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The Emergency Online Classes During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Chinese University Case Study

Weixin He, John Xiao

Abstract: The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in China at a time when colleges and universities would begin the Spring semester, and the complete lockdown of the entire country made it impossible for campuses to open after the one-month long winter vacation. Under the guidance of the Central Government's Ministry of Education, which is the highest authority of Chinese educational systems and is the supreme policy maker, all schools, including colleges and universities, moved classes online. Since the move was at such a short-notice and in a less prepared manner, the effectiveness of it remained a concern for administrators, teachers and students as a whole. This paper, using the quantitative and qualitative data provided by a Chinese university survey, aims to analyze the factors commonly used in academic researches to measure the effectiveness of its online classes under such an emergency circumstance, with perceptions of both students and teachers. The paper discusses the issues through its findings, by comparison of teaching vs. learning effectiveness, online vs. face-to-face classrooms. It further explores the solutions to improve online teaching and learning environment, and suggests that after the pandemic is over the online classes shall not be a new normal in Chinese higher education.

Keywords: COVID-19, emergency remote teaching, emergency online classes, face-to-face classes, factors.

Introduction

China's landscape of higher education has been changed when coronavirus was spreading, and home quarantine became the rule. As an emergency effort, moving all classes online was unprecedented. In this unprecedented scenario, where teachers and students connected in a virtual environment in a hasty manner while having to deal with mandatory strict stay-at-home quarantine policies with their other family members, it undoubtedly posed challenges to teachers and students to a great extent. Given the features of it, courses offered online in response to this crisis are meaningfully different from well-planned online learning as a whole. Colleges and universities working to maintain instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic should understand those differences when evaluating this emergency remote teaching (Bozkurt et al., 2020, Hodges et al., 2020). School administrators must know how effective the online classes were in order to ensure the quality of the curriculum in such a special time. And the most common way of examining the effectiveness was to conduct questionnaires among both teachers and students. This paper aims to analyze a quality report of university-wise emergency online classes conducted by South China Business College in Guangzhou China - a private university affiliated to Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, two weeks after it went online, and to investigate the various factors used in the questionnaire as determinants of the effectiveness of its online classes. The paper also, through its findings, discusses some problems that occurred in the online learning environment, and suggests solutions to improve its future endeavors.

Literature Review

Tremendous research work has been done on the subjects of e-Learning, online learning, distance education, virtual classrooms, etc., on the different terminologies of similar subject area and its broad scope. Specific research covering the evaluation of the effectiveness have been plenty. What do the

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literature tell us? A handbook edited by Attwell (2006) gave a comprehensive report on evaluating e-learning, which found ten main categories of literature (p. 9).

Though e-learning has been a way of curriculum instruction for years, the entire university curricula moving to online environment is unprecedented in higher education. Online classroom vs. traditional face-to-face classroom, the effectiveness, the factors, such as technological tools and platforms, effective learning and effective teaching, that determine and/or affect the effectiveness, etc., have been research topics under the umbrella of e-learning or distance education. But more specific studies in online classes in an emergency situation are very few, at the time of this study.

Definition

A comprehensive study has been done very timely by a group of scholars and researchers (Bozkurt et al., 2020) to reflect emergency remote teaching from a global perspective. Their research finds mixed usage of terms referring to the educational practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to better describe the scenario, they view it as emergency remote education (ERE).

> "In such a critical time, there has been a drastic change in how teaching and learning happen while learners are physically out of schools and separated from their teachers and co-learners. The educational practices during the Covid-19 pandemic are denoted with different terms in different countries (e.g., distance education, e-learning, online education, homeschooling, etc.). However, these terms do not quite capture what is being practiced during the interruption of education, which can better be described as emergency remote education (ERE). Considering that the terms used in different countries are derivations of distance education, as a generic term, the remarkable difference between emergency remote education and distance education is that the latter is an option while the former is an obligation. Such an understanding is crucial because misconceptions in definitions would lead us to misconceptions in practices. Distance education, for instance, is a planned activity and its implementation is grounded in theoretical and practical knowledge which is specific to the field and its nature. On the other and, emergency remote education is about surviving in a time of crisis with all resources available, including offline and/or online" (p. 2).

There is clearly a difference between online learning and online classes. (Hodges et al., 2020). The online courses provided by South China Business College, are not asynchronous online education courses, but rather, courses containing mediated synchronous interaction; on the other hand, those courses were not well designed and planned ahead for the purpose of pure online teaching, but materials simply placed online to replace physical classroom teaching and learning in order to deal with the coronavirus emergency. Therefore, our study adopts both Emergency Remote Education (ERE) concept (Bozkurt et al, 2020) and Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) concept (Hodges et al., 2020), while views South China Business College's move to online during the pandemic as Emergency Online Classes, to use a more specific terminology.

Factors/Determinants

A qualitative view of the factors, determinants, or indicators, including student/teacher perceptions, motivation, which researchers classify as either promoting or prohibiting e-Learning effectiveness across a spectrum of definitions, methodologies and e-Learning media, provides valuable additions to e-Learning design and research (Noesgaard and Ørngreen, 2015). In Noesgaard and Ørngreen's research, 34 factors were found and divided into the three categories: individual (subject), contextual scaffolding (context + object) and e-Learning solution and process (artefact).

Effectiveness

Pertinent to the effectiveness of online classes, a lot of research have been done to investigate the effectiveness through an integrative review. Noesgaard and Ørngreen, in their study of the effectiveness

of e-learning, discovered 19 distinct ways to define e-learning effectiveness, appearing in 41% of the articles examined in their literature review, of which, 57 % (52/92) examined effectiveness within higher education (2015).

