

# Research on Bottlenecks in the Development of Local College Continuing Education and Feasibility of MOOC's Applications

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**ABSTRACT:** To meet the urgent requirement of the information age, local colleges and universities have to break the bottleneck of their continuing education and play a better role in their service of cultivating talents for local economic development. The emergence of MOOC provides a new way of thinking for the development of teaching methods, teaching means, teaching mode, even teaching philosophy on continuing education. To timely and accurately grasp the opportunities for development of continuing education that MOOC brings, we need to study the teaching rule of MOOC further, explore its use in practice actively, and accelerate the organic integration of MOOC and continuing education.

**KEYWORDS:** Continuing Education; MOOC; Feasibility

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Continuing education is indispensable in the national scientific quality improvement, and the national socio-economic development. One of the main functions of the local college continuing education is to cultivate practical and compound skilled personnel for local economic development.

## 2 BOTTLENECKS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COLLEGE CONTINUING EDUCATION

### 2.1 *The recognition of local college continuing education is not high*

Continuing education gets sustained attention in. "The outline of National Medium and long-term education reform and development (2010-2020)" puts forward that "We need to promote education in different levels and categories through vertical and horizontal communication and cohesion, and to further meet the diverse learning needs of the individuals".<sup>1</sup> Our country puts continuing education in a very important position. However, there are very few people who choose continuing

education purely for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. A significant minority of people only approve local continuing education as formal education tacitly. As a result, continuing education will not be accepted as their lifelong education platform. Therefore, although continuing education has obtained the explicit policy support at the national level, the public recognition and attention of continuing education is not enough. Local college continuing education just tries to survive in the cracks.

### 2.2 *Traditional rigid mechanisms reform later than subordinate institutions*

From the perspective of market, the full-time academic education in common colleges and universities is "a seller's market". Universities have the active option. While continuing education is "a buyer's market", students have the right of choice. The existing internal operation mechanism of universities is on the basis of "seller's market" for decades. Such mechanism is obviously not suitable to "the buyer's market" of continuing education. Therefore, it is necessary to do some market-oriented adjustment on the unsuitable part of the existing operation mechanism for universities' continuing education. In this regard, some subordinate institutions perform a bold and creative attempt, and have achieved substantial results, such as expanding the characteristics of continuing education coordinated closely with the full-time academic

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, The outline of National Medium and long-term education reform and development (2010-2020), The education website of the People's Republic of China. [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-07/29/content\\_1667143.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-07/29/content_1667143.htm).

education. Unfortunately, many local colleges and universities have not made any moves yet, and still keep confusing on establishing Market-oriented incentive mechanism or not.

### 2.3 *Elite colleges' "Matthew effect" compresses the survival space of local colleges*

There is no doubt that the powerful nations of higher education in today's world are the few countries in Europe and America. However, the development of MOOC breaks the boundaries of time and space<sup>2</sup>, and attracts many non-native students to choose the famous universities of international education power. The radiation scope of these powers' higher education and the number of its affected population will inevitably further expand. As a result, it is hard for higher education in other countries to avoid the possibility of "being reduced". The development of continuing education in elite colleges is usually faster. These colleges have gradually formed a continuing education brand correlated with their strong profession. If local colleges lack characteristics of professional construction, together with their relatively weak academic strength, it will inevitably produce the Matthew effect - "The strong gets stronger and the weak gets weaker". But from the macro view, it would be impossible for these subordinate colleges alone to complete the construction of education system in an economic area. A large number of local colleges layered orientation of continuing education resources is a necessity.

### 2.4 *Teaching Content cannot satisfy students' career needs*

The students of continuing education are learning and working at the same time. It objectively requires that teaching ways of college continuing education must adapt to their demand characteristics of production work and learning content. Teaching content must meet their time schedule and needs of developing professional skills. As is known to all, teachers have great influence on the quality of continuing education, but many continuing education teachers take no time to learn the students' characteristics, and their attention to students is also not enough. In addition, some teachers accept the teaching tasks of continuing education are only completing the workload, etc. The need of features curriculum system of continuing education is hard to be researched and develop. As a result, the types of education, major, courses and teaching methods that continuing education provides cannot meet the actual demands seriously. Because the scale of local

colleges are generally less than the elite ones in the same area, the marginal cost of research on the same courses is far higher for local colleges than the elite ones. Local colleges make slower reaction to the change of demands of society and personnel. Therefore, local colleges are often ill-prepared for the teaching needs of continuing education.

