The Influence of MOOC on Traditional Classroom Teaching of Chinese Universities
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Abstract. Nowadays, MOOC provides a new network education platform for universities all over the world, challenging the world’s higher education and exerting a profound influence on Chinese universities as well. Actually, MOOC gradually shows its unique advantages and development potential in China. On the one hand, MOOC improves the comprehensive qualities, promotes scientific research and increases evaluating effectiveness of university teachers. On the other hand, MOOC improves the students’ ability of autonomous learning and helps them grasp good learning methods. However, there is no doubt that traditional classroom teaching cannot be completely replaced. In China, it is generally accepted that universities provide the environment of scientific research, supervise the learning effectiveness and contribute to humanistic education. Thus, Chinese universities must take full advantage of MOOC, and make up the disadvantages through classroom teaching to ensure them meet world standards. Finally, this paper hopes to get some enlightenment on the university teaching reform in China, which could be also helpful for the development of university education in the whole world.

Introduction

A massive open online course (MOOC) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the internet.[1] In addition to the traditional teaching materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, plenty of MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants. MOOCs are a recent and widely researched development in cedistance education[2]which were first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012.[3]

Many famous scholars have considered MOOC as one of the greatest innovation on human education since the technique of printing was first invented in China. However, for most Chinese, MOOC is still a totally new loanword at present. With the large-scale use of the internet, almost all industries have been influenced unprecedentedly in varying degrees. Although distance education has appeared as a more powerful medium than place-based education for the vast majority of students in the world before, in fact, the way of integreted platform based on functions of online study and test, curriculum and training management etc. actually brought only a limited impact on the traditonal class teaching.

In fact, network teaching is not a new emerging thing, but MOOC gradually shows its unique advantages and development potential due to the great charm of the top universities in the United States and its international influence on education, as well as the ordinary people’s thirst for high quality education resources. Particularly, with the widespread opening of the curriculum resources guaranteed by world-famous experts and scholars, many advantages promote MOOC spread around the world rapidly, such as autonomous selectivity and personalized approach to learning, multiple selection of learning tools and resources provided by network technology etc. which challenges the worlds’ higher educaiton and exerts a profound influence on Chinese education as well.
MOOC’s Positive Influence on Traditional Teaching of Chinese University Teachers

MOOC provides us plenty of high quality educational resources for free, which presents a new value that everyone is equal before the knowledge and the choice of receiving education. The subjects in the teaching process are teachers and students, both of whom are the largest beneficiaries of MOOC.

Improving Teachers’ Comprehensive Qualities

According to Han YU, one of the greatest writers and thinkers in Chinese Tang Dynasty, the teacher proselytizes, instructs dispels doubt also. Because of the application of MOOC’s concept of flipped classroom in Chinese universities, the teachers gradually pay their attention to the methods of discussion and Q/A with students in class.[4] Therefore, that means teachers should be knowledgeable professionals to consider the thinking and psychological characteristics of students in and out of class. What’s more, teachers should make predictions of possible and essential questions before class, and then adjust the difficult and important points to the students’ needs by combining with their learning practical. On this basis, teachers have to pay a lot of hard work to prepare for a satisfied course, and spend a good amount of time, energy and money on the curriculum video, homework management, and interaction with the students on the internet. Apparently, the more excellent the teaching team and the course are, the more learners will be attracted. Thus, MOOC puts forward higher requirements on university teachers for comprehensive qualities and psychological level.

Promoting Teachers’ Scientific Research

In the traditional teaching mode, university teachers spend a large amount of time in class, and feel the double pressure of teaching and research at the same time. Therefore, their teaching materials are often repeated used for several terms, which gradually lowers the class quality in univerisities. In 2014, China launched a comprehensive Educational Reform Pilot Project in Tsinghua University and Peking University, proposing a shift from a teaching-centered didactic model to a learning-centered model, and introducing MOOC into classroom teaching. It requires that teachers of the same course form a teaching team to share the work of dividing the course into different knowledge units, and then presenting them in the form of small internet videos. Mostly, two weeks are spent in the teaching-learning cycle of a course. So the students can teach themselves on the internet for one week, and make discussions in class the next week. In this way, teachers can guide and discuss with their students in the classroom every other week, interacting on MOOC forums at other times. As a result, this mode of teaching greatly reduces the workload of university teachers and improves the effectiveness of teaching. More importantly, besides the teaching materials developed in teams, teachers may find new issues in the continuous interaction with and feedback from students, which is good for them to devote more time and energy in scientific research.

