



# Education in Emergency

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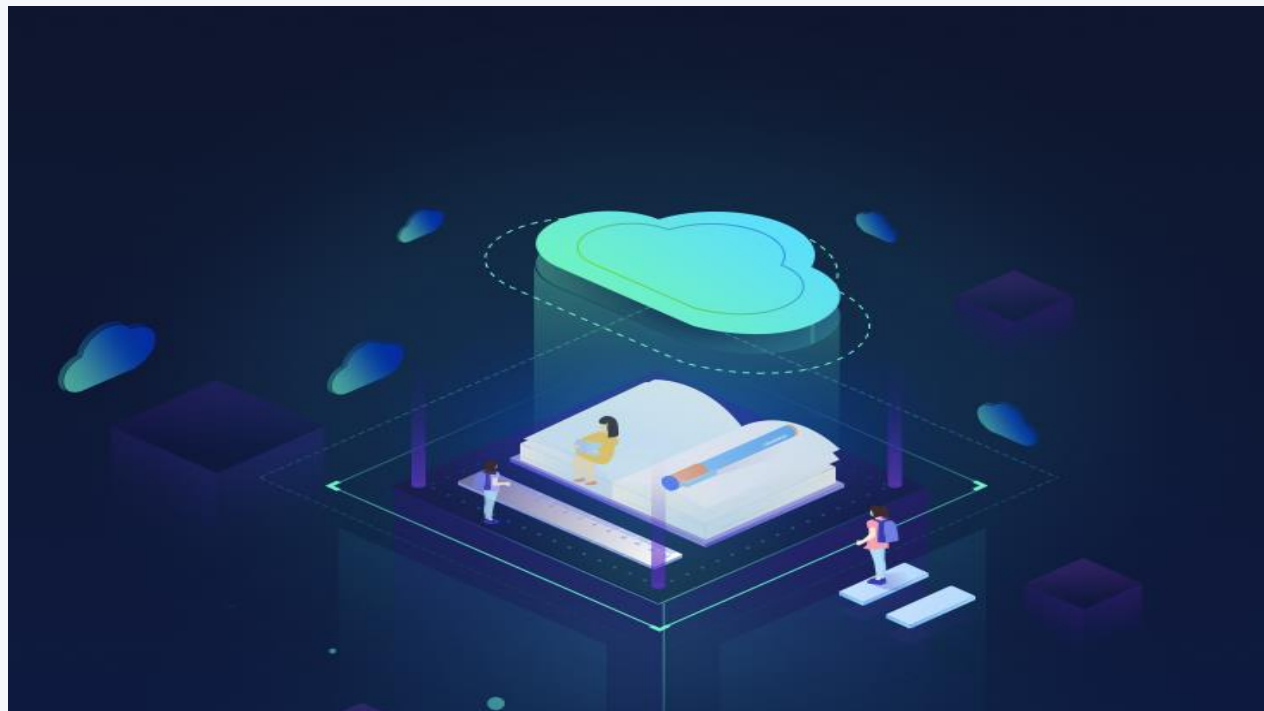
# When the Virus Outbreak Shakes China...

# Current Situation in Chinese Higher Education

For China, the outbreak is a battle against the coronavirus and the colleges are also at the front line, as one infected student might affect many other students and their families. The Minister of Education Chen Baosheng stressed it is imperative to take into consideration the worst scenario and take resolute measures in order to prevent the outbreak in colleges. Students are not allowed to return to campus without approval, and non-faculty are forbidden from entering the campus.

Chinese universities and colleges have postponed the start date of the new semester. In this situation, all the educational and academic activities have been disrupted and this seriously delayed university opening time is bound to have a great impact on the study, life and job hunting of college students. Among them, graduates, especially those facing graduation, are the most affected. Some of them need on-site internship for practice experience, some of them need collected data for thesis, and some of them need go out for job hunting. Some of them felt depression due to the reasons mentioned above and worried too much about their future.





Switching to Online Education...

# Policy Approaches and Recommendations China has Promoted



On February 5, 2020, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued the Guidance on the Organization and Management of Online Teaching in the Higher Education Institutions During Epidemic Prevention and Control Period. It requires both the national and local governments to take the leadership to encourage colleges and universities, and even the whole society to participate in jointly implement and guarantee the online education during the virus outbreak, so as to realize the objective of “Class stops, yet not teaching and learning”.

Chinese MoE also requires the higher education institutes to ensure the same quality of on-line courses with the off-line courses. It asks that the workload of teachers delivering on-line courses should be recognized as the regular ones; it also encourages college students to do self-directed learning on line. It urges universities to conduct multi-dimension of learning evaluation, and to make plan for credit transition for on-line course.




