Original Paper

During the Epidemic Prevention and Control Period, the Principal's Management of Online Course Teaching in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

At the end of 2019, the new crown epidemic swept across the globe and also affected education systems around the world. This paper aims to explore the challenges brought by the pandemic crisis to online classroom teaching, and the principal's exploration of the emergency management model of online course teaching, that is, how Chinese universities can quickly implement large-scale online teaching, and how teachers and students can quickly adapt to online teaching. Demonstrate the process of managing online classroom instruction and the problems and solutions encountered by headmasters in the context of an epidemic. Opening up a new perspective for the sustainable development of online education in the future.

Keywords

China, Higher Education, Management, Online Courses

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected education systems across the globe. With almost all students affected by the crisis globally, and tens of millions of educators engaged in online distance learning to create some kind of schooling, the New Crown epidemic has wreaked a huge amount of havoc on education systems (UNESCO, 2020). The worldwide Covid-19 outbreak has interrupted education around the world. At the same time, the epidemic has brought the principal the arduous task of managing the whole school, organizing student work, and supporting teachers to implement high-quality distance teaching. China has drawn attention to the importance of outbreak prevention and control, and the severity of the situation has rendered it impossible for Chinese universities to begin the

new semester normally. To effectively ensure education, teaching, and personnel training in universities, the Ministry of Education quickly proposed the requirement of conducting online teaching. "Suspension of Classes without Interruption of Studying" emergency policy initiative to continue teaching and learning as schools across the country are closed to contain the virus (Zhang et al., 2020). As a result, in the context of new coronavirus pneumonia prevention and control, online teaching in colleges and universities in my country has become widely used. Nevertheless, there has been a significant increase in the demand for online education in a short period, and various online teaching platforms have encountered unprecedented pressure and challenges. Therefore, universities must implement responsibilities and management while ensuring the safety of teachers and students, and they must make every effort to ensure the teaching process. It is worth noting that various courses have various teaching methods. The benefits of IT can be used in online teaching to assist university teachers in applying IT for knowledge-based courses. Following the development of a vaccine for the COVID-19 pandemic, the corresponding courses for operational practical courses can be modified and updated (Wang et al., 2020). It follows from this that during the pandemic, remote and limited in-person school management has brought with it numerous challenges faced by schools and principals throughout the crisis (Schechter, Da'as, & Qadach, 2022). From the perspective of this large-scale epidemic, we have encountered many difficulties in online teaching and management, but these difficulties provide a sustainable path for sustainable large-scale online teaching and management in the future.

1.1 Chinese Higher Education under the Epidemic

Based on the content to be discussed in this article, I searched for keywords in google scholar, eric, school library, etc.: Headmasters; management; covid-19; higher education; online; Course teaching, etc. In the process of searching for information, we find the Chinese government has taken stringent measures to halt the expansion of the Covid-19 disease outbreak. The majority of in-person activities, including teaching, were prohibited. The start of the spring semester has been postponed at Chinese universities. Without permission, students are not permitted to return to campus. The educational organizations involved launched an initiative called 'Disrupting the Classroom, Not Learning' to provide access to learning for students who were unable to access campus due to the epidemic (Zhu & Liu, 2020). At the same time, the initiative was followed up with the publication of a guidance document on organizing teaching and learning online in universities (Ministry of Education, 2020). The guidelines require that universities and all parties be encouraged to become actively involved in online education and that the new course models have the same quality of teaching and learning as the offline courses previously offered. It also requires a sustained workload for teachers and the mobilization of students to engage in independent online learning. At the same time, the Ministry of Education urges universities to evaluate learning outcomes in a variety of ways (Zhu & Liu, 2020).

The outbreak of the coronavirus has accelerated the development of online education in higher education in China. The growth of online education has led to a shift from traditional, teacher-centered

