

Research on the Strategies to Improve Teachers' Teaching Ability in Local Universities under the Era of MOOC

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ABSTRACT: Sweeping around the whole world, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) has exerted profound influences and tremendous impacts to higher education. In order to cope with such challenges brought by MOOC to local universities, this paper is intended to analyze the requirements as well as challenges from MOOC to local universities in the first place, and then further establishes specific enhancement ideas to improve teachers' teaching ability from the perspectives such as strengthening basic skills practices, reinforcing related trainings and improving evaluation mechanisms and so on. Therefore, on the one hand, it will assist to cultivate teachers who are adaptable to the development of the times and promote the sustainable growth of the local education on the other hand, which is of great significance for the society to bring up talents who are capable to satisfy the demands of the times.

KEYWORD: MOOC; teachers in local universities; teaching abilities; improvement

MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Courses. To be specific, massive refers to the large scale of learners involved in such courses, which usually reach thousands of participants, even tens of thousands; Open indicates the availability of such courses covering each corner of the world where network is available, which also embodies the fairness of education; Online means the learning is conducted through network. With the rapid development of network, MOOC is creating huge transformations to education. Besides, gathering a large number of famous teachers and noted courses through Internet platform, it's influencing the patterns and process of global education, exerting profound impacts to educational concepts, educational management and other aspects as well. Based on such circumstances, this paper is committed to explore how to improve teachers' teaching abilities in universities in order to adapt to such new teaching pattern as well as to come up with respective improving strategies so as to promote the sustainable development of local higher education.

1 GENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MOOC

Raised by Canadian scholar Dave Cormier and Bryan Alexander in 2008, MOOC was first set up in September in the same year as a kind of online

course supporting multiple learning patterns. Aimed at enhancing knowledge dissemination, it is published as open courses on the Internet by individual organizations that are holding sharing and collaboration spirits. As a large scale online course, MOOC was initially fermented in 2000 and then was put into official production in 2008 and later sprung up in 2012, stirring up a teaching storm. As a result, the year 2012 was deemed as the "MOOC Year One" by New York Times [2-3]. Subsequently, multiple suppliers exclusive to provide MOOC platforms engage themselves into competition in succession with Coursera, edX and Udacity as the three carriages driving MOOC's development [4]. Besides, various foreign universities also start to publish courses on MOOC platform, with lots of domestic universities joining this tide as well, which include Tsinghua University, Peking University and Fudan University etc.

2 CHALLENGES FROM MOOC TO TEACHERS' TEACHING ABILITY IN LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

The explosive spreading of MOOC around the globe attributes to its unique advantage presented, which are manifested as below. Firstly, MOOC is featured with its large-scale openness in the course resources; secondly, the convergence of first-class experts from

world's famous universities has endowed MOOC courses with high quality; thirdly, MOOC advocates for the self-selectiveness and the personalization of learning; fourthly, online network technique has offered more diversified selection for learning tools and resources [5]. In a word, all above advantages have contributed to the world-wide transmission of MOOC.

Providing facilitation and efficiency to students as an online learning mode, MOOC is popular among the students. However, with the rapid development of MOOC, the traditional education is subject its impacts unavoidably. With longer construction time and better operation conditions, those famous universities have better blended into the MOOC tide within a short time, whereas local universities have encountered a series of challenges due to its short construction time and weak faculty basis (Fig 1).

