associated with international learned societies such as the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) which is the oldest and largest in Computer Science, and the Computer Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) which is the oldest and largest in Computer Engineering.

REFERENCES

[2] Babson Survey Research Group and the


