

Chinese Quality Open Video Courses - *Analysis on Problems and Promote Strategies*

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Abstract

Quality open video courses are the Chinese open educational movement which leading by the Chinese Ministry of Education. These open courses have successfully brought high quality of higher educational resource from campus to the public, and extended the meaning of education from school education to life-long learning. This paper analysis the quality open video course on Icourse website from six aspects of curriculum, teaching method, video production, copyright, evaluation system and propaganda tactics. From the analysis, it is find out there are many problems and weakness on each aspects. Suggestions and advises are also discussed in order to improve the quality of open video courses.

Keywords: China University, problems, promote strategy, quality open video courses, QOVC

In 2001, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in America initiated the open educational resources (OER) movement, which gradually published all its courses online. Soon afterwards, many world famous universities joined in the flood of spreading online open courses freely one after another, including Yale, Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford, etc. Later, such courses were spread and popularized in China. In 2011, Chinese Ministry of Education started the quality open video course (QOVC), which developed independently by Chinese colleges and universities for the first time.

On November 9, 2011, the first batch of open video courses made their debut on the stages of Icourses (www.icourses.edu.cn), CNTV and Netease (www.163.com). There were only 20 courses including curriculum videos, academic lectures and literacy education in science and culture. The courses were target at college students; the public can access it freely as well. On February 15, 2012, the Ministry of Education made an announcement, which clearly indicated to build 1000 quality open video courses (QOVC) by 2020.

1. Current Statues and Problems of Quality Open Video Courses

At present, QOVC have become a brandy new education form in China, which strongly influenced the way of learning and teaching. However, compared to the open courses in European and American universities, there are still many weakness and shortcomings in QOVC. This paper is going to describe the current statues of QOVC, focusing on analyze the problems from the aspect of curriculum, teaching method, video production, copyright and evaluation system through the cases on Icourses.

1.1 Curriculum

In order to understand the condition of curriculum of QOVC, a survey was made on the subject and proportion of curriculum. The data were collected from Icourses on February 27, 2015.

At present, the QOVC in China are mainly classified according to *Subject Classification and Code Disciplines of the People's Republic of China*. There are five top categories; they are Natural Science, Agricultural Science, Medical Science, Engineering and Technology Science, Humanities and Social Science. All the subjects are classified or subdivided under the five top categories. By February 27, 2015, there had been 777 courses, and 5589 episodes in total. (Table 1) In all those courses, there were 144 courses in literature & art, 84 courses in philosophy & history, 145 courses in economic management & law, 261 courses in engineering & technology, and 109 courses in agriculture & medical.

Table 1. Curriculum data of QOVC

Subjects	Courses	Episodes
Literature	91	679
Law	54	373
History	44	381
Philosophy	40	292
Economy	38	273
Education	34	227
Technology	180	1265
Medicine	82	529
Science	81	599
Management	53	380
Art	53	415
Agronomy	27	176
Total	777	5589

Through survey on curriculum about open video courses, it can be known that the subjects of open video courses are involved with all the five categories, but with different strength of construction and attention. For example, courses of science and technology take 33% of all the courses, which has the largest proportion, while course of philosophy and history only take 11%. (Figure 1) This imbalance is due to the Chinese thoughts that value sciences and neglect humanities. People who study science are believed can gain more fame and fortune than people who study humanities. It caused more students choose science as their major, and made universities and government invest much more money on science subjects. Moreover, universities paid less attention on education and agriculture subjects. Among all those courses, education and agriculture courses are on the bottom two, only taking 4% and 3%. This phenomenon also indicated that Chinese universities make little effects on developing basic science.

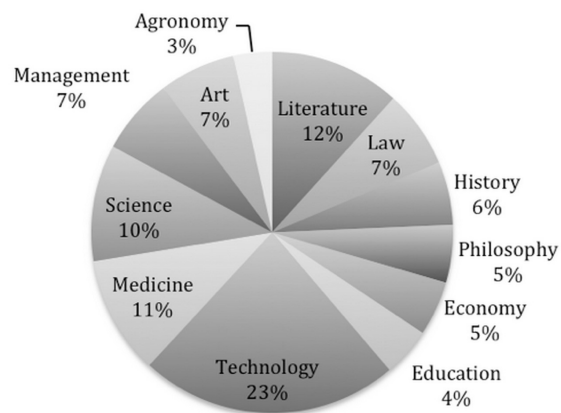


Figure 1. The proportion of subjects

From the analysis, the curriculum of QOVC is facing many problems. Shall the universities making more courses on Humanities and Social Sciences, or making more specialized courses? How to establish a more efficient update system for every course? All these questions need future discussion.