The effectiveness of online classes is determined from both perceptions of students and teachers. In has to do with effective learning (Wang, 2010), and effective teaching (Devlin and Samarawickrema, 2010). Valcheva and Todorova (2005) suggest that student assessment - the examination of student performance and satisfaction - is a powerful indicator of the effectiveness of e-learning. Teaching effectiveness may be defined as how a teacher can best direct, facilitate, and support students toward certain academic ends, such as achievement and satisfaction (Gorsky and Blau, 2009). Some research suggests that the conceptions of effective teaching in higher education extend to the social context where the learning community, meta learning and dialogue for learning are important – further extending skills requirements of teachers, particularly in the use of communication and collaborative technologies (Carnell, 2007).

Satisfaction

Many researchers agree to regard 'satisfaction' as one of the definitions and factors for effectiveness, and collecting students' perceptions of the effectiveness of their class is an achievable and practical method of inquiry (Harrington and Walker, 2009; Jung et al., 2002; Maloney et al., 2011, as cited in Noesgaard and Ørngreen, 2015). Students within a learning environment are in a good position to evaluate instruction because of their experience with many other learning environments (Fraser, 1998). Therefore, student views of online instruction in higher education courses need to be investigated (Young, 2010).

Methodology

Our university-wise investigation of all its emergency online classes adopted a mixed quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to measure indicators that could determine the emergency online class effectiveness, or otherwise, including questionnaires among students and teachers for direct quantitative data collection, and feedback and suggestions for qualitative review. The research design was a case study.

Essentially, our questionnaire survey was designed to reflect how emergency online classes were conducted and what teachers' and students' perceptions were. It was designed so that respondents were able to read, understand, and respond to the questions. The questionnaire had seven major sections and eighteen questions (items), covering the following scopes:

- courses that went online
- use of other online courses
- online teaching tools
- teachers' pedagogies
- student's online learning effectiveness
- teachers' self-assessment of teaching effectiveness
- opinionated feedback and suggestions from both students and teachers

The questionnaire design was an online or web survey and was administered over the Internet using the validated Web-based instrument WJX, one of China's most popular and authentic survey tools.
Good research practice involves the use of multiple methods to enhance the validity of the research findings (Mathison, 1988). As common research methods, the quantitative and qualitative approaches rely upon the use of descriptive research in the form of questionnaires to describe and interpret what is or what exists (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Attwell (2006) found that a typical ethnographic research method was usually adopted in literature study, namely, questionnaires to participating students and teachers.

So is our South China Business College survey. By bringing context into the literature study, the data gathering method of the empirical study aimed to discover if, how and why/or why not emergency online classes would be successful. Thus, the empirical study lives up to the criteria of the literature study, as it focuses on the emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020), or emergency remote education (ERE) (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

In quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, the quantitative data are questions that are closed-ended and conclusive in nature as they are designed to create data that is easily quantifiable. Closed-ended questions reveal attitudes, opinions, or behaviors. Open-ended questions are exploratory in nature, offering the researchers rich, qualitative data. In essence, they provide the researcher with an opportunity to gain insight on all the opinions on a topic they are not familiar with. It is therefore, incredibly useful to use open-ended questions to gain information for further quantitative research (SurveyMonkey, 2020).

In data analysis, evaluation is needed to gain a better understanding of the problems and issues regarding online classes. Our study uses comparative analysis of the students' and teachers' responses, as well as comparative analysis of online classes with traditional face-to-face class environment.

Findings and Discussions

Participants and Data Collection

A total of 6810 students and 404 teachers participated in online classes. For the Spring semester curriculum of the academic year, there were a total of 479 courses and 1342 classes, all but 7 went online, consisting of 1335 classes, 99.5%, which totaled 80736 student logins, 91.3% of attendance. The questionnaire collected valid responses from 3430 students and 311 teachers, 50.4% and 76.2% respectively.

Online Class Tools

Since the entire campus moved into a virtual environment, what online tools and platforms that need to be used, and how they were used, thus became key to the success for both teachers and students, and administrators as well. The questionnaire reveals that, of the available Internet technologies in distance education, a variety of online tools were adopted by teachers. Figures 1 and 2 were major online tools teachers adopted in online classes and those favored by students.