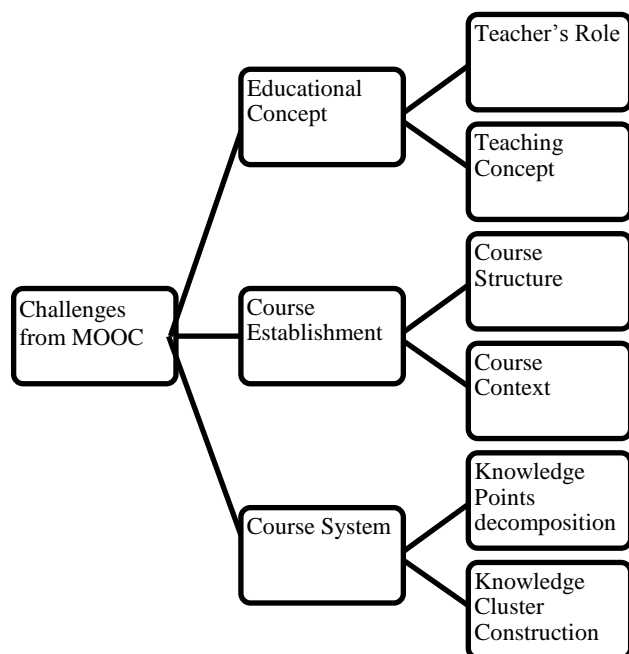


Fig 1 Challenges from MOOC to teachers' teaching abilities in local universities

(1) Challenge to teachers' educational concept in local universities

Under MOOC which is a kind of online learning mode, teacher's role transfers from the leading character to costar; besides, as online videos are online teaching, students need to "listen to the courses" outside of the classes in advance and then perform discussion and analysis with teachers and other students in the class. Moreover, teachers should also shift from the role as an "explainer" to deliver the class as in the traditional teaching mode to the role of a "constructor" to develop the class; meanwhile, the teaching key of the class will turn from delivering the knowledge to leading students to carry out discussion as well. Such changes have raised new requirements to the educational and teaching approaches, teaching abilities, teaching behaviors, and teaching methods generated in the

traditional teaching process as well as challenges to teachers' teaching concept as well.

(2) Challenges to teachers' course construction in local universities

MOOC requires for relatively deeper understanding to university students' course structure from teachers. Under the traditional teaching mode of the university, courses of various majors are all strictly validated and designed through talent-cultivation plan. Hence, all the courses, class schedules as well as the inheritance and cohesive relationship between courses are crystal clear so that students only need to make choices based on the class schedules. However, under the background of MOOC, given the wide range of registered students, the knowledge structure and basis gap held by the students and the varied preference in selecting the courses from students, teachers should be completely aware that what kind of courses to be selected and what kind of basis is required for certain courses, which has raised a tough challenge to teachers. In order to address to such challenges, teachers should be clearly aware of the course context and manage to make smart and reasonable selections^[6].

3 CHALLENGES TO THE KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM OF TEACHERS IN THE LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

MOOC request teachers to clearly grasp the relationship the knowledge points delivered. In the traditional teaching pattern, one 20-hour course can be divided into 10 knowledge modules at most with each of them delivered at each class. Instead, MOOC requires separating the entire course into multiple tiny knowledge points with each of them taking up 5-10 minutes of learning time. Similarly, it will divide a 20-hour course into 80-90 knowledge points. This is because knowledge point carrying less information will be more easy and convenient for students to learn, understand and accept. This requires teachers to be perfectly clear about the interactive relationship between each knowledge point, and be able to separate all the knowledge points into a series of knowledge cluster that can be accepted by students independently according to above relationship.

4 IDEAS TO IMPROVE TEACHERS' TEACHING ABILITY IN LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

MOOC has brought about a series of impacts and challenges to the traditional teaching mode. With teaching as the foothold of the universities, the author has purposed the ideas to improve teachers' teaching ability in terms of reinforcing practices of

basic skills, strengthening training and improving evaluation mechanism in order to cope with above impacts and challenges.

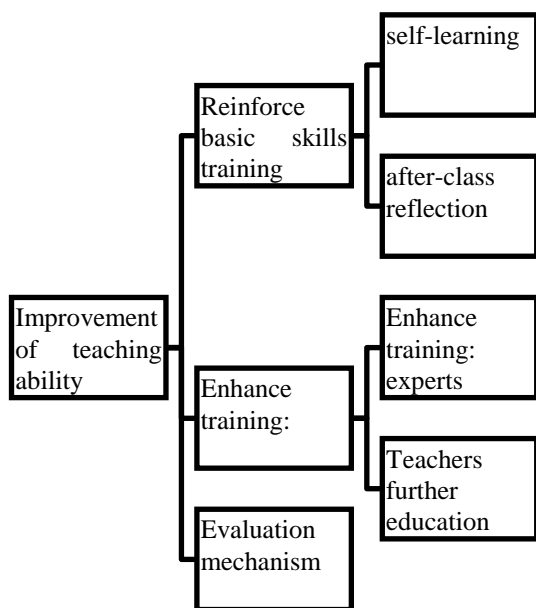


Fig 2. Ideas to improve teachers' teaching ability in local universities

4.1 *Improve teachers' teaching ability by internal potential tapping and basic skills training*