Increasing Teachers’ Evaluating Effectiveness

Teacher evaluation consists of self-evaluation and student evaluation. Generally, the traditional evaluation feedback mechanism depends on the teachers to observe the students’ classroom performance and attendance, and evaluate the results of final exams. However, studies have shown that students’ utilitarian always led to focused and mechanical learning in a short period of time before the final exams. In fact, most students study the week before the end of the term. MOOC, on the other hand, provides a real-time feedback evaluation mechanism in which teachers can not only effectively interact with students via videos or emails, but also check students’ clicks in every class and their learning method of knowledge grasping (repeating or skipping) according to the platform data. Despite that most students study three or four days before the classroom discussion, the review of knowledge is continuously carried out throughout the term. In this way, teachers’ evaluating effectiveness is greatly improved. They are capable of evaluating their students objectively based on the dynamic data on the
platform, at the same time, making prompt self-reflection and adjustment according to students’ feedback of key and difficult points in their study.

**MOOC’s Positive Influence on Traditional Learning of Chinese University Students**

MOOC develops a student-centred approach to learning and teaching, and helps students adopt right and effective learning strategies and proper methods.

**Improving Students’ Ability of Autonomous Learning**

It is true that traditional higher education pays little attention to students’ autonomy of choosing their teachers and courses, which may lead to their passive study and dependence on teachers. Because of the traditional cramming method of teaching, many university students have formed the learning idea of waiting for the knowledge imparted by teachers. Gradually, they felt the boredom of classroom teaching, in which the mode of teaching was single, outmoded and uninterested. And therefore, how to cultivate students’ divergent thinking and innovative spirit, consciousness and ability becomes the key to the reform of university teaching.[5] Almost overnight, the appearance of MOOC built a good online teaching platform for students. With the abundant curriculum resources and the substantial support of world famous universities, MOOC successfully stimulates the students’ learning interest. Particularly, most courses are shorter and more intensive than in class, so most students are fully amused by the active content of MOOC. In that case, Chinese universities have developed some MOOC platforms in native university groups to promote many high-quality elective courses and general courses as MOOCs. For example, the university group in Liaoning Province has implemented the MOOCs’ credit accumulation and transfer system, which is of great importance to help university students adopt initiative and effective learning strategies. In addition, MOOC is changing a single-style boring teaching classroom into a harmonious teacher-student interactive classroom without borders.

**Helping Students’ Grasp of Good Learning Methods**

By comparison with the students under the western higher education, the improvement of self-learning ability of Chinese university students still has a long way to go. Except for the external influencing factors such as politics and economy, the good learning methods of students play decisive roles in universities. Since the introduction of MOOC platform into Chinese higher education, students pay more attention to preview before class and self-study, as well as the integration of knowledge. According to their own hobbies and interest, students can independently choose MOOCs, then inititatively make a plan of study and actively participate in the online and classroom discussion. Furthermore, when discussing with others, they can find different comprehension of the same course and get new ideas. Based on their own learning experience, students get some new leaning methods in the exchange of different ideas. In this way, MOOC arouses students’ learning enthusiasm, promoting the grasp of good learning methods and cultivating the sustainable development and lifelong learning habits of study.

**The Necessity of Traditional Classroom Teaching under MOOC Background**

Although MOOC brings a profound influence to Chinese higher education, it can never replace the traditional classroom teaching.