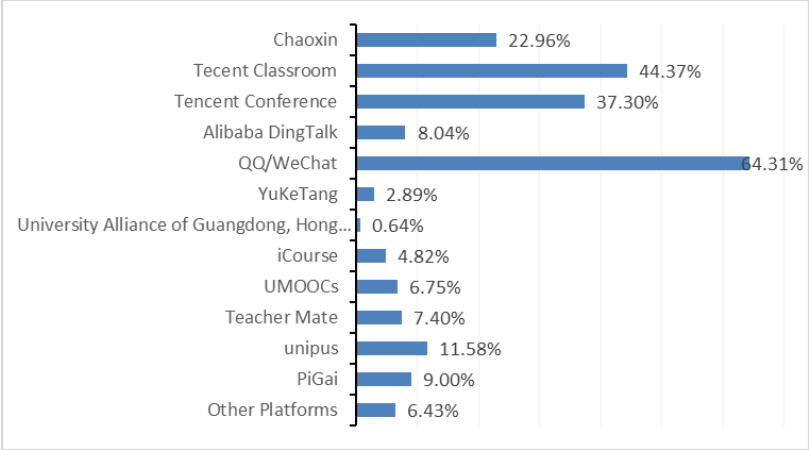

Figure 1. Online Platforms Used by Teachers

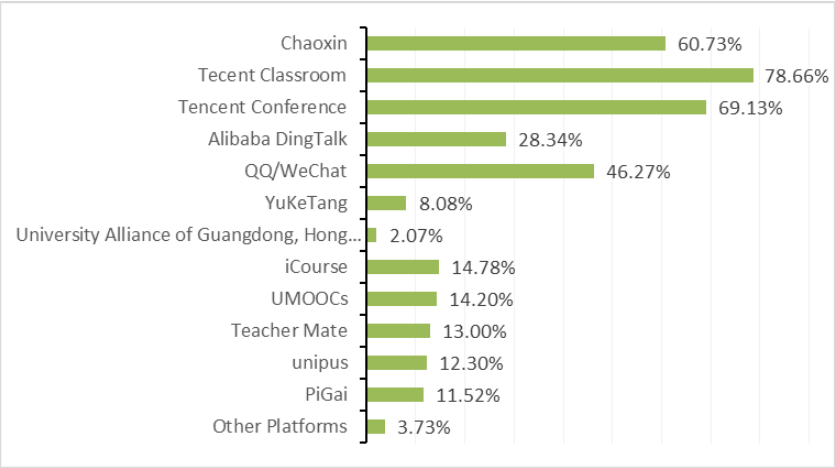

Figure 2. Online Platforms Favored by Students

It's interesting to note that, though QQ/WeChat - an app so popular with more than one billion users, was mostly used by teachers as online teaching platform, what students liked most was not QQ/WeChat, but Tencent Classroom. This indicates that, to match with what students preferred, teachers need to make some adjustments in the ongoing instructional design. This, however, has to do with teachers' ability to handle technologies.

Teachers' Ability to Handle Technologies

In a study on teachers' technology competencies, it was not 'knowing about', but rather the actual 'integration of computer activities with appropriate inquiry-based pedagogy' that determined effectiveness (Angeli, 2005). Our survey showed 39.04% of teachers knew how to use online teaching tools, about 54.65% were able to use online tools skillfully. Knowing about to use apparently is different from being skillful, this indicates that only about half of participating teachers could skillfully use online class platforms. This is not an impressive percentage in terms of teachers' ability to handle technologies, especially when we base this on Angeli's definition of teachers' technology competencies. Obviously, due to its emergency nature in ERE, there is not enough time to put into effect complex institutional plans for distance learning that were meant to be implemented over months or years. Teachers just work with what they know (Daniel, 2020). When main focus was put on technological tools available in each institution, it is hard for those teachers who are not quite familiar with the technology, i.e., non-expert online teachers (Rapanta et al., 2020)

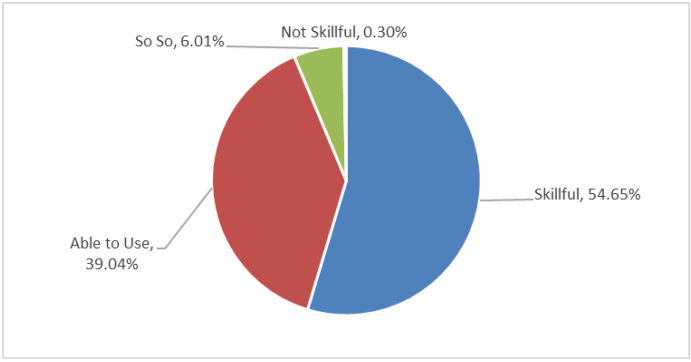

Figure 3. Teacher Ability to Use Online Tools

Teachers' Pedagogical Methods vs. Students' Preferences

Researchers seem to all agree that another factor contributing to achieving the effectiveness is teacher's pedagogies, which affect teaching effectiveness. If pedagogy is such an important factor in e-learning, then what about pedagogy in the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) situation? Clearly an important

role for evaluation is to assist researchers through providing an understanding of the impact of different pedagogic approaches (Attwell, 2006). Kamenetz, in her blog "Teaching Online Classes During The Coronavirus Pandemic" (2020), even used a term "Panic-gogy", in which she quoted some professors as describing the situation as "everybody's freaked out" (Sean Michael Morris, as cited in Kamenetz, 2020) , and the idea of porting classes online is "really to help our students feel included in the process of rethinking education for a challenging time" (Robin DeRosa, as cited in Kamenetz, 2020).

In Figures 4 and 5, teachers' choices and students' preferences basically match, about 62.16% live stream courses and 23.42% blended courses vs. 62.16% and 19.41%. Most students preferred teachers' live stream, which means that students still liked direct teaching by teachers. It is necessary to note that the blended course category in the survey was not a combination of online components with the conventional face-to-face components as defined and discussed by Wu and Hwang (2010), but rather, blended or mixed use of formats of online teaching.

