

China embraces e-learning

Experts in China predict a tremendous surge in e-learning in the next 10 years following the initial success of its advanced distance learning project. SUZIEANA UDA NAGU reports on China's experiment with e-learning.

DISTANCE learning in China has moved a step forward. Following the success of correspondence-based education and broadcast or television-based education launched in the 1930s and 1980s respectively, China is now incorporating e-learning via information and communication technology (ICT) in its advanced distance learning project.

With the implementation of advanced distance learning, academic courses in China will be delivered to places outside the campus via voice, video (live broadcast or rebroadcast), as well as real-time and non-real-time computer technologies.

Professor Cui Guowen, director of the Centre for Overseas Academic and Cultural Exchanges at Tsinghua University in Beijing, says the high level of literacy among the population has significantly pushed the demand for tertiary education.

Literacy has bred awareness among the public of the need for life-long learning, says Professor Yang Jiaqing, vice chairman of the Tsinghua University council.

"The public now understands the importance of replenishing their skills and constantly improving themselves," he adds.

Both Cui and Yang were in Kuala Lumpur recently to attend the International Conference on E-Education: Implementation and Management, organised by Inti Foundation.

They spoke on China's experiences with advanced distance



access to learning. Learners can now learn on their own anywhere in the world and at any time of the day or week.

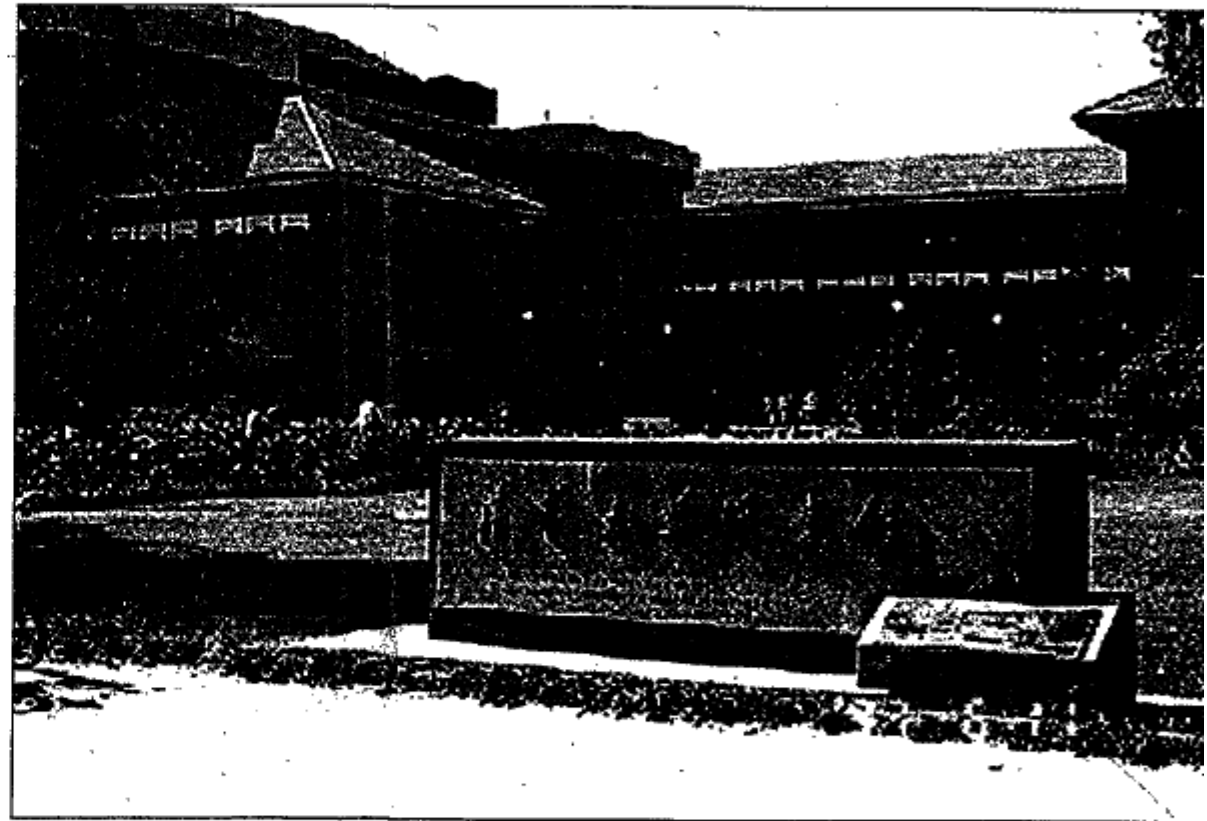
E-learning also provides an environment that is learner-centred and personalised to individual needs.

Therefore, if implemented correctly, e-learning may become an affordable and convenient mode of learning.

The Chinese news agency Xinhua reported shortages of teachers in the central and western areas of China recently.

Xinhua quoted Li Lianning, director of the Department for Basic Education, Ministry of Education China, who said the problem of teacher shortage coupled with the poor and inhospitable living conditions in those areas made advanced distance learning "the desirable method to bring education to the masses".

In light of this, the Chinese Government has embarked on a mission to regenerate interest in



TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY ... Introduced advanced distance learning programmes in 1996

conferred Tsinghua University and several other universities, including the University of Post and Telecommunications, Zhejiang University and Hunan University, as the first batch of educational institutions pioneering distance

on the wall will seem to be within reach.

To show how the system works, the researchers conducted a game of "rock, paper and scissors" between the two universities.

*Although the students were