## 3 MOOC BRING NEW IDEAS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COLLEGE CONTINUING EDUCATION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC, Massive Open Online Courses), based on modern information and network technical support, set up Open flexible and powerful education network platform. These courses deliver the high quality resources to the terminal in need, realizing that everyone can learn whenever and wherever. MOOC is considered as "a digital tsunami" in history of American higher education.<sup>3</sup> At present, the enrollment population of the three most influential American MOOC platform such as Udacity, edX and Coursera has been tens of millions of orders of magnitude.<sup>4</sup> MOOC comes from higher education, and it can really bring new vitality to the development of local college continuing education.

### 3.1 *Local college continuing education can serve local economy more closely*

With the advance of information technology, there come many new technologies, new jobs and new industries. On-the-job personnel, even the ones once won a high degree, are demanding for new knowledge structure and vocational skills. If they do not pay attention to improve their professional ability timely, they will also be fired. Local colleges and universities are always thought to be the public university around, while continuing education is regarded as a kind of civilian and popularization education aiming at promoting the construction of learning society. Regional economic development gives the opportunity of getting advancement to local college continuing education from the dimension of social demand. Taking the actual requirements of job positions as teaching content and improving students' vocational skills as teaching goal will certainly strengthen the function of local college continuing education.

In respect of the application of MOOC, it provides "massive and open online classes". The

<sup>3</sup> Fan Wenqiang. Mass of Online Open Courses (MOOC) Based on Connectivism and their Learning Support. Distance Education, 2012, (3):32.

<sup>4</sup> edX, What technology does edX use[EB/OL]. <http://www.edx.org/org-faq>.

<sup>2</sup> Zhang Wei, Chen Gang. Massive Open Online Courses of Education Reform. Continuing Education 2013,(10):7

heuristic teaching methods of MOOC highlight the students' individual different requirements. Its lifelong education without degree threshold conforms to the characteristics of vocational education. Using the "Micro-video" based on knowledge points, MOOC breaks through the "fragmentation" time restrictions of part-time students. Therefore, in today's increasingly prominent vocational skills education, the organic integration between local college continuing education and MOOC is entirely suitable for the local college continuing education practice. And it is also the important development direction for continuing education in the future.

### 3.2 *MOOC adds new vitality to local college continuing education*

Local colleges and universities should not hesitate to move forward because of their lower academic ability and weaker teaching power. On the current, although MOOC is flourishing in the background of elite colleges and top teachers, whether these elite colleges and universities can achieve ideal teaching effect in the teaching practice of training skilled personnel for local economic development remains to be seen. Actually, a large number of students from developing countries which are in the process of the urbanization have limited knowledge background. In spite of the free MOOC resources of education powers, these students don't have enough ability to grasp the essence of top MOOC resources. So the teaching effect of MOOC will be greatly discounted them, but they are just the effective target population for continuing education.

When MOOC integrates with continuing education, it converts to serve occupational demands for low education level students, as practical learning resources for vocationally skillful personnel. MOOC will have broader participation groups, thus more vitality. Therefore, adopting MOOC requires local colleges to identify the positioning of continuing education timely and accurately and innovate education means actively. Then it can not only create miracle for the development of local economy but also provide favorable conditions for the development of local college continuing education. As Lord John Daniel said "Ordinary teachers can become masters through the innovation of informationization teaching, while ordinary local colleges can also become famous through the innovation of informationization education."<sup>5</sup> Regarding MOOC as new teaching method, local colleges develop teaching content linking up with the regional economic development.

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<sup>5</sup> Cui Ying. Thinking of Using MOOC over Promoting the Development of Higher Vocational Education. Chinese Worker Education, 2014, (10), 161.

It help local college continuing education exploit their advantages and build their featured brands.

