A Discussion of Online Education in 21st Century Illustrated by the Case of MOOCs

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Abstract

With the rise of the concept of "Internet + education", the continuous popularization of Internet technology has brought new challenges to the traditional teaching methods of colleges and universities, and the growing diversified and personalized learning needs of students. Online college student education is the development of the current education model. This paper is going to explore online education in 21st century. Online education originated in the United States, but after years of development and exploration, today, China has been fully promoted and developed under the impetus of Internet thinking and mobile technology. This article will analyze the development history of online education, the growth mode of MOOC and its advantages and disadvantages, discuss the strategies for students to participate in online courses, this paper explores the future of online education and provides some advice to students and teachers.

Keywords

Online Education, MOOC, Mobile Internet.

1. The History of Online Education

The word Online Education is nothing new for most of us. Online learning has emerged triumphant as a viable education choice in its own right. Each student choosing an online course or an online program gets to play a small role in that evolution, shaping the course of online learning for the students of tomorrow.

As early as 1960, the University of Illinois created an Intranet for its students in 1960. It was a system of linked computer terminals where students could access course materials as well as listen to recorded lectures. MIT begins offering lectures and course materials online through its OpenCourseWare project in 2002, most of which is provided free of charge to anyone in the world. The goal is to offer these materials for all MIT courses. In 2009, As we approached the end of the first decade of the new century, the impact of online learning on education could no longer be denied. The number of students taking online courses jumped a whopping 187%, and there were about 5.5 million students worldwide who were taking at least one class online (source). Moreover, traditional universities began expanding not only the number of online courses but the number of entire degree programs available online.

The initial stage of China's Internet development and big data application research in the field of education can be positioned in 2013. In this year, there has been a wave of investment and financing in China's online education industry, and development of Internet companies has opened up the online education market. In 2013, the news media called it “the first year of China's online education”. According to the 42nd "China Internet Development Statistics Report" released by the China Internet Network Information Center, as of June 2018, the number of online education users in China reached 172 million, of which the number of mobile online education users was 142 million. At the same time, the "2018 China Online Education White Paper" released by the new economic industry data mining and analysis agency iiMedia
Research predicts that China's online education users will reach 296 million in 2020, and the market size will reach 433 billion yuan. It can be seen that the scale of online education is gradually expanding.

So, what is the future of online learning? Predictions that online learning would completely replace traditional programs have proven unfounded. However, there is little doubt about predictions that the number of students expected to have at least one online course in their class schedule will quadruple in the coming decade. The biggest change from the first online correspondence course to the present day is our perceptions. Online learning is no longer a choice student make when they cannot attend classes in a traditional environment. It has become a viable educational choice. Every student who chooses an online course or program can play a small role in this evolution, shaping the course of online learning for future students.

2. Online Education Practice – Illustrated by the Case of MOOC

2.1. The History of MOOC

The full name of MOOC is Massive Open Online Course. Two professors in Canada were the first to experiment with this teaching format. In 2008, they invited 25 students from Manitoba university and 2,300 participants from around the world to attend a course. For the first time, the term "MOOC" was coined.

The original purpose of the course was to share excellent teaching resources. The maturity of the Internet has given traditional education a chance to transform -- even at a world-renowned university like Harvard, courses are readily available.

A number of MOOC platform companies have launched, and a wave of MOOC fever has been set off around the world.

In 2015, 23 million people worldwide used MOOC platforms.
In 2016, there were 58 million users;
In 2017, 81 million;
In 2018, the number of users exceeded 100 million and reached 101 million.

2.2. Features of MOOCs

a. Cooperating with universities;
b. A series of supporting teaching methods and processes, such as classroom tests, interaction between teachers and students in class, interaction between students, assignments, corrections and grouping collaboration, final exams and certifications.

For example, the design of learning interaction includes: Software-based quizzes and assignments; Observe student integrity: Study groups and forums; Students have autonomy and can choose to join courses halfway; Issue study certificates for students, some of them can even get credits to communicate with some schools.

This series of designs can solve several problems in online education and learning to a certain extent: learning goals and learning outcomes, and learning motivation.

2.3. Content of MOOC

In terms of the number of partners and courses, the numbers are also very impressive.

3. Dilemma of Online Education

3.1. Is Online Education An Education or A Commodity?
What is the nature of education? The essence of education is to awaken the educated person. It is a process of understanding self, awakening self, and realizing self.

But online education must form an industry and operate in the form of a company, which will inevitably lead to contradictions: companies aim at profit and emphasize the conversion of profits into real money. This requires education as a tool to earn money. Online education must be based on utilitarianism and practicality.

