

"Digital Campus" Policy Impacts Teacher's Work in A Chinese Hotel Management College

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of China's "Digital Campus" policy on teachers at a four-year undergraduate Hotel Management College in Beijing, China. The policy, initiated by the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education, aims to integrate digital technology into higher education, promoting online teaching, big data utilization, and intelligent campus management. Through qualitative interviews with five faculty members, the research reveals that teachers face significant challenges in adapting to the policy. Key findings include the deprivation of teachers' policy-making rights, the blurring of work-life boundaries due to digital tools, and increased pressure to innovate in teaching practices. Teachers reported expanded workloads, role shifts, and difficulties in balancing technological demands with educational quality. The study highlights the tension between top-down policy implementation and teachers' autonomy, emphasizing the influence of educational policy factors on educational practices. Ultimately, the research underscores the need for greater teacher involvement in policy design and support for integrating technology into education effectively.

KEYWORDS

Teacher Development; Educational Policy; Digital Campus; Education Efficacy

1 Introduction

The place where education is conducted has become a movable space as a result of the impact of technology (Arnett, 2017). Instead of going to classrooms on campus, students now can attend classes at home or elsewhere via the Internet and technology. Similarly, teachers can instruct in many locations online as well. Accordingly, the fast and continuous growth of digital technology is forcing higher education institutions to adapt to the changing culture and society, while the traditional educational practice is being challenged (Stepanyan et al., 2013). Educational institutions are being challenged, nowadays, by the pressure of providing creative teaching and learning experiences for students in the digital environment (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). Some are even concerned that digital technology could even disrupt educational institutions in terms of educational practices and implementation (Posselt et al., 2018). For example, if teachers rely too heavily on multimedia instruction, the classroom may eventually become a place to exhibit Powerpoint, audio and video, but not impart education.

China's higher education is impacting by digital technology greatly. In recent years, the Chinese government and the Chinese Ministry of Education published a policy named "Digital Campus", leading university reforms around the country. The policy aims to prevent Chinese universities from falling behind the rest of the world. This study will focus on teachers' responses to the "Digital Campus" policy in a four-year undergraduate Hotel Management College in Beijing, China.

The driving question of the study is:

How does Digital Campus policy impact teachers' work and teaching?

The research results indicate that teachers have encountered issues and problems when complying with the school policy. Teacher's policy-making right is deprived, the boundaries of teachers' work practice disappear, and teacher feels pressure from innovation.

2 Background of Policy Implementation

In 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) launched the Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan (the "Action Plan"). One of the goals of the action plan is to realize the construction of digital campuses in all schools by 2022 (Notice of the Ministry of Education on Printing and Distributing the Action Plan of Education Informatization 2.0-People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Education Government Portal, 2022). Future Schools: The Fourth Industrial Revolution Defined a New Educational Model was published by the World Economic Forum in January 2021, and the "Global Framework of Education 4.0" was proposed to redefine the high-quality development of education in the new economy. On this premise, the Chinese MOE proceeded to propose and implement the Digital Campus education strategic action in 2022 (Cao Jian, 2022).

In this article, Digital Campus policy refers to the policy initially released by the Chinese government and the Ministry

of Education; the implementation of this policy is predicated primarily on the development of an intelligent campus, based on utilizing big data and online teaching and studying platforms. Under the policy, the Hotel Management College establishes a variety of data-based digital platforms to manage the school. For instance, the college has built a facial recognition system powered by artificial intelligence to identify students' and faculty's behaviours that violate school regulations. In addition, the college develops an independent college APP for internal administration; and school faculty are required to use the APP to implement online office.

3 Research Methods

The study uses qualitative research methodology and develops a structured interview to carry out the communication with five university faculties, in a bid to collect their feedback on the implementation of digital campus policy. Interviews were conducted both online (video conference) and offline (classroom). All of the interviewees are instructors from the Hotel Management College in Beijing. Their ages are divided into three groups: 30 to 40 years old; 40-50 years old; 50 to 60 years old. Using diverse age groups is necessary for this study because teachers of different ages may have varied attitudes toward the usage of digital platforms in educational practice (Šabić et al., 2021). The subjects taught by these five instructors vary, but their teaching specializations all fall within the scope of Hotel Management specialty. Their teaching subjects are: Teacher A: The Principle of Catering Service; Teacher B: Restaurant Art; Teacher C: Practice Simulation of ERP (laboratory-based course); Teacher D: Online and Digital Marketing; and Teacher E: Room Service Management. The selection of these instructors is based on the fact that their teaching curriculum includes theory, practice, and a combination of the two. Thus, diverse feedback on digital-based teaching experiences can be collected. These instructors all provided quality responses to the interviews.