## 4 THE FEASIBILITY OF LOCAL COLLEGE CONTINUING EDUCATION APPLYING MOOC

As a new teaching form, MOOC brings local college continuing education both opportunities and challenges. How to promote the application of MOOC in local college continuing education requires colleges' exploration and attempt to ensure its feasibility.

### 4.1 *Create MOOC learning atmosphere*

During the process of local college continuing education applying MOOC, one of the biggest obstacles is the problem of cognition, so there needs to create MOOC learning atmosphere actively. Let the students learn how to correctly apply MOOC to learning and communication. Creating opportunities to show the characteristic advantages of MOOC, let more students experience the benefits of MOOC. Based on the full investigation of students' needs and interests, a student information database can be established. The database can give feedback to students according to the classification of their interests and demands. It will help students facilitate the matching between like-minded and knowledge complementary persons. It should be also fully aware that MOOC mode requires more initiative to participate in teaching and learning. It also has certain requirements on the technical characteristics of the college technology platform.

### 4.2 *Make innovations in credit management system*

The rise of MOOC has brought huge impact on traditional teaching pattern. It reflects the new development trend and tendency of higher education. Since learning is a lifelong process, MOOC conforms more to the concept of lifelong education in curriculum and teaching. So the evaluation of learning achievement will not be conclusive. The evaluation methods and evaluation standard of continuing education settings need to be adjusted, especially teachers and students' thinking pattern of evaluation, establishing a more open and diverse evaluation system makes credits can really become true reflection of students' knowledge level and learning ability. In addition, equal approval should be given to credits of MOOC and credits of curriculum gradually. Educators should focus on students' achievements and their desires more prominently in the new credit system, and ultimately achieve educational goals about enhancing students' self-learning ability.

### 4.3 *Increasing the appeal of teaching*

On one hand, full-time teaching mode is still used in traditional teaching methods of continuing education. The teaching methods are so monotonous that students get bored about it. On the other hand, remote network education is another mode of continuing education. Its online courses generally last for 40 minutes or longer. It is difficult for on-the-job students to have such long time to concentrate on learning online. MOOC uses the form of "micro-class" and "micro-film" to disassemble a large segment of the teaching video into several logically related "micro-video". What's more, MOOC has a large number of additional like interactive sessions online communications in the video, interspersed with questions and quizzes, which are easier to attract students' attention and help on-the-job students make full use of their fragmented time to learn. How to create a new learning environment in the background of MOOC mode and how to stimulate students' initiative and restore their learning confidence are the issues that MOOC has to solve in practice.

### 4.4 *Focusing on cultivating innovative ability*

The "Flipped Class Model" which co-exists with current class model makes the MOOC acclaimed. If the teachers continue to use traditional teaching mode, but introduce "Flipped Class Model" to the process of important knowledge teaching, they can have the teaching effect double. As a result, they will form a new mixed-type teaching mode, which can improve the teaching quality effectively. In Flipped Class Model, the teacher prepares the short video of important knowledge in advance for the students, and the students should do self-study on the video before class. Then the teacher begins teaching in the way of answering questions or guiding students to discuss in class. It will be better to sublimate learning effect and clarify students' doubts. The new mixed-type teaching mode provides an effective way for the incremental reform of traditional teaching mode.

### 4.5 *Setting up the new relationship between teachers and students*

Because of continuing education students' working experience, as active learners, their thoughts of analyzing problems are more open. However, the traditional teaching is a unidirectional process from teacher to student. Students are just the courses receiver. On the contrary, the learning mode of continuing education based on MOOC is a process from student to teacher. During this process, students participate in the process through a variety of social tools, creating a more open and interactive learning environment. In teaching and learning, students have the courage to ask authorities for questions and build active and innovative learning habits, while teachers will form teaching habits of focusing on inspiring students' learning ability and cultivating creative mind.

## 5 CONCLUSION

MOOC broadens the development direction of continuing education greatly from learning approaches, learning methods, and even teaching concepts. How to stick to the stamp of the age to make a breakthrough of local college continuing education reform is a problem that requires education workers to make good use of modern science and technology like MOOC, big data, mobile information technology etc. It is vitally important to grasp the development opportunities of continuing education precisely which MOOC brings.

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