Globalization and Its Curriculum Implications in Higher Education

by Prof. David Chang
Chancellor of Polytechnic University in New York

As information can now be transmitted and shared almost instantaneously across time zones and national boundaries, with a minimal cost and seemingly unlimited bandwidth, our own sense of time and space has changed radically. A globalized world is no longer just an abstract concept when we have over one billion Internet users and three billion cell phone users are practicing it every day. Educators around the world are facing the challenge of how to educate future generations of leaders at a time when cross-border movements and exchanges of ideas, culture, capital goods and investment are forever expanding, when geographically distributed manufacturing, service and operation are intensifying, and when technology advancement further sharpens both interdependency and conflict among nations.

The intertwined socio-economic forces due to the structural shift of our society, the explosive growth of information technology, and the acceleration in globalization have created a work environment that is once both competitive and collaborative, both local and global, and both independent and interdependent. Such an environment would require our students to be flexible and agile while at the same time, able to manage complexity and maintain a system and global perspective. Educators must reconsider issues such as whether the purpose of an undergraduate degree is to train specialists or to train generalists or to train generalists in today’s rapidly changing world, and whether modern engineering education should shift more toward traditional liberal arts, and for that matter, whether modern liberal arts education should place a stronger emphasis on technology and science.

In this talk, I would also like to offer some specific observations, critiques and suggestions on today’s engineering education. In addition, a new collaborative model between Nanjing University and Poly/NJU, launched recently, will be used to demonstrate how the two renowned universities can partner with multinational corporations and local government to help educate/train leaders of tomorrow.

by Prof. David Chang