1.2 Teaching Method

Teaching method is the soul of teaching. Since the QOVC are made to demonstrate the advanced teaching idea, unique teaching method and abundant achievement of Chinese higher education, which promoted the innovation

of teaching method in Chinese universities. Therefore, QOVC shall be more focused on the design of teaching method. But it is not so ideal in practice. There are still some problems in teaching process arrangement and selection of teaching method.

1.2.1 Teaching Design Was Lack of Innovation

In 2012, the Ministry of Education announced the *Regulation of Developing Quality Open Video Courses*. It required that every course should post no less than 5 episodes; each episode should least 30 – 50 minutes, and should be presented in unique and complete topic, while all these independent topics should guarantee the logicity and integrality of the course as a whole.

Through the study on Icourses, it was found that the course contents were designed to satisfy the learners' cognition in certain degree. The courses were presented by proper media according to the features of different subjects, and were practical with reasonable selection of information.

However, there were still problems. First, the contents were not comprehensive, logical, rational enough, and were poorly divided. Some courses' core conceptions were missing. Some courses were disordered with ambiguous knowledge and repeated knowledge. And some were just copy the original order of textbooks, organized the video episode by chapters, without reasonable planning, thus make the course dogmatic, inflexible and lack of innovative. Second, many teachers showed their rigorous teaching methodologies, but atmosphere in the class was dull and tedious. Some teachers were simply "read" their handouts; the PowerPoint has no pictures, not even to say audios or animations.

1.2.2 Teaching Method Was Too Simple

First of all, most courses are still using traditional method to organize and present the knowledge, which present the class orderly and clarify teaching content into different levels. Tradition teaching method combined with skilled teaching performance, making the course come to life. However, many of the courses were focused too much on the comprehensive and systematic of knowledge, while ignored to train students' ability of solving problems and creativity. Secondly, lack of interaction with students, making the class monotonous. After watching the open courses, many students want to ask questions to the teacher, but on the homepage of QOVC, in addition to few discussions between learners, we can hardly see the response from the teachers. Take "Eternal Moon" as an example. This is one of the most popular open video courses, which was given by Yu Dan, culture and history professor from Beijing Normal University. Yu's vivid description and graceful body language made students enjoy arts at the same time of learning Chinese ancient history. Even such a master, her class was still lack of diverse teaching activities and reaction between the teacher and students. She was speaking for most of the time, shadow asking questions or letting students post doubts.

1.3 Video Production

To ensure the course quality, the Ministry of Education adopt the *Recording and Production Standard of Quality Open Video Courses*, which specified prophase recording, post production, video and audio delivery process in detail. Prophase recording includes the requirements on the 5 aspects of duration, site of recording, form of course, recording method as well as the production and recording of multimedia courses. Postproduction includes the requirements on titles & tail leader and technical indicators. The above two process ensure the quality of recording environment, image and sound of the video.

On Icourse website, most of the courses are recorded during real classes, which let online students feeling the campus culture of different universities. However, there are problems in actual video making process. Due to the cameraman's (many of them are media students from the universities)limited skills, many courses cannot be recorded completely, or cannot capture the reaction between teacher and students in time , or fail to record the lecture vividly from different angles. Without professional postproduction personnel, some videos are poorly cut, thus affect the whole quality of the video.

1.4 Copyright

The aim of QOVC is to open course materials, including textbook, course handouts, test papers, PPT and videos as much as possible. While on the other hand, copyright of the authors should be clarified and protect. Therefore, copyright of digital materials and related legislation for referencing, quoting or using others' textbook or PPT shall be enhanced to protect the authors' and users' benefit from both sides. (Zhang, 2011) Such academic standards and regulations, which are similar to the quotation of references shall be established, acknowledged and popularized among teachers and academia. It is expected that all the course materials using in the classroom can be published online along with the open course, thus to achieve the complete opening of all educational materials which can be accessed on the Internet.

