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# Higher Education Teaching Reform: Integration of the Online and Offline Teaching

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**Abstract: The traditional teaching mode of large class sizes and face-to-face instruction originated during the industrial era has struggled to meet the talent development demands in the post-industrial era and cater to students' requirements in the information and digital age. The online teaching emerged as a complement to traditional teaching and gained widespread promotion as a substitute for in-person teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even after the pandemic, the online teaching has further developed alongside traditional methods, but opinions about its effectiveness vary. Both the online and offline (face-to-face) teaching have their distinct pros and cons. To meet the requirements for contemporary talent development, the integration of online and offline teaching courses strategically combines the strengths of each approach while mitigating their weaknesses. This integrated teaching approach transcends the limitations of traditional colleges and universities instruction, particularly in general courses with large class formats. It enables educators to devote greater attention to students, stimulates students' innate drive for learning and promotes the normalization of learning in their daily routines.**

**Keywords: Online Teaching; Offline Teaching; Integrated Teaching; Higher Education Institutions; Teaching Reform**

## 1. Introduction

Since the industrial era, contemporary education has been characterized by obvious traits of scaling, standardization, task orientation, and bureaucratization. In terms of teaching, this has manifested as large-scale and face-to-face teaching becoming the predominant teaching model [1]. However, in the post-industrial era, the educational effectiveness of this teaching model has gradually diminished, and it has also become less appealing to students. This is evident from the low attendance rates in general courses at higher education institutions. In this teaching method, there is a growing trend of students using electronic devices, resulting in low levels of active participation. The reasons for this can be attributed to two main factors: Firstly, the traditional teaching model struggles to to meet the talent development demands of the information age [2]. In this era, society seeks individuals with personalized talents and innovative capabilities rather than those who merely replicate knowledge and repeat skills. Secondly, college students in the information age have numerous avenues for accessing information, preferring quick absorption through the internet and multi-sensory stimulation, thus finding it challenging to endure prolonged, monotonous, and passive learning. Therefore, teaching reforms are necessary. However, due to constraints such as population size and financial limitations, it's not feasible for China to swiftly implement personalized small class teaching in college general education courses. Enhancing teaching effectiveness in large class instruction has become a focal point in China's educational realm. The integrated teaching mode, which combines online and offline instruction, reflects a shift from traditional pedagogical approaches. "Online teaching" is an educational activity in an open virtual network. Within this virtual space, interactions between teachers and students, students and students, students and learning resources, all occur indirectly through the mediation of networks and terminal devices [3]. The common "online teaching" technologies currently include broadcasting, video recording, online interaction, online practice, online testing, etc. Meanwhile, "offline teaching" refers to traditional face-to-face in-person instruction. However, educators hold diverse opinions

regarding the integrated teaching mode, with the primary focus of contention being on online teaching.

## 2. Emergence and Controversy of Online Teaching

The early instances of online learning involved teachers recording courses and uploading them to websites, enabling students who couldn't attend in-person classes to study remotely. However, this early form of online teaching primarily aimed to overcome temporal and spatial constraints by digitizing knowledge. It's essentially a partial replication of traditional in-person instruction. With the global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, online teaching emerged as an alternative means to sustain normal educational activities during quarantine. China was among the first nations to implement online teaching during the epidemic, maintaining it extensively and for the longest duration. The substantial demand for online education stimulated the growth of the teaching software market. Software developers seized the opportunity, creating various online teaching tools and continually adjusting designs based on customer needs amidst competition. Acceptance of online teaching among various educational institutions and frontline educators rapidly increased, leading to a plethora of diverse online teaching methods compared to pre-pandemic times. Post-epidemic, numerous educational institutions retained online teaching methods to enhance audience engagement. Conversely, universities reverted to offline instruction, while a minority of educators persisted with online teaching and exploring the feasibility of integrating online and offline modes in post-epidemic higher education.This has sparked significant controversy, particularly regarding the commendation and criticism of online teaching. Opponents fear that excessive reliance on modern technology may displace the human essence, leading to putting the cart before the horse [4]. Advocates regard the modern technology supporting online education—like information technology, digitization, and the internet—as the latest technological revolution in the annals of human history. These modern technology anticipate significant changes in people's lifestyles, including education mode. Therefore, embracing new technology in education is an inevitable historical development [5]. Both perspectives hold some validity,yet neither is entirely accurate. Faced with the dominance of capital and technology, people might struggle to effectively control and use technology as intended. For instance, smartphones have shifted from tools to primary focuses, leading many into addictive internet use, validating opponents' concerns. However, rejecting the online teaching mode solely due to these concerns might lead to unwarranted missed opportunities/waste of resources. The opposition's perspectives serve as a reminder for supporters to cautiously embrace new technology in education, guarding against technology manipulating humans and resulting in human alienation.

## 3. Complementary Advantages: the Integration of Online and Offline Teaching

Embracing new educational technologies doesn't intend to replace offline teaching with online teaching. In fact, both possess their own advantages and drawbacks, making them irreplaceable by one another. The following analysis will assess the pros and cons of both teaching modes based on instructional effectiveness.