3.2. How to Ensure the Quality of Teaching and Content?
Teacher is the soul of the class. In today’s education innovation brought by information technology, the profession of teachers will be even more important. Is it easy to have an iPad or a computer? What really affects the quality of education is the teacher? How to ensure the quality of teachers? No matter from primary school to university, knowledge is taught too much, but the most important thing to be a teacher, should teach children how to become a real person, to prepare for the future life, and this is the direction of the role transformation of teachers in the future. Teachers' teaching style, teaching methods and so on will affect the quality of teaching.

Content is the key. Whether it’s real time, whether it’s interactive, it’s very important. For example, many forms of online education are mainly recorded course videos, but the cookie-cutter explanation videos may not be suitable for everyone, so it is impossible to teach students according to their aptitude, and the educational effect is difficult to guarantee. And the same lecture that works today may be obsolete tomorrow.

3.3. How to Ensure the Learning Effect?
Interaction, supervision, and efficiency: The disadvantage of online learning is that you cannot directly interact with the teacher face to face. A major problem that plagues students is that students have questions during the lectures, which cannot be raised and resolved in time. In addition, online learning is difficult to concentrate, and it is difficult to ensure learning efficiency without supervision.

4. Strategies for Students to Take Online Courses

Treat an online course like a “real” course.

When it comes to online classes, you need to have the discipline to sit down and say, “I am going to work on this,” as well as the dedication to actually follow through. Though you can be flexible as to when you choose to complete your work during the week, you can’t put it off indefinitely.

Hold yourself accountable

Set goals at the beginning of the semester, and check in with yourself weekly. In a traditional classroom setting, you'll often receive verbal or visual reminders of an assignment's upcoming due date. But without a professor actively reminding you, it’s up to you to make sure you’ve allotted enough time to complete the work so you're not starting an assignment the day before it’s due.

Practice time management.

The flexibility to create your own schedule is often one of the biggest appeals of taking online classes. But that freedom can also be detrimental if you do not have solid time management
skills. Without them, you might easily find yourself cramming before classes or handing in subpar assignments.

Create a regular study space and stay organized.

Set up a dedicated learning environment for studying. By completing your work there repeatedly, you’ll begin to establish a routine. Whether your workspace is your kitchen table, a library, or the corner booth in a local coffee shop, it’s important to determine what type of environment will work best for you. Experiment to discover which type of setting boosts your productivity. Wherever you choose, make sure there’s high-speed internet access so you’re not trying to take an online course over a lagging connection.

Eliminate distractions.

From Netflix to social media to dishes piling up in the sink, you’ll be faced with many distractions that can easily derail your studies. The best online students know how to lessen these distractions and set aside time to focus.

Exactly how much of a challenge these distractions will prove to be will depend on your own unique personality and situation. Some might find that they can tune out a noisy home by listening to music. Others might choose to work from a local coffee shop or library to eliminate their urge to multitask at home. Ultimately, you will need to find a strategy that works best for you.

Regardless of where you choose to work, consider turning your cell phone off to avoid losing focus every time a text message or notification pops up. And if you’re still having trouble resisting the temptation to check your email or surf the web, try downloading a website blocker. Using applications like Cold Turkey and Freedom can help eliminate distractions by blocking the apps or websites that tend to compete for your attention.

Actively participate.

Participate in the course’s online forum to help you better understand course materials and engage with fellow classmates. This might involve commenting on a classmate’s paper on a discussion board or posting a question about a project you’re working on. Read what other students and your professor are saying, and if you have a question, ask for clarification.

Leverage your network.

Online classes may sometimes make you feel like you are learning on your own, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. Most online courses are built around the concept of collaboration, with professors and instructors actively encouraging that students work together to complete assignments and discuss lessons.

Build relationships with other students by introducing yourself and engaging in online discussion boards. Your peers can be a valuable resource when preparing for exams or asking for feedback on assignments. Don’t be afraid to turn to them to create a virtual study group. Chances are good that they will appreciate it just as much as you will.

5. Conclusion

This paper explores the development of online education. And use MOOCs as an example. The advantages and disadvantages of online education are discussed. It also suggests ways to deal with online education. In the first 20 years of the 21st century, our network technology and science and technology have developed rapidly, but in the field of education. There’s a lot we can do. MOOCs are just the tip of the iceberg. As an educator, we all should, at any time, learn new science and technology. Keep up with new trends. Only in this way can we keep thinking, exploring and inventing new teaching applications.
References


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