# Universities Switching to Online Education

The education systems reacted very fast. In the higher education sector, by February 2, 22 online curriculum platforms opened 24,000 online courses for higher education institutions to choose from, including 1,291 national excellence courses and 401 national virtual simulation experimental courses, covering 12 undergraduate programs and 18 tertiary vocational programs.

On February 24, Beijing Normal University (BNU) started its new semester with a national flag raising ceremony, the campus is vacant, yet online classrooms are full. A total of 4,036 courses have been planned for this semester, involving 94,350 students, with 3,238 courses being offered online by 1151 faculties. This is a meaningful day for Beijing Normal University as it's the first time in its history since 1902 that all the courses provided in its 30 faculties and schools were delivered through on line system. It involves a joint efforts from our faculty, professional staff and students to make this happen.

Take Faculty of Education, BNU as an example, we immediately formulate the online teaching implementation plan during the virus outbreak to improve teaching efficiency, ensure teaching quality, complete teaching tasks, and conduct teaching assessment. Our faculties are encouraged to choose the e-learning platform which they are familiar with and most useful to organize their teaching.





In order to support all the teachers being able to conduct the on-line courses successfully, FOE BNU has taken five actions to address this need.

First, a series of on-line education platforms were introduced to all teachers through emails, Wechat discussion groups and our website.

Second, teachers are encouraged to share their previous experiences and lessons learnt from using these different platforms, such as Blackboard, TronClass, Zoom, Classin, Wechat group, and QQ group. The strength and weakness of different tools are fully discussed and tried. It helped our faculty to choose an appropriate platform and tools for their teaching.

Third, we have a professional team working in the school of education technology. Many of the professors and young scholars have rich experiences of practicing on-line teaching and research in this field. They initiatively shared their knowledge and detailed skills in different platforms by conducting on-line training to our faculties. Besides, a couple of professional companies were invited to train our teachers in specific tools. Our faculties took part into this on-line learning events actively as these CPD training responded their needs.



**Beside, it's a big change and challenge for our students to learn on line regularly.** With the aim to prepare our students for the upcoming on-line learning, our strong administration team did a lot to students. Their work includes informing the students for the change, selecting teaching assistants for each on-line class, and making sure every student could be able to receive or participate into such kind new ways of learning, particularly to inform and support the ones from poor family background.

**Last, our administration team collected the information of all the on-line courses,** including the platform the faculty chose to deliver it, the size of the class, the schedule, and the students' readiness for it. Most importantly, we selected a few of the classes to conduct trial lessons at a variety of platforms with the aim to identify problems before the officially use of the platforms in large scale. Our university's technology support team provided immediate support on it.

So, with all the efforts I mentioned above, on Feb 24th, our faculty successfully managed to conduct 307 courses through on-line systems, 15 within them are English-taught courses for our international students. It involves over 183 faculties and all 3000 students including undergraduates, Master students and Ph.D candidates, and our 250 international students. Currently, after 3 weeks, all of our faculties and students are getting familiar with it. Many of them quite enjoy it. Most of the courses are going on very well, even some of our professors reported that students seem more active on line by engaging into discussions than face-to-face classroom teaching.

# Main Obstacles, Challenges and Problems

# Main Obstacles and Challenges

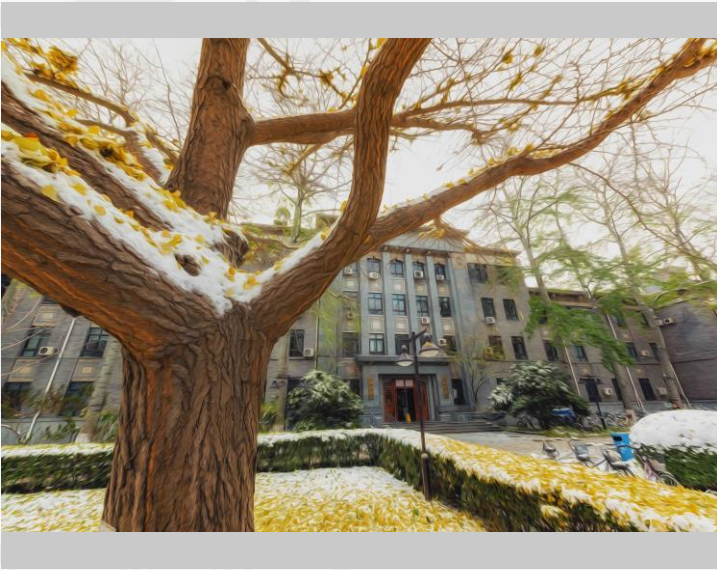
Providing online learning platforms and courses for students is **the easiest part of the transition.**

**The main obstacles** focus on how to improve teachers' online teaching capacities. Different universities have different dilemmas in terms of balancing online teaching and learning effectiveness. For us, we carry out a variety of teaching, scientific research and service work through the Internet, which can effectively relieve students' pressure and anxiety caused by their studies.