The goal of the interview is to discuss the veracity and engaging experience of the digital campus policy. Three primary questions were posed to respondents:

- (a) When did you hear about the school's digital campus policy?
- (b) How do you adapt your teaching since the new policy come into fact?
- (c) Does digital instruction influence your work?

To ensure the authenticity and validity of the description and explanation, the name of the interviewees were not recorded. The interviewees pledged to keep their responses private. The qualitative data reveals several outcomes, such as teachers' job experience and the difficulties they face in the classroom, all of which stem from policy changes.

4 Discussion

4.1 Digital Invade Teachers' Work Brings Advantages and Disadvantages

Digital invades the classroom and office work of educators, bringing them both benefits and drawbacks. In 2005, the European Commission proposed a mandate for digital proficiency in schooling. Digital competence referred to the competent and critical use of information society technology (IST) for business, leisure, and communication. People could retrieve, evaluate, save, display, and communicate information on a computer, as well as used the Internet for collaborative purposes (Council recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning. European Education Area, 2022). Technology is now an integral component of university education. Universities mostly offer to learn management systems and electronic journals, in addition to word processing, e-mail, Google, and Wikipedia (Losh, 2014). Some individuals believe that digital technology is frequently portrayed as neutral in the education field (Selwyn, 2016) since digital technology is not always beneficial or detrimental to higher education.

For one, Johnson (2012) claimed that technological changes have lowered the working quality of university teachers. The new digital school system has shifted work and study from on campus to at home on many occasions, and mandatory promotion of online office software seemed to double the workload of teachers, which aligns with the interview results provided by instructor A:

"My working hours were expanded after the introduction of the online office policy. In the past, when I got home from work, I could focus on my family and children. However, now I had to work off work. My cell phone was constantly vibrating and ringing, making it impossible to ignore. It makes me exhausted. Moreover, I am compelled to link with all of the teachers at the school group on the APP. This is likewise a contentious issue that occupies considerable communication time. I believe the digital officing has modified my work hours from 8 to 24 hours".

According to Biesta (2020), with the introduction of technology in education, education is caught in a complex and multifaceted network, especially, since the new form of control replaces the old form of discipline. For university teachers in the Hotel Management College, their work has started to go online in an all-around way during the pandemic, including teaching, evaluating students, as well as officing.

Mobile APPs will inform them about work tasks at any time, whether it's working hours or off-hours. They have to obey these notices and deal with the work messages, or they will be regarded as unprofessional. Digital technology, especially online office software, has become a new tool to control teachers' work. Teachers obey this invisible "manager" of the online office software.

For another, the digitalization of education is viewed as a new policy instrument in educational administration (Rincón-Gallardo, 2020), and it helps teachers to organize their work at the same time. According to Rincón-Gallardo (2020), the objective of big data practice is to make data and feedback flow synchronously and recursively within the classroom's instructional apparatus. As a result, one advantage of digitalized education is that education management becomes increasingly organized.

"Meanwhile, my work has gotten organized and less time-consuming. No longer do I need to check each student's attendance one by one, which is a waste of time. Now, all of the student's attendance data will be provided to me automatically, and I will be able to view class and homework at any time and from any location", Teacher C replied.

4.2 After the Policy Was issued, Teachers started to be involved in it

It is interesting to find that all five teachers look at the digital campus policy in the same way:

"I received an email from the administration department, and it instructed me to download different Apps and online platforms and the setting up procedures of those Apps".

When asked who they believe is responsible for the establishment of the policy, one young educator responded: "This should be a policy initiated by the institution. After all, Beijing is so developed that it makes sense for the college here to use big data to run the campus"; while one older teacher answered: "Although the university notified us of this policy, I am aware that the Chinese government mandates universities to do so, and the government news has already provided hints."

According to the interviews of the five teachers, all of them were not involved in the process of drafting or contributing suggestions for the Digital Campus policy. In other words, constructing a Digital Campus in a university is the state and university's independent strategy. Teachers have limited or no participation rights in formulating the policy. Teachers have been deprived of their right to make policies (Shieh, 2021). One of the instructors showed his understanding of the sudden notification of the college's digital campus policy: "I was suddenly told to use this APP. Before that, the school administration office didn't solicit my opinions to use the online APP, or ask me if I accepted working on the APP. Which means, I didn't participate in the formulation of the policy of using the APP."

