

WHAT MASS COLLABORATION MEANS TO TAMKANG' S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION?

The Vice President for International Affairs, Tai Wan Ching, was asked to read and report on the book *Wikinomics : How mass collaboration changes everything* (2007) written by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, two seasoned business consultants from the US and UK respectively. Dr. Tai points out that the crux of the book is about a new paradigm shift in economy. This shift deals with sharing resources openly by using tools provided by the Internet, and with the help of this collective power to push the engine of the economy. The existence and operation of Wikipedia, the namesake of the book, is an embodiment of such a new economy, as it is the result of a typical mass collaboration and collective power that transcend borders, disciplines, and cultures. Anyone can contribute something to Wikipedia, and in the process of it, help change, shape, enrich, and expand it in a very open and democratic way. This kind of free alliance based on a common goal is the foundation of Wikinomics, according to the authors of the book. Dr. Tai sees this free alliance a perfect model for the way TKU can cooperate with universities in and out of Taiwan. Just like Wikipedia, TKU can create the biggest collaboration network through free alliance.

However, the philosophy that drives such alliance is, in contrast to conventional wisdom, to share intellectual property, i.e., we can share our innovative and profitable ideas which can be in exchange for sharing other people' s similar ideas. In this light, the new competitive principles prescribed by Wikinomics are openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally. They are the same principles governing the economy that is based on the Internet.

From these four principles, Dr. Tai p sees some practical applications to

the university' s international alliances. They are as follows:

1. All the information, including the protocols and memorandums signed with TKU' s sister universities around the world can be accessible openly on the net to our staff, faculty members and alumni who can in turn spread this information to relevant parties. Through this word-of-mouth propagation, TKU' s efforts in academic exchanges will be widely known.

2. The way TKU cooperates with its sister or associate universities should resemble that of the “mass collaboration.” In other words, the more people from the university participate in promoting academic cooperation, the better. Mass participation generates “peer production” which is more productive than leaving this work to a selected few.

3. As regards to enhancing cooperation with top universities in the world, there should be a mutual benefiting principle that is often seen on the traditional market place where people gather freely in order to exchange information and the latest gossip. In this way, the university makes open all information and events relating to its joint projects with these universities to staff, faculty members, and alumni. In turn, these people will be happy to share with the universities whatever they have on these universities which may help facilitate better alliances.

4. The colleagues and third year students of the university who do research or study abroad at TKU sister universities are the “prosumers” mentioned in the book. They not only consume but also produce results for the university.

Finally, the cooperation TKU with its existing of future sister universities is a kind of global action espoused in the book. Anyone out there who can contribute something to the international academic exchanges and education of TKU will be supported and rewarded by TKU.

With this unconventional way of using resources in mind, Dr. Tai proposed

some immediate goals for his office. Firstly, his office will continue expanding the number of sister universities, particular those with a good academic reputation. Universities that are able to participate in joint or dual degrees with TKU will be prioritized for signing bilateral agreements. Once this is done, the next step for the office is to implement aggressively such an agreement. Finally, the number of junior year students going abroad and international exchange students studying at Tamkang will increase considerably. (~Ying-hsueh Hu)

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