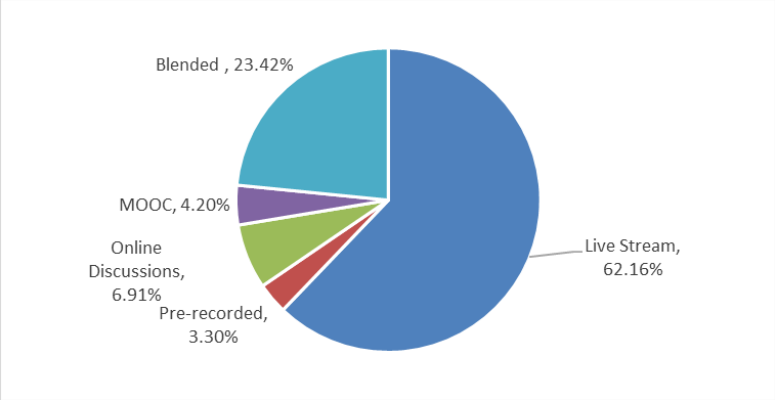

Figure 4. Teachers' Adopted Pedagogical Methods

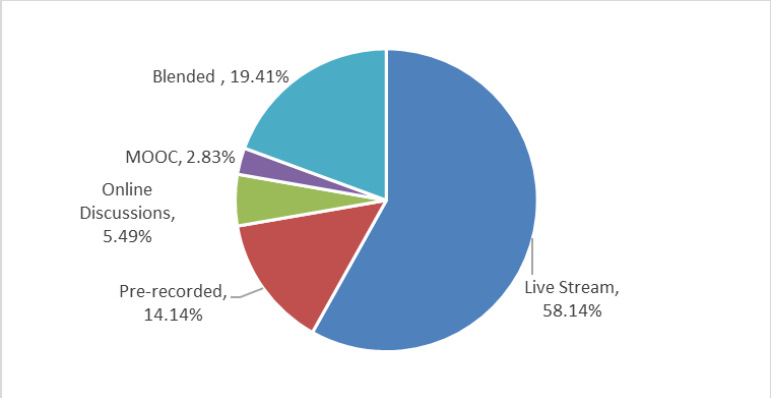

Figure 5. Students' Preferred Pedagogical Methods

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is an important measurement of reflecting the effectiveness of online classes, from the perspectives of how students evaluate teachers' teaching, and how they assess themselves. Young (2010) did some research on student views of effective online teaching in higher education, and found that seven items emerged as the core group to indicate effectiveness: adapting to student needs, using meaningful examples, motivating students to do their best, facilitating the course effectively, delivering a valuable course content, communicating effectively, and showing concern for student learning.

Students' Satisfaction of Teachers and Their Teaching

Figure 6 shows that 63.84% of students were (very) satisfied with their teachers, only 2.15% were not. To the authors, however, if only about half of teachers who can skillfully use the online class platforms, why the student satisfaction rate was as high as 63.84% remained a question. Figure 7 shows the students' satisfaction of their teachers' teaching job was about 53.03% in the combined very satisfied and satisfied categories, which again is not so impressive.

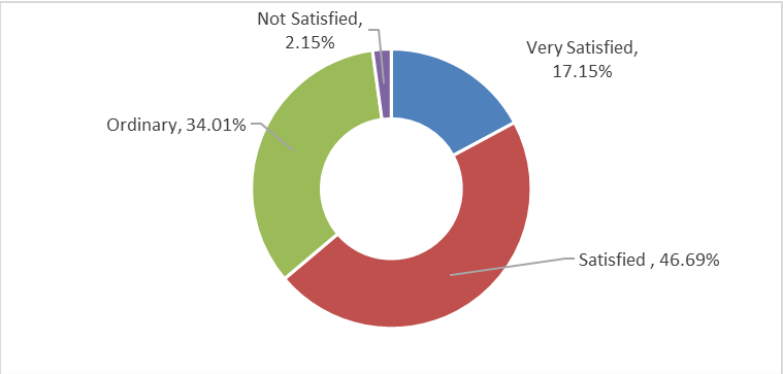

Figure 6. Students' Satisfaction of Teachers

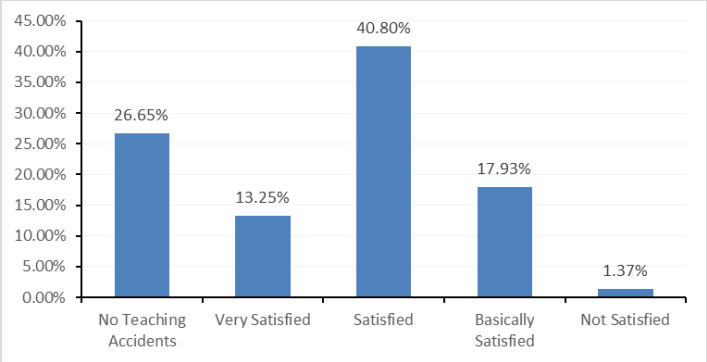

Figure 7. Students' Satisfaction of Teachers' Teaching

When asked if they had received timely course arrangements and timely feedback from teachers, students' satisfaction was very high, resulting 94.96% and 91.94% respectfully, as shown in Figure 8.

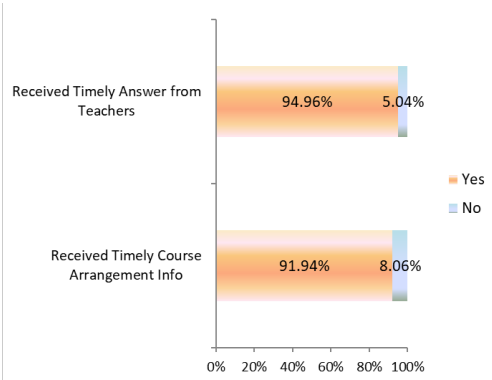

Figure 8. Student's Satisfaction of Teachers' Course Arrangements and Feedback

Students' Assessment of their own Satisfaction

Students' own assessment of their online learning experience, though somewhat subjective in a sense, can also reveal their effectiveness and satisfaction. Figure 9 shows that majority of students were

satisfied of their online classes, very good 14.02%, relatively good 51.22%, which were about the same as their teachers' comments and assessment, as shown in Figure 10. Given that both teachers and students had similar assessment of the students' satisfaction, this observation can be interpreted as being above average in terms of students' online class satisfaction.