4.1.1 *Keep pace with the times and timely update the educational concept enhancing via self-learning.*

MOOC has broken the organizational structure of the traditional class where teachers will deliver class for 50 minutes with students listening the whole time, whereas under the MOOC pattern, the teachers are targeted to guide and enlighten the students to learn and think with the knowledge "input" phase completed by several 5-10 minute teaching videos. Moreover, during the implementation of MOOC, teachers not only needs to constantly update their educational concepts, but also should break the outdated teaching mode. In addition, it also demands for the comprehensive ability from teachers because teachers' role has changed from class deliverer to the guide leading students to learn through discussion and to think through interaction, which requires teachers to equip themselves with knowledge from textbooks as well as outside of the textbooks so as to respond the various questions raised from 40-50 students in the class. And only by constant learning and updating their knowledge structure and teaching ability will they be able to better carry out class organization and exert the role of teachers, guiding students to roam among the knowledge and to learn through exchange and discussion.

4.1.2 *Reinforce after-class reflection and enhance teaching level.*

Teaching reflection is perceived as the key element for teachers' professional development and self-growth and the most fundamental mechanism for teachers' professional knowledge and capability development as well as one of the most effective methods to promote teachers' personal professional development. In MOOC, interaction between teaching and learning, learning and learning is online, which is beneficial to the mutual enlightenment among people at a large scale and has raised higher level of requirement to teachers' guidance and course design at the same time. Specifically speaking, based on the class performances, teachers need to conduct further reflections, carry out detailed analysis and draw out conclusion, in order to lay a foundation for the teaching going forward. With such approach, teachers will discover their advantages and insufficiencies via reflections, which will promote them to obtain progress through practices. Furthermore, they can improve the shortages and exert the advantages, achieving the improvement of teaching level through reflection.

4.2 *Enhance training and lead teachers to improve their ability*

4.2.1 *Invite expert to deliver training in school.*

Currently majority of the teaching faculty of local universities in our country are sourced from the postgraduates or PHD graduates who have just graduated from university. And such group of people has just stepped out from the school and lacks the actual class teaching experiences. To improve such situation, schools can invite some famous professors to transfer their teaching methods, knowledge, experiences and teaching ideas related with pedagogy and psychology to above young teachers so that their basic qualities can be enhanced imperceptibly. Meanwhile, schools may also invite the first-rank MOOC production team domestically to conduct field explanation in order to impress the understanding to MOOC teaching so as to further elevate the teaching level in local universities.

4.2.2 *Teachers should improve their teaching ability.*

Based on the actual situations, schools should arrange teachers by batch to receive further study in universities with more mature MOOC courses periodically so that through deep and practical study, it will drive the improvement of the teaching ability and comprehensive ability.

4.3 *Improve teachers' teaching ability by establishing a sound evaluation mechanism*

Set up a set of multi-perspective teaching evaluation standard integrating students' evaluation on teachers, peer evaluation and self-evaluation together in order to guide the teachers to enhance their teaching ability [7]. Students' evaluation should be conducted on routine basis instead of being fixed at the end of the term so that as long as there is any insufficiency in the class, it can be timely corrected by teachers. Peer evaluation refers to the evaluation conducted by 3-5 or 5-7 teachers in terms of the quality of the course video, class discussion atmosphere, class guidance and class exploration etc. Such kind of mutual discussions and mutual references will promote the improvement of the teaching level. Self-evaluation means the personal statement conducted by teachers on their courses delivered, which majorly include the experiences and shortages of their teaching as well as the further teaching improvements. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation from multi-perspectives will help to promote the enhancement of teachers' teaching ability.

5 CONCLUSION

As MOOC is popular around the whole world with various places subject to its influences across the nation, local universities are undertaking the responsibility to cultivate talents who are adaptable to social and economic development. However, due to the limited construction period, teaching faculties of them are still weak and teachers' teaching level still can't satisfy the demand of the times. In front of the impacts from MOOC, local universities teachers should take the initiative to blend themselves into the tide of MOOC teaching in order to build up

competent talents suitable to the economic development of the times under the new round of teaching reformation.

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