The Opportunities and Challenges Faced by English Teachers Against the Background of "Educational Informationization"

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Abstract—**Information industry has undergone two phases: computer technology and Internet technology, and now is in the third stage, the Internet of Things, which has a deep influence on education, that is, "Educational Informationization". Against this background, English teachers have to meet up to and adjust to these changes. This thesis will firstly analyze and distinguish some terms related with "Educational Informationization", and then give detailed analysis on the opportunities and challenges faced by English teachers, and finally give some suggestions accordingly.**

Keywords—Internet plus eduation; Educational Informationization; computer-aided teaching; Internet-aided teahcing; mobile device-aided teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

So far, the information industry has entered into the third stage: the Internet of Things, which comes after the technology of computer and Internet. The fast development of information technology will never forget education; instead, it requires the seamless integration between the two. Therefore, terms like "computer-aided teaching", "Internet-aided teaching", "mobile device-aided teaching", "educational informationization" and "Internet plus & education" have sprung up during these years. Whatever the ways, the original aim of education is always to serve the students well, to cultivate them in the best way required by the times. In the following parts, the writer will firstly introduce and distinguish some terms related with "Educational Informationization"; and then tries to analyze the opportunities and challenges faced by college English teaches; in the last part, the writer will give some suggestions accordingly.

II. DISTINGUISHING SOME TERMS

A. "Computer-aided Teaching", "Internet-aided Teaching" and "Mobile Device-aided Teaching"

"Computer-aided teaching" was put into use in 1978 in China. Compared with "Internet-aided teaching", it seems to be simpler, which only needs computer instead of Internet. For English teachers, some Office software, such as Excel, PowerPoint, and Word and so on are usually required. For "Internet-aided teaching", it is another case, in which Internet plays an essential role: to integrate Internet into education. For instance, there are affiliated textbook online-resources requiring teachers and students to go online and finish them by certain rules. Following this trend, a lot of applied linguistic researches have produced terms like "autonomous learning" and "individualized learning". On the other hand, Internet has provided a lot more online resources for both teachers and students, which enable them to find something really new, authentic and interesting out of the textbooks and traditional classroom. As for "mobile-aided teaching", it has one more thing over "Internet-aided teaching", that is, the use of mobile terminal devices (mobile phones, IPad, PC and etc.). Through those terminal devices, students may use different apps or software to their taste, to their time, and to their learning style and needs.

B. "Educational Informationization" and "Internet Plus Education"

The Ministry of Education of China issued "The 10-year Plan for Educational Informationization" in 2012, which states "educational informationization is the effective way to push education forward, to improve educational quality. The emphasis lies in the integration of information technology and education so that education contents, means and perceptions will be changed accordingly" [1]. In essence, "Educational Informationization" refers to the integration of information technology with education, for example, the use of Internet courses, macro-classes, MOOC, SPOC and etc. By pushing "educational informationization" further forward, "Internet plus Education" is the "higher level of representation of that integration" [2], "is the important means to revolutionize education" [3]. Therefore, the differences and similarities between these two terms are quite obvious: they are closely connected in different ways. But in this paper, all the suggestions, analysis are given on the basis of "Educational Informationization", while for "Internet plus education", the author will conduct further research in other papers.

III. THE OPPORTUNITES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS

Based on the terms mentioned in the previous part, it is obvious that "educational informationization" covers a much wider range than imagined so that it is not easy for English teachers to master or handle. As for the reasons, there are two to explain it. First, information technology is another field, which is totally different from the knowledge or special skills that English teachers have received before. The second reason lies in information technology itself, that is, it is always moving forward much faster than people can realize it, in that way, to integrate information technology with education is not an easy job. However, those reasons cannot act as the excuses to avoid or dislike or hate that integration. Most students were born in the age of fast development of information technology, and also grow up with it, and they are quiet accustomed to the use of new technology, and also eagerly anticipate its application into education. In short, it is in their educational ecosystem. If teachers try to shun away from it, or keep ignorant of it, how can they claim that they are doing their jobs? Or even worse, how can they prove they are qualified teachers?

A. Opportunities

As for the opportunities brought by the fast development of information technology and the proper integration with education, they are all on the table. For example, both teachers and students are exposed to a vast range of Internet resources, which has changed the scope of teaching and learning. Teachers can call the rolls, check homework, and conduct questionnaires partly or entirely online. On the other hand, teachers who are conscious of these opportunities and really are taking measures to utilize these opportunities can always find ways to improve their teaching philosophy, methods, tools and way of class management.

B. Challenges

Opportunities and challenges are always like partners standing side by side. For these two, challenges usually stand out, and make people feel their presence more vividly. So what are the challenges brought by information technology exactly? Through literature review and deep thought over it, the writer can give a list of three.