As discussed above, it reveals that the policy-making power transfer from the top to the bottom, and the top refers to the Chinese government, while the bottom refers to schools and teachers. This proves Wrigley's (2020) idea that the significance of educational policy change can only be revealed by contacting macro-political economics. In the past, several studies have also investigated the connection between education and politics. According to Williamson (2015), they believe that education governance is dependent on public policy tools, such as international assessment, quality standards, and comparison benchmarks, and these tools contain the values, worldview, interpretation, as well as politics, all of these factors will coordinate and control education. Agreed with Williamson (2015), Shieh (2021) has demonstrated the three factors: technology, politics, and culture in helping educational institutions to successfully implement improvements and innovations in schools. Those studies emphasized that education is inseparable from politics. This is also congruent with China's situation, as the Chinese government frequently has the greatest influence among other departments. The Digital Campus policy is firstly announced by the Chinese government, and then the Hotel Management College follows the policy.

When educational policy is made without the involvement of teachers, it may pose some issues. For instance, teachers sometimes pretend to adhere to policies with which they disagree or do not support (Copp, 2016; Heng & Song, 2020). One of the interviewees said:

"The school required teachers to submit daily work reports online during the lockdown period so that our supervisors can know what we did during the day. I mean, I am a teacher, other than teaching, and preparing for teaching, what else I will do? So it is a waste of time to finish the task. Even though I complete the task each day, I wish the school cancel this policy as soon as possible".

4.3 Teachers' Identity is Changing Under the New Policy

The identity of instructors has shifted under the digital campus policy. Marquès (2020) believes that in Internet-based education, teachers become "mediators, consultants, instructors, providers of learning resources, information sources, learning organizers, imitation behavior patterns, trainers, and motivators of apprentices" (p. 1). Just as Teacher B stated:

"I'm not just a teacher anymore, because my job entails so much more than giving lectures to students. Before class, I search the Internet for a variety of new teaching resources. In class, I am required to be proficient in installing various types of software. After class, I need to learn how to analyze teaching outcomes by using different online analyzing tools.

Consequently, I am now accountable for instructing classes, fixing computers, and analyzing data, just to name a few”.

At the same time, she felt strain during the roles shifting process:

“Occasionally, I have to utilize two cell phones to manage my teaching duties. This is an idiotic approach, but at least it can deal with the urgent situation” .

Juggling many responsibilities at one time might be challenging for teachers. This issue was pointed out by a Spain university, that effectively integrating information and communication technology into teaching and learning is cited as one of the obstacles universities overcome when transforming the traditional to digital-based education mode (ICT Teaching Ability of Spanish Public Universities - UM, 2022). Until 2013, there was no evidence showed that college classrooms had successfully incorporated a wide range of technologies to help the teaching process (Ng'ambi, 2013). Therefore, hotel school instructors may need to exercise their ability to integrate technology and multiple roles in the upcoming technology era (Prendes, 2020).

4.4 Teachers are Facing the Challenge of Innovation

The execution of the digitalization policy on campus necessitates ongoing innovation in the classroom, and teachers feel pressure from it. According to teacher B:

“The director of the Academic Affairs Office meets with us every week to discuss creative teaching techniques, but I've discovered something demoralizing: innovative ideas are scarce. The fact that I cannot think of many or more creative teaching or working methods puts me under pressure.”

The speed of technological evolution is astounding. Teachers, students, educational leaders, as well as the government's need for educational innovation exert constant pressure on education requiring universities to develop the most fashionable or trendy education, this poses a new issue, which is teachers may not have time to carefully judge what to offer and what to need for education, thus it results in educational fault or discontinuity (Biesta, 2020). Just as teacher D responded about the challenges he met in using digital teaching methods:

“Sometimes the teaching content is no longer important, but the teaching methods, especially new methods are the ones that get praise from my supervisor. So sometimes I will pay more attention to the teaching techniques rather than the knowledge itself”.

5 Conclusion

Based on interviews conducted at a four-year undergraduate Hotel Management College in Beijing, China, this research examines the impact on teachers of the “digital campus” policy that the Chinese government and universities have aggressively promoted in recent years. The results indicate that teachers accept the policy passively. The school did not invite the staff to participate in the formulation of some policies. On the contrary, the school administrators formulated policies themselves and then implemented the policies among the staff.

When teachers are teaching and working in a digital environment, they find their working hours are compressed by spatialization, particularly because the time limit for working from home is no longer clear, putting them under pressure. Teachers also experience challenges from identity change. They own multiple identities working with diverse online teaching and working tools. This may warn them to master the ability to integrate and utilize technology with professional knowledge together. Since educational requirements under the digital world are always evolving, after a period of introspection, some teachers discover they may be incapable of meeting the most innovative teaching demands of college students. When teachers are pursuing teaching techniques instead of professional knowledge, inconsecutive education between teachers teaching and students studying may appear.

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