**Universities Provide the Environment of Scientific Research**

Scientific research, one of the basic functions of universities, often needs to be done in traditional university classroom. In accordance with Humboldt’s education concept, although universities are teaching institutions, they undertake a scientific research task as well. Humboldt states that a university will have no future if it only cares for its teaching practice, because the theory and practice in teaching activities cannot separate from each other. [6] Both students and teachers come to universities for science, and science in universities should be regarded as endless questions to answer for which
teachers and students are tireless explorers. As practice proves, traditional universities provide the best environment for scientific research. Apparently, universities undertake the important task of imparting knowledge and cultivating talents, besides, they are academic institutions where scientific research and culture are developed. Although MOOC cultivates the active and creative thinking of students, there is no doubt that scientific studies have to be performed under the support of university environment, and the experimental data obtained must be repeatedly discussed in class. Besides that, the influence of university cultural heritage on society is in the way that MOOC cannot afford. Michael Spence, the University of Sydney’s vice-chancellor, says concern about Chinese universities that some universities will be influenced owing to China’s acceptance of high-quality teaching resources in top-ranking US universities. However, Chinese universities have their own characteristics at the same time, and the impact of MOOC still remains to be seen.[7]

**Universities Supervise the Learning Effectiveness**

Although MOOCs satisfy people’s lifelong learning desire, the teaching effects mainly depend on the learners’ self-consciousness and self-control. Sometimes, in the online virtual classroom, students cannot concentrate because of the surrounding environment, which will probably affect their learning. Most of the time, we may find that the number of registration on MOOC platform is very high, but actually the pass rate of the course is very low. Take Artificial Intelligence, the famous MOOC of the Stanford University for example, the enrollment increased rapidly to nearly 160,000 after its debut online. But in the end, only 7,175 learners completed the course and the pass rate is about 5%. Therefore, the supervisory function of traditional universities plays a very important role in the supervision of learning effectiveness. Under the supervision of classroom teaching in universities, the experience of students corresponds approximately to the proficiency. Thus, the completion of a course is guaranteed to the maximum as well as the teaching effects. In addition, there is another aspect to be mentioned that MOOC exists in the virtual network platform, so the norms of moral integrity lack effective checks and oversight. Although the test of MOOC provides credit and certificate, it cannot be effectively supervised as in the traditional classroom. Meanwhile, it is obvious that whether the test-takers are learners themselves cannot be ensured, which is also an inevitable problem.

**Universities Contribute to Humanistic Education**

In Humboldt’s opinion, only a perfect talent can really make contributions to the society. The purpose of higher education is to cultivate the humanistic spirit of individuals.[8] Universities undertake the task of imparting general knowledge to students which is necessary for the society, thus to foster them cultivated citizens. Through the university education, students become qualified citizens. After stepping into the society, they will be helpful for improving the quality of the whole nation.[9] Humanistic education cannot separate from the environment of traditional universities. Especially in China, emphasis is placed on the enhancement and management of moral education by teaching students how to be an upright person. Example is better than precept. As Marx once said:"people create environment, same environment also shaping people”[10] Universities directly associate with society, where comprehensive talents for social development are educatied. What’s more, universities provide good moral environments for teaching and scientific research. As a result, the moral environments of higher education have a direct impact on the effects of universities and the cultivation of citizens with good moral quality.[11] Humanistic education is an important part of higher education in China all the time, which is also of great significance to cultivate well-rounded and well-qualified individuals.
Conclusion

At the beginning of University, a great work written by Confucius, it says that what the great learning teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence. It is obvious that MOOC cannot completely replace traditional universities because it is only the spread of knowledge. With the rapid development of internet technology today, MOOC improves the online learning platforms of global education. However, the teaching method based purely on internet is unlikely to reach levels of traditional universities in terms of student-teacher interactoin and teaching atmosphere. After all, students learn not only the content of the course itself, but also a lot of social experience which will help them grow and learn how to live and work. Anyway, the impact of MOOC should be paid enough attention to, but it should not be blindly exaggerated. Chinese universities must take the challenge as a starting point, improving the existing higher education by finding new opportunities which adapy to the development of society. In the meantime, conforming to the trend of the times, higher education in China must take full advantage of MOOC and make up the disadvantage through classroom teaching to ensure universities meet world standards.

References