The advantages of online teaching are as follows: (1) Digitization enables knowledge reproduction without time and space constraints, aiding students in study and review [6]. (2) Real-time records of students' activities on teaching apps serve as objective indicators for evaluating academic performance. (3) Online teaching creates multiple parallel spaces for increased interaction between teachers and students, fostering higher participation and efficiency in class discussions. For example, teachers initiate discussion topics through learning software, providing each student with the opportunity to express their opinions, and allowing students to respond to each other as well. However, online teaching also presents limitations: (1) Lack of teacher supervision demands high level of student self-awareness and proficiency in using electronic devices. (2) Online interactions may suffer from time and space separation, hindering immediate understanding due to the absence of immediate expressions and body language. (3) Online teaching success relies not only on teachers' design but also on additional factors like

teaching software, internet connectivity, and digital learning materials, complicating quality control.

Compared to online teaching, offline teaching holds irreplaceable advantages: (1) Face-to-face interaction facilitates simultaneous expression through voice,facial expressions, and body language, fostering mutual understanding and profound communication. (2) Educators have more control over classroom dynamics, monitoring student behavior, and adjusting teaching content based on real-time circumstances. (3) Besides monitoring learning progress, teachers can consider non-academic factors like students' psychological well-being, extending their educational role. However, offline teaching also has limitations: (1) Bound by fixed time and space parameters. (2) Knowledge mainly conveyed through oral and written media can be simplistic and face distractions from digital devices. (3) Students are often passive receivers of knowledge in offline classes, limiting their expression opportunities. Even though students have the opportunity to speak in offline class, the time for speaking is limited, thus it's difficult to emphasize students' subjectivity.

Online and offline teaching, two sides of the same coin, possess advantages and disadvantages mirrored in each other. Is it feasible to integrate these modes to maximize benefits and minimize limitations? This possibility holds true for college students who possess the independent learning skills required by online education. Moreover, These students exhibit a strong thirst for knowledge, an eagerness to stimulate creativity, and a desire to transform into active and mature individuals, laying the fundamental prerequisites for amalgamating online and offline education. In college courses, especially in large class settings, experimenting with integrated teaching is a beneficial attempt to increase teacher-student interaction and transform closed classrooms into open ones [7]. It is conducive to establishing diverse teaching quality standards, resolving conflicts between uniform teaching and students' personalized learning needs, and cultivating students' habits of active learning [8].

## 4. The Integration of Online and Offline Teaching

The integration of online and offline teaching is not merely a superficial blend, nor is it a demonstration of education keeping up with technology's trends. Therefore, before discussing how to merge these two, it's necessary to delve into more fundamental queries such as what higher education aims to achieve and the type of talents we seek. Only when we have clear answers to these foundational questions can we deliberately and selectively integrate these teaching modes.

Education and talent are products of specific temporal and spatial contexts, not immutable. The essence of education is cultivating individuals, prompting us to contemplate the specific qualities and attributes we need in people. In today's era of rapid technological advancements—information technology, digital tech, artificial intelligence—we require talents that foster positive societal growth. What's needed isn't standardized individuals who replicate knowledge and skills, but innovative minds adept at swiftly comprehending and integrating information in a complex informational world. Such individuals can construct and generate knowledge, a quality not solely cultivated through passive classroom instruction. Thus, modern higher education should immerse teaching within students' authentic realm of information, enabling them to acquire information and construct their own knowledge systems. Fostering this capacity isn't easy, students succumb to information overload rather than effectively managing it, necessitating guidance from educators. Hence, online teaching isn't merely letting students surf the internet but necessitates systematic guidance from teachers, enabling students to traverse the virtual and the real world, making offline teaching still essential.

How should online and offline teaching be restructured to achieve the educational goals of contemporary colleges and universities? Firstly, extending traditional classroom learning through online teaching. The end of class doesn't mean the end of learning. Teachers can provide students learning materials before and after classes via online platforms, gather student questions, and administer knowledge assessments to better understand their needs and design more targeted offline content. Secondly, integrating online tools into

traditional classrooms as supplementary aids. For instance, using learning software functionalities like quizzes and polls to increase the engagement of roll calls, modify the classroom atmosphere, stimulate student interest in class activities.

However, the achievement of integration presents a significant challenge. Adopting online teaching requires a corresponding shift in knowledge transmission mediums, posing a challenge in the digitization of knowledge [9]. Without abundant high-quality digital teaching resources, online teaching remains superficial [10]. Effective online teaching software is equally vital. Given that software developers may lack an educator's perspective, it's crucial for educators and students to proactively articulate their needs. This guidance is essential in steering software development, preventing it from being solely driven by technological trends. Furthermore, reforming the current landscape of higher education in China, characterized by numerous courses and lengthy class hours, by appropriately reducing traditional classroom duration is necessary. This empowers students with more autonomy over their learning.

## 5. Conclusion

In densely populated developing countries like China, immediate adoption of personalized small-class teaching remains impractical, despite the efforts to increase higher education enrollment rates. Within this context, the integration of online and offline teaching methods serves as a remedy for the limitations inherent in offline education, such as uniformity, monotonous content, and limited interaction. This integrating approach amplifies the overall effectiveness of the teaching process. However, as an emerging entity, online teaching has yet to fully realize its advantages due to constraints imposed by certain objective conditions. To maximize the benefits of online teaching, it's crucial to reform existing education -related measures primarily designed for offline teaching, such as talent development programs and teaching evaluation standards. There is a necessity to enhance the utilization of new media technologies within the higher education industry, facilitating easier dissemination of higher education knowledge on the internet.

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