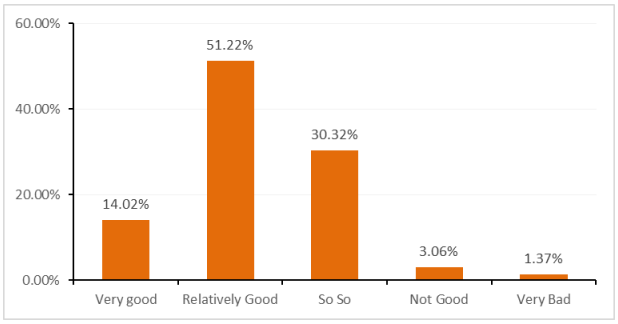

Figure 9. Students Self-Assessment of Effectiveness & Satisfaction

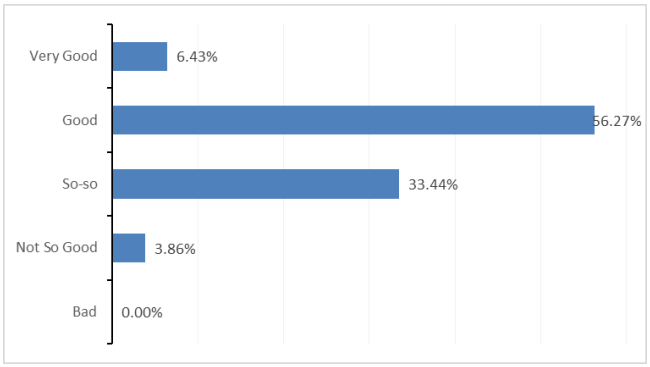

Figure 10. Teachers' Comments on Student Preparation Before Class

It is clear that, while in some categories student's satisfaction rate was very high, overall satisfaction was not as impressive.

Teachers' Self-assessment of their Teaching Effectiveness and Satisfaction

Teachers' self-assessment of their teaching effectiveness should be regarded as a direct and reliable indication of the online class effectiveness. Faculty satisfaction is considered an important factor of quality in online courses, and three factors affect satisfaction of faculty in the online environment: student-related, teacher-related, and institution-related factors (Bolliger and Wasilik, 2009).

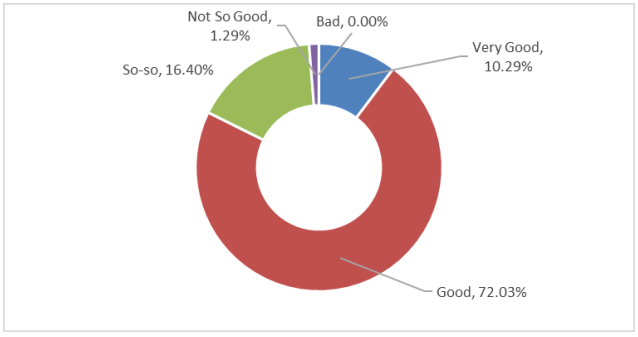

Figure 11. Teachers' Self-Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

The overall teacher satisfaction is very impressive according to Figure 11, with 10.29% very good, and 72.03% good. To combine the two categories, the vast majority of teachers were satisfied with their online teaching, more than 82%. However, comparing students' view of their teachers, as shown in Figure 6, there's an about 20% gap between student perception and teacher perception of teaching

satisfaction. Carpenter, Witherby and Tauber (2020) researched on students' judgments and/or misjudgments of learning and teaching effectiveness and found out that students' judgments of their own learning are often misled by intuitive yet false ideas about how people learn. Thus the "illusions of learning" can mislead students' evaluations of the effectiveness of their teachers, and students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness can be biased by factors unrelated to teaching, especially in this COVID-19 learning environment. The survey did not provide data on other unrelated factors, but the authors agree with the research opinion that it is difficult to use e-Learning to improve teaching performance as Noesgaard and Ørngreen (2015) suggested.

Challenges of Online Classes

There are certainly advantages in online classes. The advantages described by teachers of this study included 1) no time-space restrictions, 83.78%; 2) resources can be shared; 3) courses can play back, 50.75%; 4) can strengthen a new way of interaction, 46.25%; 5) no class size limitation, 22.52%; and 6) teaching materials can be reused broadly, among others.

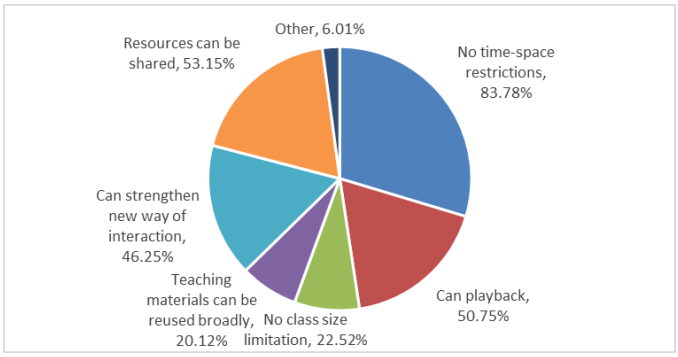

Figure 12. Teachers' Assessment of Online Class Advantages

However, online class was not without challenges in itself, as both teachers and students shared in their survey responses.

Technology

Unstable Internet connections apparently is one of the major factors to affect the effectiveness of online classes. 24.32% teachers realized that, due to the Internet unstable connectivity technical reason, students often were cut off the online classrooms, as depicted through Figure 13.

