Chapter 80
How COVID–19 Has Stimulated Innovation in the Chinese Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 in China's education sector. It will capture the dynamics of the interlinked changing relationships between the availability and use of education technology (EdTech) and the demand for online learning among various stakeholders in the Chinese education market. In addition, this chapter examines whether and how these relationships enhance operational efficiency via transforming the current business models in the sector, in particular due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By analyzing the current practices of the sector, this chapter will critically discuss the challenges and opportunities for technology in education and how these changes in turn drive stakeholders (including students, educators, and regulators) to respond and engage with each other, and how these stakeholder engagements impact the sustainable development of delivery modes, such as digital education and remote learning by using EdTech strategies in the sector.

INTRODUCTION

China's Education Under the New Normal

Education is a critical factor in any strategy to encourage economic development (Pana & Mosora, 2013). There are some circumstances when learners are pushed to the online option, such as being in a war (Rajab, 2018), being a worker, and not having time to attend regular classrooms (Bourne et al., 2005). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on mass gatherings and social distancing requirements have limited in-class teaching, which has resulted in a massive quick shift to online teaching methods (Ratten, 2020). Hence, the ever-growing demand for online instruction, along with the call to include technology in education, has led to the increased use of e-learning to promote positive student learning outcomes (Kowitlawakul et al., 2017). In this connection, e-learning content can be repeated as many times as needed creating a safe learning environment (Paquet & Marchionni, 2015). This chapter aims to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 in China's education sector. It will capture the dynamics of the interlinked changing relationships between the availability and use of education technology (EdTech) and the demand for online learning among various stakeholders in the Chinese education market.

Under COVID-19, China launched the "no class suspension" policy and operated a large-scale online education, which successfully dealt with the crisis of class suspension caused by the epidemic. This strategy formed a new model of online education in practice, which has far-reaching significance for the future development of China's education. In recent years, the potential market size of China's education and training is vast and maintains a rapid development trend. The main body of education in the training market is also expanded from the initial schools to social forces, training companies, or individuals. However, due to the continuous exploitation of the offline market, there is a surplus of offline traditional education and training institutions, so the industry pattern and structure are undergoing a new round of shuffling. Because of the development of EdTech, China can adjust the online education mode in time during the epidemic period. EdTech is used as an innovation of educational methods, and it contains digital education, remote learning, and online education. EdTech market is prominent in China, and its services have transformed the traditional education model in many countries, for the number of stakeholders is vast. For instance, reports show that Chinese parents give priority to children's education. They hope their children can graduate from famous universities and get stable and well-paid jobs.

Moreover, technology is promoting the development and adoption of education in China from a practitioner's perspective. In other words, the application and expectation of Internet technology and online learning technology in the field of educational technology in China are very high. In this connection, the Chinese government has issued several policies to promote the healthy development and fairness of digital and online education and develop "Internet + education," and encourage the development of online education among all eligible subjects. So far, online education in China has covered early childhood education, K12, higher degree education, and occupational education.

The Development of Online Education in the COVID-19 Era

Why is online education so popular? What is fueling the growth of e-learning in China? Compared to the traditional offline education model, online education has outstanding advantages. E-learning is flexible, convenient, and rich in resources; combining with artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other technologies, it can better meet users' personalized needs (Jun, 2020).

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