**The biggest challenge** to this online education transition is how to evaluate students' learning outcomes and promote the real interaction between teachers and students. Faculty of Education currently provides 6 English-taught Master and Ph.D programs to around 250 international students. Now, only 20% of them staying in the dorms of BNU campus and the rest came back to their home countries and scattered around the world. We managed to deliver 15 on-line courses to international students. However, some of them still face different challenges, for instance, the time difference, the network speed and the cost of internet in different countries.



# Problems Existed



## Technical Problems


The online education definitely has some technical problems. For example, a large number of high-quality educational resources are not informationized, lack of unified platform management of educational resources, and insufficient application, which are not conducive to learning and sharing. In addition, the existing information education resources are scattered and not systematic.

## Legal Problems

There is a lack of precise laws and regulations to restrict online education and activities. Thus, we need to propose the precise laws and regulations on online education consumer protection and network security.



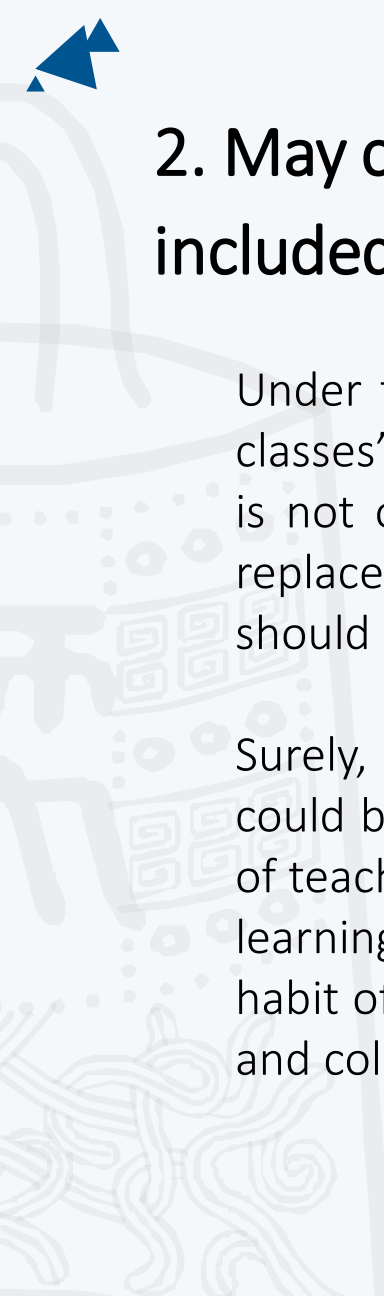
Black Swan Effects?



# 1. Will reform national policies and institutional strategies to embrace more of online learning

The virus outbreak has accelerated the development of online education in Chinese higher education system. With the development and application of Internet, big data, AI, 5G and Cloud platform technologies, the Chinese central government is paying more and more attention to the inevitable position of the online education in current universities and colleges. I also hope that teachers and administrators need to conduct in-depth research and reflection on how to use online education to adapt to the impact of the Fourth Industrial Technology Revolution along with the development of higher education worldwide.





## 2. May change the nature of online learning to more comprehensive, legally included in the universities curricula

Under the virus outbreak, the online education has become the inevitable choice of “suspension of classes” in colleges and universities. The difference between online education and traditional teaching is not only the difference between online and offline teaching and learning methods, but also the replacement of learning concepts and teaching organization forms. Colleges and universities in China should regard it as an important opportunity for the current school education and teaching reform.

Surely, the quality of the on-line courses is the big challenge and concern of us if the online learning could be included into the university curriculum legally. Due to a series of reasons, such as the quality of teaching and learning resources available for teachers and students, the user-friendly level of on-line learning devices and software, the capacity of faculties in universities and colleges, and the learning habit of college students, the quality of the on-line teaching and learning in China varies in universities and colleges at different levels.



## Suggested Follow-up Steps to be Taken

We believe the follow-up steps for the development and promotion of high-quality online learning in higher education should be taken in the future:

First, to ensure the quality of learning resources by conducting accreditation of the open education resources.

Second, to conduct quantitative and qualitative research to study and evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing models of on-line teaching and learning; particularly focusing on the outcome of the on-line learning.

Third, to capacity building of university faculties of conducting on line courses and the professional staff to manage and support the on-line learning system.

Lastly, to encourage cooperation between domestic universities, private sector, international organizations, NGOs, and universities abroad. To learn from each other and find best way of promoting high quality leaning.





**THANK YOU!**

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