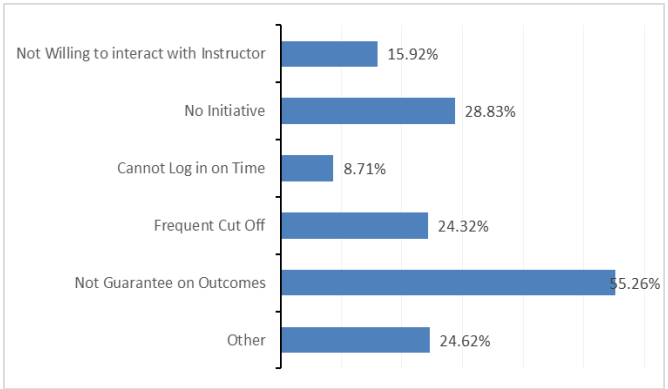

Figure 13. Most Challenging of Student Participation in Online Class

Teachers' use of online tools was also an issue. As above mentioned in 4.3., teachers' technology competencies were vital. If teachers were not able to skillfully handle technologies, the effectiveness of the online classes would be problematic.

Motivation

Students' lack of motivation was a definite challenge. Figure 14 shows that students' self-assessment of their learning motivation was high, very good, 24.92%, and good, 58.26%. To teachers, however, their top concern in the online environment was that there was no way of knowing students' motivation and initiative. 55.26% of teachers agreed that, because it was not a face-to-face class environment, they could not monitor students' activity, and therefore not sure about students' motivation and thus learning effectiveness.

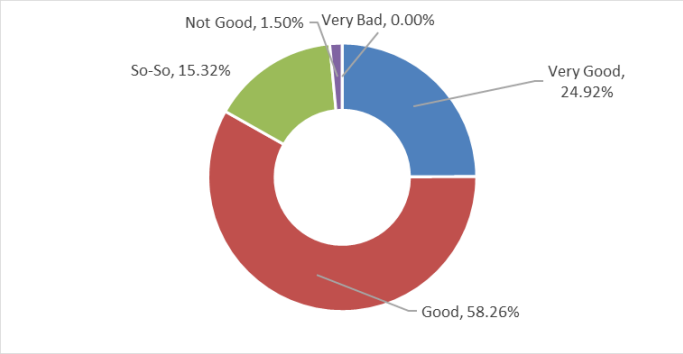

Figure 14. Student Motivation in Online Interaction

In the question about whether students are more motivated in online class than in face-to-face class, only 8.36% respondents thought they were more motivated. And the overall response was mediocre.

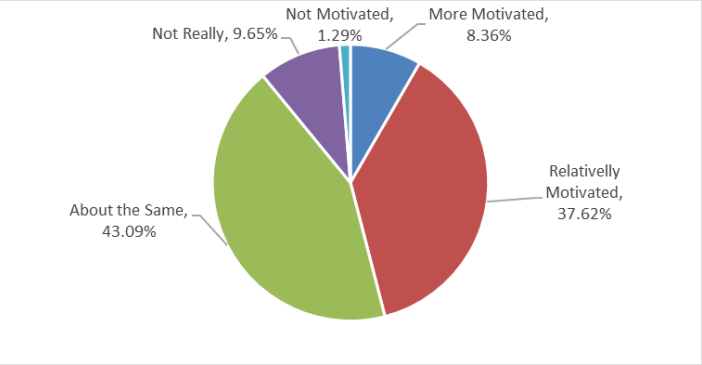

Figure 15. On Whether Students Are More Motivated in Online Class than in Face-to-Face Class

Challenges of Online vis-vis Face-to-Face Classes

Emergency online class differs from ordinary online learning. Although both occur via an internet-based platform, online learning can occur asynchronously, whereas online classes require a synchronous environment where the teacher and students log in class at the same time. South China Business College's scenario is the synchronous virtual environment and students need to log into the classroom altogether, just like attending a physical classroom. As afore mentioned, the data collected from the questionnaire indicates that the student attendance rate was very high, at about 91.3%. This supports the concept of online class' synchronous feature. Then, the question is: is online class more advantageous than traditional face-to-face class? Figure 16 and 17 respectively reveal teachers' views and students' views of the challenges they face in online class environment.