However, in reality, there is no law to protect the copyright of online courses, nor has the special standards such as Creative Commons (CC) to regulate publish and share process. The *Implementation for Construction of Quality open video Courses* issued by the Ministry of Education is the only guidance document. This document indicates that universities and construction teams under the title and expenditure of “National Quality Resources Shared Courses” shall open and share their course resources freely on the Internet according to related agreements, and is prohibit to use the “National Quality Resources Shared Courses” in by any commerce means, not for any organizations nor individual. This document is also clearly divides the right, obligation and legal responsibility of course constructor, course websites administrators and course users. And on the other hand, the “National Resource Center of Quality Courses”, established by Higher Education Press, who initiated the “National Resource Alliance of Courses from Colleges and Universities”, has no right to collectively manage the digital resource copyright of national quality courses, according to JGT Letter No. [2007] 32 issued by the Ministry of Education. (Gu & Luo, 2010)

While in practice, many teachers still do not have much aware of their right and obligations. In one survey conducted in 2010, researchers interviewed all the teachers of State Benchmarked Courses (former form of QOVC). And the result showed that there was 15% of teachers do not make any reference when quoting others’ works, and 10% teachers even do not care their copyrights. (Lu, Sun, Tian, Xie, & Wei, 2010)

Therefore, how to find the balance point between knowledge sharing and copyright protection, and how to make teachers’ rights and interests be respected need to be solved.

1.5 Evaluation System

In course evaluation process, open video courses are mainly lead by government, independently constructed by colleges and universities, evaluated and selected by specialists and the public. The courses are first being recommended by the Ministry of Education, after being evaluated as a level and reviewed by subject specialists and instructional technology specialists, the courses need to be put on the campus website for more than two weeks, and then it can be put on the public website. Such selection process shows the basic form of QOVC evaluation system. All the courses are evaluated during real lecture; all the specialists viewed the courses in the classroom. After being qualified as QOVC, the courses are recorded as videos.

Problems come out. Since the courses are all evaluated like traditional courses, specialists are only paid attention to the content, while ignored if they were suitable for recording. But the evaluation of QOVC is different from the evaluation of other educational evaluation, such as traditional course evaluation, school management evaluation, textbook evaluation and learning quality evaluation of students due to the characteristic of Internet. The evaluation shall be made according to the characteristic of QOVC and the difference of distance teaching with traditional teaching. Take “Translation Process Determined by Vote” on Netease as an example. Audience vote on the online courses, which wins a higher score, can get the chance to translate first. For those who get the bottom vote will be unavailable soon. This is also an efficient and functional way of evaluation.

1.6 Propagation

Currently, QOVC adopts national uniform sharing platform, which gives priority to www.icourses.edu.cn and cooperates with commercial websites to present synchronously. The QOVC on websites such as Netease, Sina, and Chaoxing Academic (<http://www.chaoxing.com/>) have high click rate.

By these propagations, after experiencing a silent time, QOVC have had high rate of visit since they are issued online, but such rate of visit is still not satisfactory for the national condition of appealing to establish learning-type society. In fact, the usage of QOVC is still limited in small group of schools, teachers and learners. Most of social workers cannot use QOVC and even don’t know their existence. Facing this situation, making the course builders and education policymakers think about either it is the reason of course quality or the reason of lack of propagation. In conclusion, it is necessary to strengthen the promotion and propagation and let more people know and use QOVC.

2. Strategies to Promote Quality Open Video Course

The establishment of QOVC has got favorable results, which not only leads to strengthen the establishment of excellent resources in universities, but also shares excellent classes to strength universities’ capacity of serving the society. For the problems of the establishment of QOVC, this paper proposes the following measures.

2.1 Expand the Covering of Subjects and Establish Them in Balance

Open video course in universities not only target the students and teachers in all China, but also gain audience from all over the world and represent Chinese higher education to the world. Therefore, foreign educators also

regard the quality of open video class as the index to measure the quality of Chinese higher education. In order to establish excellent and Chinese featured open video course more universal courses should be established in the aspect of topic selection to face the public in the society and even the citizens in the whole world to spread Chinese science, culture and knowledge. Those courses require strong profession or high level of knowledge are not beneficial to the popularization of classes and are not suitable as the topic selection of open video courses.

Although now the courses have covered several major fields of subject classifications, it is not enough. Nowadays, with the rapid development of economy and scientific culture, the updating speed of knowledge is incredibly fast, so the topic selection of QOVC must expand the coverage of subjects to meet the increasingly growing knowledge demands of the public. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary subjects should be paid more attention with balanced establishment. It needs the educators of this subject or universities to participate in, providing the power for the establishment and development of the subject. With the help of the two measures above, the establishment of topic selection should be strengthened to make the topic selection richer, more comprehensive and balanced.