classrooms to more student-centered activities. This necessitates a conceptual redefinition of the origins of teaching and learning, its roles, and the relationships that exist between teachers, students, and equipment (Jandrić et al., 2018). As a result, students' course learning must transition to online learning. Online learning is the learning experience of being online in a specific environment while using a variety of devices. Students can use these environments from anywhere to learn and interact with teachers and other students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The implementation of these processes is inseparable from the standardized and reasonable management of the principal. Before the pandemic, few articles were written on the principal's role (Huang et al., 2020). In emergencies, the headmasters should always act as proactive managers, creating a common goal, encouraging teachers to face new challenges, and, at the same time, creating a sense of shared responsibility by actively seeking solutions when mistakes are identified. (Gregorčič Mrvar et al., 2019). These roles become even more important during emergencies such as a pandemic (Netolicky, 2020), that's why the focus on principals cannot be ignored when developing the appropriate response to the pandemic. Therefore, headmasters are responsible for creating a school that will make education effective. However, many principals are either unable to cope with the numerous changes or lack the necessary skills to effectively and efficiently manage their schools' knowledge and attitudes (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). At the beginning of the pandemic, principals had to learn how to cope with temporary school closures while also planning to move to teach online and deal with the virus's impact on teachers and students. For the principal and other senior staff, it was a "perfect stress storm" that put a severe test on a leader's crisis management skills.

1.2 Different Students and Teachers Have Different Needs for Online Course Learning

One of the areas affected by COVID-19 is higher education. It has become a fact that the mode of teaching has become online. Although some schools and universities have been using distance learning, it was not compulsory. However, after COVID-19 took place, universities were temporarily closed and basically, every course was taught online. This change was a challenge for teachers and students alike. In addition, it was an organizational challenge for the entire teaching and learning process at the University (Cicha et al., 2021).

2. Students' Course Study

COVID-19 disrupts students' academic lives in a variety of ways. Changes such as graduating from high school to university or from university to entering the workforce can bring unique feelings to students. They will be unable to complete normal school courses and assessments, and in many cases, they will be removed from their learning community almost immediately (Daniel, 2020). At the same time, the experience of "home isolation" has also had a multi-faceted impact on students' learning. In addition to the psychological uncertainty brought about by the epidemic, learners also face many challenges, such as internet connection, weak infrastructure, etc. (Kyungmee, 2020). However, the repeatability of online instruction is better suited to each student than in a traditional classroom.

Students can use the resources regularly to review and consolidate their knowledge, which means they are not limited by location or time and can learn whenever and wherever they want (Huang, 2020), which relieves students' learning pressure to a certain extent. Students of different majors face different problems in studying online courses. For example, students of science and engineering must enter the research lab to experiment. Online teaching cannot provide experimental equipment. Additionally, for exam assessment, some exams are being re-examined in a different format, and many organizations use alternative methods for evaluating students' academic performance, so while some students may benefit from the disruption to academic life, others are finding that in the online learning process It's hard to get better grades. The changes that these epidemics have brought to our curriculum have also provided a new and different perspective on our educational process (Chandra, 2020).

3. Teaching Challenges for Teachers

Due to the huge popularity of Covid-19, online learning pedagogy has been temporarily mainstreamed by different educational institutions to help and assist students to continue their education. Teachers' readiness to teach online investigates their profession's flaws as they transition from the classroom to the online lecture setting, where they must address technology issues. This is a challenge that teachers of various courses face (Cutri & Mena, 2020). This shows that student-centered learning pedagogy is different and sensitive from the learning classroom setting to the online learning setting (Mallillin et al., 2020). Furthermore, researchers involved have shown that most of the problems students encounter in online learning courses are internet connectivity and devices, especially those moving from traditional classrooms to online learning environments. They have difficulty adjusting to their learning habits. As a result, instructors are faced with various challenges in how to deal with gaining educational quality and professional development through the use of technology for effective teaching and learning in online courses (Mallillin et al., 2020). It is important to note that good communication between headmasters and teachers is essential to keep both parties informed about the responsibilities of teaching online courses. Teachers are not only overburdened with learning and virtual instruction, but schools are adding task after task to teachers during this crisis (Khanal, 2020). As can be seen, the COVID-19 has made every teacher aware of the need for alternatives to traditional teaching methods, especially during any unforeseen crisis. Courses and course materials should be designed to easily and effectively support online learning. This means that every learning content should be digitized. Additionally, teachers should prepare learning materials digitally. Course descriptions should detail each learning outcome and the associated learning experience to help teachers select appropriate activities in virtual forums. Principals should help develop curriculum and teacher guides and other alternative instructional strategies to help teachers concisely use the curriculum during times of crisis.

