

Preface

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As a new productive force, modern information technology represented by Internet is initiating an overall change in productive relations and exerting profound impacts on various aspects of our socioeconomic life. Also, businesses in all industries are constantly taking on new looks with the optimization, increase, and innovation driven by the development of information technology. Thus, the Chinese government responds to this ongoing and unstoppable trend by proposing the strategy of “Internet +.”

The serious impact of modern information technology can also be seen in education, a social subsystem, and in face of this trend, educational informationization becomes the inevitable strategic deployment and countermeasure. Many countries have looked at the strategy of educational informationization as a forward-looking choice to promote educational reform and enhance national comprehensive competitiveness. Educational informationization has entered the stage where technology and education are deeply integrated. One distinct feature of this stage is that the closed door of traditional school education is going to be knocked out open by the openness nature of Internet, and the system of educational services is going to be reconstructed. Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his congratulation letter to the First International Conference on Educational Informationization on May 22, 2015, has stressed that it is a key issue faced by the entire mankind to construct a learning society where everybody can learn at any-time and anywhere by promoting the development of information technology, advocating educational reform and innovation, construct networked, digital, individualized and lifelong educational system so as to produce large numbers of innovative talents.

MOOC is one typical example of educational informationization at the stage of increasing integration of innovative technologies. As a new mode for education dissemination in the age of information, MOOC has changed the social attribute of education. For thousands of years, people have taken for granted that it is the natural way for higher education to be organized in units of majors, happening in

school premises, and provided to only a small group social elites. The emergence of MOOCs shatters this myth by vividly demonstrating that a service model that is organized in units of courses, network-based, flexible, and open can allow everybody to freely choose and enjoy quality higher education. The innovation of MOOCs lies in its very creation of the groundbreaking teaching model for high-quality courses that transcends the barriers of national borders and examinations in higher education, making it available to every willing learner across the world.

Ever since 2012 when the digital tsunami of MOOCs swept the world, China has been consistently increasing its devotion to the area both in theoretical researches and practical implementations. In April, 2015, its Ministry of Education issued *Opinions on Strengthening Construction, Application and Management of Online Open Courses in Institutions of Higher Learning* to have overall deployment with regards to the construction, application, and management of online open courses. So far, hundreds of MOOC-related platforms have taken root in China, offered a variety of courses, and attracted multitudes of learners.

As a leading institute in China specialized in researches on distance education, while promoting relevant researches on MOOCs, we have also kept a coolheaded, introspective attitude toward the development of MOOCs in China. Through in-depth analysis of the 1388 courses from 14 MOOC platforms, we find that most of the MOOCs are xMOOCs built upon the principles of behaviorism and cognitivism. Although connectivism has exhibited the process of knowledge creation and the process of learning in the era of Internet with convergence of collective wisdom, it has not become a major source of theoretical guidance for MOOCs and has attracted little attention from the public. Thus, most of the MOOCs have not made innovations in terms of their teaching methods. At the same time, we have also sorted out ten characteristics of construction and development of MOOCs in China from the perspectives including organization mode, system construction, course development, learning qualities of learners and have identified eight challenges faced by Chinese MOOCs in exploration of business mode, innovation of technological application, intellectual property protection, innovation of learning theories, etc.

At last, we sincerely hope that this book will be helpful for the research, construction, usage, and management of MOOCs in China.

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