

Reflections on Online Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges amidst the Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract: The paper aims to explore the importance of online teaching for higher vocational colleges, the common problems and solutions encountered in the online teaching practice in higher vocational colleges under the Covid-19 outbreak by means of literature reference and questionnaire survey. The purpose of the current study is also to analyze how online teaching effectively promotes teachers' teaching and students' learning with a hope to provide insight into college teaching.

Keywords: Online teaching; Higher vocational college; Covid-19

Introduction

Since January 2020, the covid-19 epidemic has swept through China. The Chinese government initiated a policy "Suspending Classes without Stopping Learning(SCSL)"(Zhang et al .2020)^[1]. This article intends to explore the importance of online teaching, the common problems and solutions encountered in the online teaching in HVC(HVC) under the Covid-19 outbreak by means of literature reference and questionnaire survey. It is also to analyze how online teaching effectively promotes teachers' teaching and students' learning with a hope to provide insight into college teaching.

Discussion

Question 1: What does "SCSL" mean? Is online education accepted in HVC?

"SCSL" which aims to fight against the spread of the epidemic by suspending offline teaching and turning to online education can be explained in the government's own words "suspending classes without stopping learning and suspending classes without stopping teaching". We must integrate all resources to support online teaching and learning". Then, do teachers and students accept online teaching or not?

Table 1 *Online Teaching or Traditional Teaching?*

| Item | For | Against | Neither for nor against |
|------------------------|-----|---------|-------------------------|
| Online Learning | 40 | 17 | 3 |
| Traditional Learning | 20 | 38 | 2 |
| Total Participants: 60 | | | |

Table1 shows that most teachers would rather accept online teaching than traditional teaching because some teachers do not need to prepare lessons and broadcast online, but only push content on the learning platform at a fixed time. While one third of teachers dislike online teaching for the following reasons: 1) They can't use computer and make PPT or video skillfully; 2) The schools prohibit them from using the existing platform resources; 3) They are worried about making mistakes in live online class, etc. Certainly, there are still several teachers who neither support online teaching or traditional teaching nor oppose them.

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Table 2 *Online Learning or Traditional Learning?*

| Item | For | Against | Neither for nor against |
|-------------------------|-----|---------|-------------------------|
| Online Learning | 130 | 30 | 10 |
| Traditional Learning | 39 | 128 | 3 |
| Total Participants: 170 | | | |

As shown in Table2, most students prefer online learning. The number of students who are for online learning are more than four times as many as the one who are for classroom learning. Besides, there are 13 students who neither support nor oppose. Thus, online education is the best choice for HVC after the Covid-19 outbreak.

Question 2: What difficulties do teachers and students at HVC have in online teaching? How to implement online teaching in HVC effectively?

Despite the careful planning and arrangements by colleges, schools and families, the implementation of online teaching still faces some problems.

1. Difficulties that higher vocational teachers have in online teaching

Based on the questionnaire survey and analysis from Table3, the difficulties that higher vocational teachers confront during the online teaching can be summarized in the following points.

Table 3 *Difficulties for Higher Vocational Teachers*

| Difficulties | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Constrained by hardware | 2 | 3.33% |
| Subject to teachers' technology and ability | 20 | 33.33% |
| Too much online teaching resources | 50 | 83.33% |
| Lack of Wifi | 15 | 25% |
| Limited teaching space | 15 | 25% |
| Influenced by housework | 14 | 23.33% |
| Influenced by babies | 14 | 23.33% |
| Difficult to control class | 25 | 41.67% |
| Lack of experience | 30 | 50% |
| Total Participants: 60 | | |

1.1 Online teaching is constrained by infrastructure.

Hardware and software resources play an important role in online teaching. Meanwhile, differences in information technology infrastructure between regions can be significant^[1]. CCTV News (2020) reported the network coverage in remote areas is insufficient, which may further lead to educational inequity. In line with the survey from the higher vocational teachers, 3.33% of teachers are short of computer and 25% of them are unable to find suitable spaces for teaching at home. Therefore, some teachers have given up online teaching.

1.2 Online teaching is influenced by teachers' technology and ability.

It is well known that the effect of online education is contingent on teachers' online teaching skills, abilities and experience. Although the teachers received various training, the short-term effect remains arguably minimal. As shown in Table3, 1/3 teachers are subject to computer technology. Thus, they are replaced by others.

1.3 It is difficult for teachers to guide and control the class.

Unlike traditional classes, teachers can direct students' learning and monitor their homework. In my own case, I put more effort into reminding students to submit their assignment on time through various methods, there are still some students who don't complete the homework as required.

2. Problems that higher vocational students have in online teaching

As can be clearly seen from Table4, the biggest problem for students is lack of self-discipline, which takes up 70.59%. There're thirty students who are not interested in online courses because internet teaching lacks face-to-face communication and cordial interaction between teachers and students. Half of them have poor self-study abilities and habits. 58.52% have no access to online learning. More than half of students have no Wi-Fi. Few students in mountainous areas even have to walk for hours to find places with stable network signals.

3. Problems with online teaching resources

Based on the investigation, the problem with online teaching is mainly due to the excessive number of online teaching platforms, but lack of a unified one with complete functions. Some excellent resources are chiefly concentrated in the top universities, and most colleges pay insufficient attention to the online course development. Also, there existed regional differences, inter-school differences, and subject differences, in the quantity of the selected quality courses (Fang 2018)^[2]. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, online teaching platforms such as Cloud Classrooms, Tencent's Class and Chaoxing Platform have been overwhelmed, and network crashes may happen. To change the current situation, the colleges should devote the online course construction.

4. Conclusion

In sum, this article performed an investigation into the online teaching in HVC. For most teachers, online teaching is a new teaching form, which requires teachers to explore how to design teaching and conduct effective interaction. It is a new challenge for teachers to ensure high teaching effect. The results indicate that online teaching is more important in face of Covid-19 outbreak. My claim has been that some effective measures to improve online teaching in HVC should be carried out. Therefore, future research can consider how to create a set of blended teaching mode suitable for HVC, effectively integrating online resources and face-to-face instruction to adapt to the changing emergencies and promote the teaching reform.

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Note: All participants including 60 teachers and 170 students in different majors are from Xianyang Vocational & Technical College in China.

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