3.1 Principal's Curriculum Management Measures

The principal plays a very important role in school management, both as the focal point and the center of decision-making (Bush and Coleman, 1995). The effective management of schools is a complex,

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challenging and difficult task (Heaney, 2001). Because, in their work, researchers Handy and Aitken (1986) emphasized the demands of schools in their efforts to achieve change, the management of schools requires a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment, and requires daily interaction with many people. In addition, there are many issues associated with these interactions, generally with students, staff, and parents. Relevant research shows that classroom management is a necessary condition for students to learn effectively. Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on classroom and school management, one may have realized that a whole new reality has been created, and the reality of schools has completely changed. It has transformed into an unprecedented form, which is the reason for a fundamental change in school management (Meland et al., 1984).

To better carry out the work of "starting classes after school", effective management of classroom teaching is carried out. The principal should quickly set up a working group headed by himself. The person in charge of the teaching and research office and the person in charge of the lesson preparation group are the team members to provide a guarantee for the online teaching work during the extended school period. At the same time, the school gives full play to its subjective initiative, and further enriches the curriculum resources for students to learn based on the use of national public teaching resources such as provinces, municipalities, and districts, and according to the results of the school's classroom teaching reform (Dai & Lin, 2020), and guides students to learn to Utilize a wealth of online resources for student preview and development. In addition, principals should also pay attention to school-based resources, and encourage teachers of various disciplines to develop resources according to the actual situation of the semester and students, especially the construction of online teaching resources. At the same time, principals should organize teachers to prepare preview books and students' self-learning guidance plans, appropriately increase learning content, pay attention to the guidance of learning methods, and enrich online teaching courses during the extended term. It is worth noting that in addition to the standardized management of curriculum teaching, principals should also pay attention to the dissemination of epidemic prevention knowledge, and strengthen life education and public safety education so that students can receive comprehensive and vivid training and development. Principals, as managers of curriculum improvement, can advocate for collaborative efforts across different curriculum areas to facilitate the satisfaction of students' belonging needs (Ediger, 2014). Additionally, teaching on a virtual platform necessitates a long-term strategy to prepare teachers for online instruction. Schools and teachers must have adequate ICT infrastructure and resources. This will necessitate significant government investment. Headmasters can use their internal resources, if they have them, to ensure that adequate ICT facilities and resources are available. This should be a prerequisite for beginning a teaching course. Second, principals should provide teachers with opportunities to upgrade their ICT knowledge and skills through regular on-the-job training programs. Upgrading teachers' skills in ICT should be a core component of their professional development plans. In addition to this, for students with other special needs, such as those with language and/or socioeconomic difficulties, the principal must assign them any equipment on school property (free of

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charge) or request the Ministry of Education (Pellegrini & Maltinti, 2020). At the same time, principals are actively involved in the decision-making process, they assist teachers with problems and develop plans to support any children with special needs. For example, teachers go to the homes of students with special needs to provide them with the devices they need to access the Internet or any assistive technology (Sider, 2020). At the same time, principals also need to focus on the professional development of all teachers to build competencies in virtual learning environments. In addition, school leaders should continue to network, share best practices on school operations, and collaborate with other instructional leaders to determine how they are addressing challenges (Anderson, 2020).

Last but not least, Chinese principals should also be very concerned about their financial responsibilities, especially having sufficient resources to maintain their schools and be successful (Zhang, 2004). Access to additional resources is critical to the success of any school and is especially difficult for "normal" schools that are disadvantaged informal resource allocation arrangements. Access to resources is also more difficult for "remote (with few resources) schools" (Hannum & Park, 2002). In their own words, many principals are forced to "beg" from local governments, local businesses, and parents (Zhang & Gu, 2005) to find sufficient resources to maintain the school's online course expenses.

4. Discussion

The conversation surrounding COVID-19 is highly polarized. On the one hand, optimistic voices are calling for a new normal, reimagining or realigning global education. These voices spoke about the possibility of repositioning and reshaping education brought about by COVID-19. On the other hand, some people want to quickly go back to the "old normal" and re-engage with everything that came before. These voices are keen to transform or integrate the educational practices of the current crisis into the previous educational order (Harris, 2020). In times of crisis, leaders must act quickly and with foresight, as with anything that shifts (Kuhn, 2012), but they must also carefully consider the options and consequences of the actions taken (Netolicky, 2020). Surviving a crisis is an inherently risky project, but it is the drive and direction to move forward that is critical to getting through the most difficult of times. Headmasters must ensure that their schools run smoothly and efficiently. Overall, the primary responsibility of a headmaster is to manage the school and ensure that learning and teaching are as effective as possible. Therefore, during the epidemic, it is particularly important to ensure the smooth progress of curriculum teaching in colleges and universities. Related research has shown that classroom management is an extremely important role in solving classroom problems, helping students to share classroom rules for better functioning (Marzano et al., 2005). While the evidence base for school leadership amid the pandemic does not exist, several patterns of practice have emerged that provide guidance and insight into how principals should manage classroom instruction.