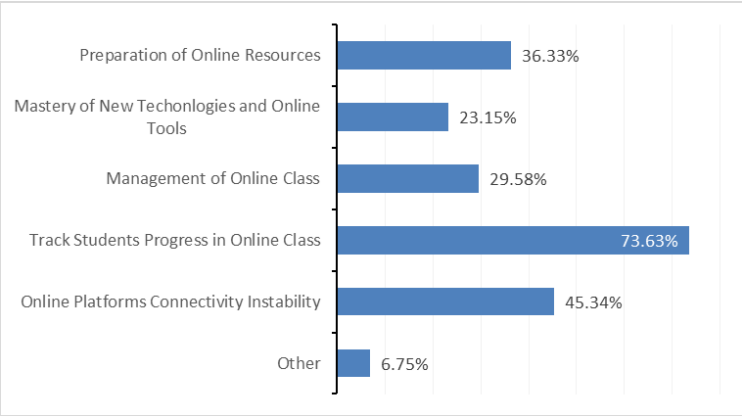

Figure 16. Teachers' Views on the Challenges of Online Class

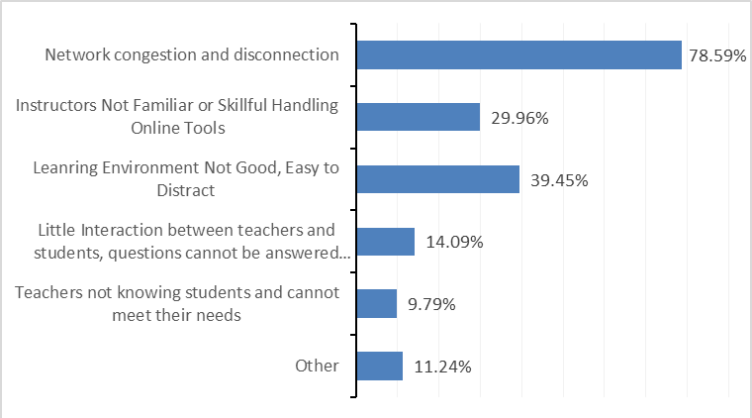

Figure 17. Students' Views on the Challenges of Online Class

Main issues teachers faced: teacher's unfamiliarity of online tools, 23.15%; online platforms were unstable, 45.34%; difficult to interact with students, and their highest concern was that it was difficult for them to monitor students' progress and learning effectiveness, standing at an astonishing 73.63%. Main issues students faced: teachers not familiar or skillful handling online teaching tools, 29.96%; easy to be distracted learning environment, namely, at home with other family members, 39.45%, and most troublesome of all was network congestion or disconnection, a shocking 78.59%.These challenges shown in the responses support the opinion that everyone involved in this abrupt migration to online learning must realize that these crises and disasters also create disruptions to student, staff, and faculty lives, outside their association with the university. So, all of this work must be done with the understanding that the move to ERT will likely not be the priority of all those involved (Hodges et al., 2020). This result also supports the conclusion of a research book that it was more difficult to monitor discussion in an online environment than in a classroom setting (Collison et al., 2000). Overall, to teachers, online classes are not as good as face-to-face classes. Figure 18 shows that, only about 15% (much better, 1.20%, better, 13.81%) thought online classes were better than face-to-face physical classes, while about 35% thought the former was worse than the latter (32.13% worse, 3% much worse).

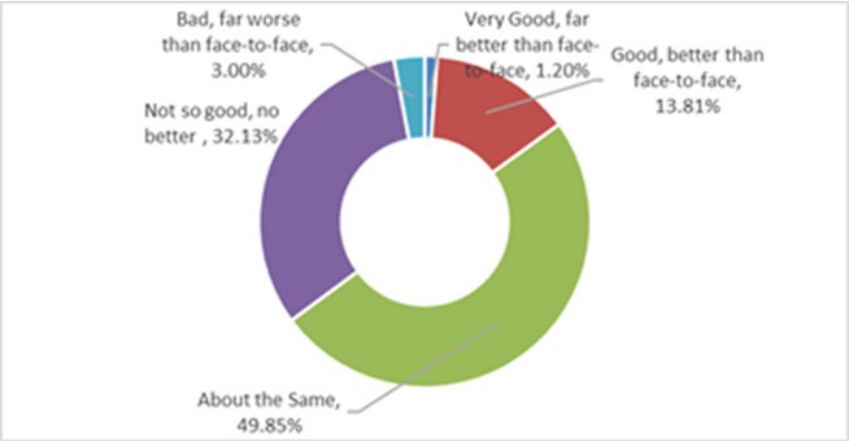

Figure 18. Teachers' Views of the Online vs. Face-to-face Effectiveness

In a research, Neuhauser (2002) compared in an experiment two groups taking online and face-to-face classes respectively, and found that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their assessment of the effectiveness of the learning activities, learning preferences/styles, and learning effectiveness of the same course. In our study, however, it is interesting to note that both students and teachers prefer to returning to the normal face-to-face classrooms. This strongly indicates that, although they thought the online classes were effective, they did have preferences, and that is, going back to normal and were reluctant to accept online classes as the new normal.

Qualitative feedback was collected in the form of open-ended questions, which reveal to the authors a variety of opinions and suggestions that were useful to help us to gain information for further research.
Students' feedback
Students' feedback covered areas of online classrooms such as technological concerns, teachers' teaching methodologies, and among others.

- too much homework assignment load
- too tiresome sticking to computer or smart phone
- hope to have a one-stop learning platform with more interactive functionalities, preferably, Tencent Classroom instead of Tencent Conference or others
- better use live stream instead of pre-recorded coursework
- too time-consuming to clock in an online class, which was a waste of time
- hope to return to campus class soon

With regards to returning to normal brick-and-mortar classrooms, it is very interesting to note that, given the quantitative data analyzed in the Findings of this study, what students wanted most in this part of qualitative questionnaire was that they hoped to return to the face-to-face campus learning environment, sooner than later, though they at the same time suggested some sort of blended courses combining online.
Teachers feedback included:

- need of a one-stop online platform
- assurance of online class with comprehensive technical support
- online class being a good complement, blended course can be adopted when returning to campus
- hope to resume campus teaching soon.

Again, in this part of questionnaire, like students, most teachers also prefer to returning to traditional face-to-face teaching environment sooner than later, because, to them, it was difficult to monitor students' learning effectiveness when online platforms were unstable and difficult to interact with students.

This qualitative data collected from the open-ended questionnaire is very important in that, not only it revealed a common opinion that both teachers and students preferred face-to-face teaching and learning, but also indicated that the illusion about e-learning need to be revisited and studied otherwise. Apparently, there're gaps between students and teachers, gaps in preferred platforms, in perceived satisfaction, in student-teacher and student-student interactions. The temptation to compare online classes to face-to-face instruction in these circumstances will be great. In fact, an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education has already called for a "grand experiment" doing exactly that (Zimmerman, 2020). In our findings of the South China Business College case analysis, the typical ERT or ERE feature is clear and self-evident, which supports the notion of Hodges et al. (2020) and Bozkurt et al. (2020), and consequently, students lacked of motivation, and interaction between students and teachers was insufficient.