2.2 Modify the Teaching Method and Promote the Interaction between Teachers and Students

QOVC should adopt the teaching method of interaction between teachers and students. The course content not only should be solid and fresh, but also should have inspiration effect to motivate the innovative awareness of students or audience. Case study, discussion and scene teaching should be adopted to strengthen the attraction of class teaching, avoiding reading according to the textbook. The interaction with students is the way to let them rethinking and can should motivate audience's thirst for knowledge and motive power for learning

QOVC is the on-line open class, so the leading edge of course content and updating of knowledge should be assured as much as possible, otherwise the credibility will be lost. Since the learners of QOVC is a large group with different cultural backgrounds, academic backgrounds, and learning customs, and QOVC is an outstanding teaching resource with the conception of openness, sharing, and spreading which is universal and should meet the demands of learners as much as possible, the design of course content should be reasonable to the needs of most learners and combine the professional features of subject to design studying content, including strength of important points and difficult points of teaching content, selection of difficulty of study task, partition different level of knowledge points, and organizing and presenting form of studying content to achieve the studying optimization of learners. (Liu, 2011)

The interaction not just means communication in the class, but also means to communicate on and off line. Therefore, an online discussion space like a forum should be made. In this forum, learners could exchange their ideas with other learners as well as the teachers, and learn from their thoughts, ideas, academic or life attitudes, moreover to appreciate the teachers' talents and charms.

2.3 Build Professional Video Producing Team

For the problem of different videos qualities, the advanced team cooperation conception should be adopted to shape a systematic project for development and production of course and PPT. Let the first-class teachers give the lessons; educational technology experts design video course content; and professional media producing team shoot and produce in the post production process. Such cooperation with a common effort by playing their own advantages not only reduces the workload, but also improves the quality of video. Meanwhile, the staffs that attend course production should be trained professionally to improve their skills, assuring the level of course production.

2.4 Consummate Copyright Issues

The goal of QOVC is to share the excellent educational resources in maximization. However, due to lack of laws and regulations, and legal awareness, creator's intellectual property right is easily be damaged. In order to assure the sharing and assure the rights of creators and their units, occupation standard like Creative Commons, or copyright management department for QOVC should be established. The department provides the alternative authorization forms and articles, so creators or teachers can share their results with learners. With the rapid development of QOVC, various universities should implement their own copyright management department to possess the management right for QOVC and relevant resources. Besides, multiple technical methods such as user identification authentication and authority control should also be adopted in portal sites to effectively and reasonably manage and control the excellent class resources, making excellent teaching resources be protected to the utmost and be used completely. (Feng, 2012) Only regulations and technical methods take effects together, can QOVC be managed and controlled reasonably and effectively, making them be protected to the utmost and be used completely.

2.5 Establish Effective Evaluation System

As the network studying resource, a perfect evaluation system is also needed. Online real-time data statistics, analysis, and assessment system are suggested to be established. Meanwhile, this system requires students (including public learners), teachers, and experts give scores respectively, and then take their scores in some consideration.

With the evaluation system, the sustainable development of QOVC can be promoted to finally achieve the on-line issuing and timely updating of all excellent courses in all universities. Finally, the motivation mechanism needed to be established to award bonus, establishment fund, and academic title assessment to the teachers with high evaluation scores and let more teachers to participate in. Seeking cooperation with enterprises or foundations is needed as well, which is beneficial to the establishment and maintenance of QOVC.

2.6 Expand the Popularity of Quality Open Video Course

The audiences of QOVC have different cultural backgrounds, academic backgrounds, and learning customs. Based on these features, the individual propagation method should be adopted to face different audience and the popularity of open video class should be expanded.

1, select traditional media. At present, traditional media still have considerable readers and audience on circulation and fraction of coverage, so QOVC should adopt these media to propagate to the public completely. 2, use education website and social media. The university students are the major target audiences, so QOVC should be connected on campus websites. Meanwhile, social media should be used such as QQ, RenRen, Microblog, and Wechat to expand the popularity and audience rating of class. Furthermore, multi-language versions of QOVC should be translated to break the language barrier and let the QOVC truly open to the world.

3. Conclusion

As a new emerging thing in Chinese universities, quality open video courses (QOVC) not only lead colleges and universities to enhance quality resource construction, sharing quality courses to others, improved the ability to serve the society, but also exert itself in establishing a learning society and form a good learning atmosphere for the whole society. This paper describes the construction of QOVC, revealed the existing problems. In order to let QOVC play the further role of inheriting traditional Chinese culture, improving higher education quality, pushing higher education reform and cultivating public scientific literacy, further discussion and study on how to improve the quality of open courses and get broader recognition on them are still needed.

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