

Chapter 7

Chinese EdTech Economy in the COVID–19 Era

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the Chinese EdTech economy in the COVID-19 era. After studying the characteristics of the Chinese online education market and its market size, this research focuses on the differences in business strategies and market responses among online education applications during the COVID-19 era and the subsequent institutional changes, as well as analyzing the factors that cause such differences. For the analysis, a few cases of successful online education companies in China are selected, and their business models and technology applications are discussed. The authors conclude this chapter by addressing the challenges that China's online education faces and providing corresponding suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

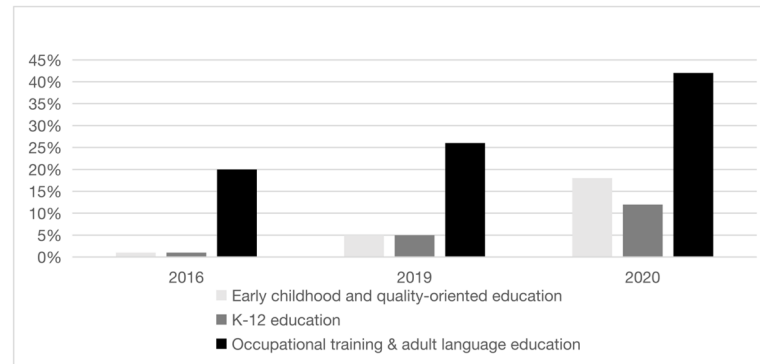
A sudden and unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak brought China's entire offline education industry to a halt at the start of 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, large-scale, national attempts to use technology

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Figure 1. Online share of the education market in China 2016-2020, by sector

Source: Statista.com, 2021



to promote remote learning, distance education, and online learning are emerging and expanding rapidly (World Bank Group, 2020 b). As a result, China's Ministry of Education instructed schools at all levels to postpone in-person exams; requested that all schools postpone the start of the spring semester, and encouraged schools and social education institutions to teach through online formats (http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/202002/t20200206_418480.html). In search of a new paradigm to deliver education amidst the pandemic, the domestic education system and K12 parents all turned to online education.

This chapter discusses the Chinese education technology economy in the “post-COVID-19 era”. As is illustrated, China's online education market has shown an upward trend in the past few years and the market size has been expanding, with the childhood education and K-12 education business being the hottest. Covid-19 and institutional changes have brought about many differences in online education applications. And quality education after the Double Reduction policy in 2021 may become the educational institutions' new direction. Currently, online education in China still faces challenges, such as insufficient software facilities and shortage of teaching talents, and suggestions are made in the end.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHINESE ONLINE EDUCATION MARKET

Online education in China refers to an educational method that applies information technology and Internet technology to disseminate educational content. The online education industry covers early childhood education, K-12 education, adult education and other educational stages.

As indicated in Figure 1, out of the three categories (namely, early childhood and quality-oriented education, K-12 education, and occupational training and adult language education), occupational training and adult language education account for a significant share, that is, 42% of the Edtech market in 2020. Meanwhile, early childhood and quality-oriented education and K-12 education are both growing at a rapid rate of over 100% (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1221013/china-online-share-of-education-market-by-sub-sector/>).

Lei et al. (2021) suggest that online education, as opposed to the more conventional offline education, will overcome the limitation of time and space, and allow Internet users to access education in their spare time. In addition, online education gives consumers more flexibility in terms of the selection of educational brands and teaching methods.

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