Overall, teachers basically familiarized themselves with online teaching tools, and students gradually adapted to the online class environments and requirements. The overall assessment of teaching and learning effectiveness had been achieved in an early stage of online class. However, the result shows that the emergency online classes were not without their problems.
Major issues were:

- students could not stay focused easily
- overloaded course materials and assignments could distract students learning experience and affect their progress
- teachers could not monitor students the same way as in the physical classrooms
- some students lacked motivation and could not adapt to online class environment

Solutions to be:

- increase teachers' knowledge of information technology and technological skills
- increase teachers' online teaching abilities
- optimize teachers' instructional design
- strengthen interactivity between students and teachers through face-to-face live streams

Technology plays a big role in ERE. However, it is a delusion to which we are recurrently lured and trapped (Sharma, Kawachi, & Bozkurt, 2019). We naively forget that technology is a tool, not an end; and the right approach should not be learning from technology, but rather, learning with technology (Sharma, Kawachi, & Bozkurt, 2019). Greenagel pointed out that there's some illusion about e-learning because we're missing out on the promise of technology (2002). Schultz (2003), in his study of the effectiveness of online synchronous discussion, compared online class and physical classroom instruction, and concluded that synchronous online discussion seems less effective than classroom instruction. Some other factors such as learning environment are seldom considered or all too often ignored (Attwell, 2006). Our survey findings seem to support all those research opinions. Technology, or technology variables, is a main focus in the survey to be used as an evaluation tool, for example, teachers' use of it, students' adaption to it, unstable Internet connections, and so on, which apparently is one of the factors to affect the effectiveness of online classes. However, one factor, a contextual variable, was not covered, or to the authors' knowledge, was purposely avoided, in this questionnaire, and that is: censorship. Because the Internet censoring by the government is a common practice in the Chinese net community, this surely will be reflected in online classes. Complaints about interruption and disruption of online classes posted on the net indicate that, due to some words and pictures and videos that are automatically detected by the net police as being sensitive to the audience, many ongoing online classes got a sudden screen blackout, or a warning. Social media posts show that, some classes in subject matters such as biology, political science, Chinese literature, International Trade, even English language, etc., can easily get blocked because of the sensitive contents. Hence a dilemma that teachers will come across: What? Is my content blocked? This is a basic text content in my face-to-face class, why I cannot use it in my online class? The questionnaire focused on elements of online class including content, structure, motivation, feedback, interaction and learning strategies, but simply no mentioning of the content blocking. The authors understand the reason behind the college administrators' state of

mind, yet do hold the opinion that this needs to be addressed. Though this is not the topic discussed in this paper, it will be the authors' future research interest.

In a time when Internet technology has been embraced so dearly, some research (Hamid, 2001) related e-learning to dot-com, and asked a question of "how long will they stay?" We think, therefore, there is a need to reexamine our understanding of the e-learning concept in order to fully exploit its advantages and to avoid its misgivings as Hamid points out. Though the survey result, using some academically acknowledged factors and determinants, shows that South China Business College online classes were effective on the whole, or at least without substantial teaching accident which is in fact a major concern of the administrators, it is, to the understanding of this study, impossible for the traditional face-to-face classrooms to be replaced, either partially or entirely, by online classrooms.

In order for further discussions, lessons should be learned. The authors agree with University of Virginia's Curry School of Education's reflection on what the pandemic has taught us about online learning – and how those lessons can guide us to a more open, accessible future for academia. In the UVA's reflection, Moore likens emergency remote teaching to waking up inside a burning house and grabbing what you can before fleeing to safety (Finding the New Normal of Online Learning, 2020). This is exactly what South China Business College did to react to the COVID-19 emergency and moved the essentials of their courses online as a replacement measure.

Conclusion

South China Business College's move to online classes was just a temporary action in an emergency situation caused by the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. And so were all moves of colleges and universities in China, and later, in the entire world. Though on the whole it was showing both teaching effectiveness and learning effectiveness to certain extent, it had issues in its own process due to the less than needed preparedness. South China Business College's online classes were not genuinely online learning, because the online courses provided by South China Business College are not asynchronous distance education courses, but rather, courses containing mediated synchronous interaction.

The analysis of the data, both quantitatively and qualitatively, suggests that South China Business College's move was kind of experimental still in an early stage, whether or not this total action would be considered to be truly effective is yet to be determined. It also suggests that, after things go back to normal, South China Business College shall not do it again, and all China's colleges and universities shall return to face-to-face environment without any doubt. One thing is for sure, this special time's experience shall make the university administrators rethink about building up a regular model of online education system that will work more effectively in case of new emergencies in the future.

Given the fact that moving all classes online has become a new normal at least during this coronavirus pandemic period, and for the coming foreseeable future in possibly an entire academic calendar year, and that prior researches are a limited few to deal with emergent online classes, this study provides a firsthand data for future researchers in this area. Though ERE in a COVID-19 crisis is a short-term temporary solution, definitely there are lessons learned by all parties, including policymakers, institutions, administrators, teachers and students (Bozkurt et al., 2020). So, we can treat it as an opportunity for reimagining distance education (Zhao, 2020), and can have better plans for future education-in-crisis.

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