According to the relevant results, almost all higher education universities have transformed to urgent teaching methods such as online distance learning. However, the majority of the transitions were

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haphazard, with constrained remedial teaching, even experienced online teachers used new teaching methods to meet the challenges posed by this large-scale transition. While web-based technologies are widely used for distance learning globally, their proper management and utilization have been problematic (Khanal, 2020). At the same time, as shown by recent OECD research, the accessibility and strategic planning of technology resources is a significant challenge for transition pedagogy (OECD, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, few written works provide some critical perspectives on distance learning information and communication technology. But Perrotta and Bohan (2020) have mixed experiences with online teaching at the higher education level, at the same time, online teaching can sometimes lead to problems such as greater isolation from students. Different educational institutions are making decisions to implement and develop an effective response to the learning process during the Covid 19 pandemic to support the shift in online learning pedagogy. It provides instructors and students with the necessary precautions and social distancing, effective techniques, and strategies to protect educational opportunities for online learning. It also organizes a system for education leaders to continue the necessary educational alternative programs and modalities during this pandemic crisis (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). Despite what has happened with Covid19, education can still be used as a form of distance virtual learning through an online process, using different technologies such as radio, live TV classes, Zoom, and other alternative learning methods to confirm that teachers have the opportunity to engage students in the teaching process (Chen, Qian, & Wen, 2021). On the other hand, the model of learning through an online platform provides ample opportunities for teachers to guide the process of online learning in a synchronous environment with alternative teaching methods and models (Henriksen, Creely, & Henderson, 2020). It can be seen that online teaching courses have advantages and disadvantages for teachers and students.

It can be seen that the principal, as the administrator of the school, must first ensure ICT resources and facilities, which are the most important for teachers and students. Online teaching and learning are completely ineffective without a minimum of ICT equipment and resources for those who learn online. Second, headmasters need to train teachers to make online teaching more standardized and lively. Regardless of the learning platform, they are the only way to connect students and engage them in learning activities. The key to the normal development of classroom teaching is how to make virtual teaching as interactive and lively as in the physical classroom through these methods. It is therefore crucial that principals provide adequate training to teachers and enable them to use these functions effectively. Third, principals also need to give students thorough practical training. This training not only helps students learn the basic online information systems and learning management solution requirements but also helps them become more engaged and active in virtual forums. Fourth, principals also need to set work goals and continuously update and improve teachers' skills, which should be a core component of curriculum development plans (Khanal, 2020). It is worth noting that the principal is the cornerstone of the school and plays an important role in the development of the educational program. I believe it is necessary to provide principals with the knowledge and skills to deal with the

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multiple changes and complex tasks of managing human beings. A qualified principal leads the school in the right direction and requires others to learn and take into account feedback from outside and within the school for timely corrections (Farah, 2013).

Traditionally, the curriculum has been the teacher's physical location, and the principal may not be welcome. Furthermore, in several cases, principals have less subject knowledge than the teachers they supervise. This makes teaching supervision a particular challenge. The factors that prevent principals from "entering the classroom" are many, varied, and difficult to overcome. This is true even when the principal has a strong will to do so (Barth, 1980). In addition, "Risk schools" may initially necessitate a more rational and disciplined approach that focuses on improving curriculum teaching methods. As instructional managers, headmasters typically set clear academic goals to steer the organization steadily in the desired direction. Simultaneously, they will play a more active and hands-on role in organizing and coordinating teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on China's education system should extend far beyond responding to the current crisis, and thus has the potential to provide opportunities for future growth (Jandri, 2020). At the same time, as school administrators and leaders, headmasters should mobilize to develop other leaders and create a positive culture in which all educators' professional talents, competencies, and knowledge can be enhanced and expanded (Leithwood et al., 2020). This is possible when teaching online courses, but it takes extra effort to connect with others in a meaningful way, maintain relationships, and keep things moving. With this global crisis far from over, enormous challenges still lie ahead. Principals also need to play a key management role in the teaching of online courses so that all students and teachers can conduct teaching activities smoothly.

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