First, teachers' authoritativeness has been challenged. Before the application of information technology, teachers are everything, are the major source of knowledge. Students can only receive what teachers "tell" them. While in this information age, teachers are not the only source of knowledge, Internet begins to play a very important role in both teaching and learning process. An example can be given here: a teacher is explaining something in class with great enthusiasm, and then a student may stand up and tell the teacher that he/she is not right, and then referring his/her reasons/sources to Internet. Would the teacher feel embarrassed? What would be the teachers' response to that challenge? As is known that, teachers are always prepared for their classes. "Prepared" here implies on one hand that teachers are ready for their lectures; on the other hand, teachers are not ready for what they haven't prepared or

anticipated in class. Before the information age, teachers can usually respond in this way: "ok, thank you very much, maybe I am not right. So I'll refer to more resources after class and give you an exact answer next time." Now, it doesn't work in the information age. Internet is just there at that moment, the answer is just there at that moment, and the challenge is there!

Second, more choices of online courses are there on Internet, and most of them are free and with higher level of quality. The way of English learning has been changed by those choices: students may choose some courses made by some distinguished foreign universities, because English language is usually used in them and the chosen contents are more interesting or useful for students. For another reason, online courses may provide a much more flexible timetable or space for learners: 24 hours per day or 365 days per year, and any place! Compared with traditional class or classroom, online courses are more attractive, practical and useful.

The third challenge lies in the way of class management. Before the integration of information technology with education, teachers usually refer to tests, questionnaires, face to face interviews to reflect on their way of teaching contents or methods. While in information age, "big data" are changing those ways. For example, if students have attended some online coursed, their attendance, time/durance of learning, way of learning, habit of learning will all be recorded there. And those records are just there, offering clear and worthy reference for teachers or class managers. By analyzing the "big data", teachers or class managers can make adjustments to both teaching contents and methods, which in turn will be more suitable, useful and attractive for learners. In this way, traditional classes are greatly challenged.

IV. SOME SUGGESTIONS

A. Teachers Need to Adjust to New Eduational Philosophy

The integration of information technology with education is an unavoidable and irreversible trend. Teachers, however traditional as they claim themselves to be, should try their best to accept and adjust to that trend, because "The application of new technology will naturally bring about a new form of educational reform. Educators shouldn't shun away from it. This application is not merely the difficulty that teachers may come across, but opportunity instead, the opportunity to improve our capability and qualification in teaching. "The use of new technology in education will consequently produce new educational philosophy, new teaching methods and tools" [5]. Under this occasion, teachers should firstly realize that their role in the process of teaching and learning has changed. Previously, they are the actors/actresses in class, and now, students are playing their former roles, and they are now mostly playing the role of "guide" or "director", the guide/director of knowledge learning, and the guide of learning skills. Secondly, teachers should also realize the fact that learners' learning styles have also changed, which has adopt the mode of "Internet plus". Based on the above two points, teachers should make

adjustments to their way of teaching, class management, and thus make proper integration of online and offline resources.

B. Teachers Need to Improve Their Skills of "Educational Informationization"

There is no denying fact that some teachers in colleges are quite "traditional" (or they claim it themselves) in their way of teaching: a textbook + a teacher + a classroom full of students + a blackboard. They even claim themselves to be the bold challengers of "modern technology", who are the steadfast guardians of traditional class and classroom. They don't want to (or are not able to) use basic Office software; they don't want to (or are not able to) utilize the multitude of Internet resources; they don't want to (or are not able to) manage their class by integrating online and offline resources. All these are going against the trend of social and technological development. The educational ecosystem is not for the generation of 1970s, or 1980s any more, but for the 1990s, or the young learners born after them. These young people were born with and are growing up with the fast development of information technology, who are more used to them. If teachers won't accept the fact and won't make changes, how can they be qualified teachers?

C. Teachers Need to Build a Blended Mode of Teaching

Blended teaching is to integrate the online and offline resources: teaching materials, way of class management, tests, assignments and etc. Teachers, both young and old, both "traditional" and "modern", don't have to be frightened by or fight against the vast range of resources on Internet. Instead, teachers should make the best use of them, and make no-slot joint with their classes. Modern educational technology is not the substitute or the threat for teachers but the stimulus for improvement and development, the helper for teachers. Therefore, teachers should learn to use the new teaching methods, tools and platforms. By making proper and effective use of those information technologies, teachers will keep pace with the new trend of teaching philosophy, teaching reform and thus be better equipped to meet up the new challenges brought by them.

V. CONCLUSION

The development of information technology has brought huge opportunities and challenges for English teachers. To meet up with those challenges, teachers should keep their eyes widely open with the latest development, and the influence on their teaching as well so that they may try their best to adjust to that changes, and be capable of handling those challenges and produce the best results out of it.

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