

EXAMINING THE CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ONLINE EDUCATION FROM THE VIEWS OF BOTH STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN CHINESE AND FLEMISH UNIVERSITIES.

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ABSTRACT

Considering the examination of online education from the viewpoints of students in Chinese universities, the present research aimed to understand the cultural aspects at play. Examining the ways in which cultural norms shaped the acceptance, execution, and results of online education was the primary goal of this study. Using a quantitative study approach, data were gathered from students and teachers at various universities through the distribution of structured questionnaires. Various cultural aspects significantly influenced distance learning approaches, according to the results. Students' evaluations indicated that their participation in digital learning was affected by their dependency on instructor competence and organised instruction, which offered transparency but restricted autonomy and critical thinking. Particularly when trying to encourage free speech and originality, educators found it challenging to adjust to the participatory, student-oriented methods used in online environments. In addition to this, the cultural reliance on learning as a path to social development and the collectivism ideals that underpinned it promoted active engagement and learning among peers. Differences between pupils in urban and rural areas, however, demonstrated the impact of uneven accessibility to technology. According to the research's findings, culturally appropriate techniques that value convention while encouraging creativity are crucial for online education to thrive in China. It has been found that there is an important impact of online learning setting on different Chinese universities. Teachers' professional growth, expenditure on technological infrastructure, and the incorporation of collaborating instruments were the main points of the suggestions. To create accessible, efficient and sustaining online education consequences, Chinese universities had the opportunity to more effectively combine technologies with their cultural context.

Keywords: E-learning; Cultural aspects; Student views; Online education; Chinese universities.

INTRODUCTION

The way Chinese institutions have adapted to and implemented e-learning systems has been greatly influenced by the cultural aspects of distance education. Obedience for superiors, regulation, and teamwork are essential tenets of Chinese education, which has its origins in Confucian practices. Especially regarding teacher-student interactions, involvement in classes, and educative results, these cultural standards impact the character of distance

learning. Conventional Chinese education places a lower priority on student individuality in acquiring knowledge, which means that learners on internet-based courses frequently depend more on teacher leadership. The adoption of international e-learning paradigms that place an emphasis on autonomy, group work, and analysis may be hindered by this (Martha et al., 2021). Chinese institutions have faced these difficulties directly, but online education has also opened fresh possibilities. Accessibility to different worldwide knowledge is made possible through the convergence of digital platforms, which concurrently encourages innovations in education and broadens viewpoints. Nevertheless, to meet the demands of culture, educational institutions should meticulously craft online learning spaces that integrate both conventional administrative frameworks and dynamic, tech-driven methods of instruction. For instance, students' cultural norms around humility and dignity may make them reluctant to speak up in online conversations; however, with well-organised platforms and instructor-directed involvement, this can change. In addition, cultural variables have a role in moulding the way colleges perceive the aim of education. Social advancement and national progress are frequently associated with academic achievement in China (Grothaus, 2022). As a result, online education is considered as an important instrument for increasing availability, boosting productivity, and fostering equitable learning opportunities, rather than only a utility. Innovative hybrid models that show cultural consistency and international applicability are being developed by Chinese colleges by merging conventional norms with new computerised techniques. In summary, Chinese institutions attempt to integrate technology advancement while preserving their cultural identities and fundamental educational values by addressing cultural aspects of online education in their e-learning strategies, delivery, and evaluation.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Despite the obvious societal, socioeconomic, and political distinctions between China proper and the many other regions where Chinese culture is highly prevalent, there remain several fundamental cultural principles shared by all Chinese individuals, whether they call Taiwan, Hong Kong, or mainland China their residence. The fundamental individuality of the Chinese population is bestowed upon them by Chinese culture. Owing to a shared language and a heritage that spans four millennia, these fundamental principles have remained unchanged and distinctive. Despite the many distinctions between individual Chinese residents and their communities, all Chinese culture is based on the same set of fundamental principles. Distinct from both Western and other Eastern civilisations, this assortment of values is distinctive to China (like Japanese culture, for instance) (Wu, 2024). On the other hand, the bond between a teacher and their students is crucial. Some have noted that Confucianism is famous for its emphasis on reverence for elders in the classroom. Firstly, in accordance with Confucian culture, pupils regard their instructors as parents. Educators in conventional China were typically senior men than their learners; as a result, the dynamic between the two corresponded to that of fathers and sons, with the father serving as the authoritative figure. Thus, kids are considered second class citizens compared to their educators. Particularly influential in the context of higher learning, Confucian culture imposes a huge influence on Chinese civilisation

as entirety (Jiang et al., 2022). An individual's perfection, learning capacity, and moral knowledge are essential tenets of Confucianism, which places an emphasis on education first and foremost for the betterment of society. One of the most direct routes to material success and social standing is a good education. By examining specifically at their ideas in important topics including the value of high scores, their confidence with expressing different perspectives to professors and classmates, the significance of hard work, and achievement from effort have been observed. The piano, as a popular and all-ages musical instrument,

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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The study's goal was to investigate at online learning from the cultural points of view of university learners as well as educators in China. Students' and teachers' beliefs, ethics, and ways of interacting were the focus of this study's investigation of the impact of online learning on both parties. The study aimed to determine how cultural norms affected online learning strategies, student engagement, and evaluations of their own performance. Cultural circumstances influenced perceptions towards adopting technology, cooperation, and educational commitment; the research offered an equal assessment by students and professor viewpoints. Furthermore, in this culturally grounded educational context, the initiative aimed to bring attention to the difficulties to students encounter when adjusting to online education. The study looked at the effects of cultural elements on inspiration, participation, and evaluation techniques, including collective behaviour, authoritative reverence, and hierarchy connections. Online education's potential compatibility with or potential disruption of China's long-established educational traditions was another focus of the study. This helped shed light on how culture and e-learning interact with one another. In the end, the project's goal was to provide institutions with information they could use to create online education techniques that are respectful of different cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost every college and university are currently employing some kind of distance learning system to provide its students with course materials and other educational opportunities. Poor graduation rates and high rates of abandonment are problems with online learning. The main reason for this is that students are not motivated or engaged. Regarding the purpose of informing the development of gamified structures, an earlier study attempted to offer a thorough review of the present status of gamification in distance learning within institutions of higher learning. Most gamification components of e-learning systems utilised in colleges and universities include PBL features (such as points, badges, and leader boards), competition levels, and suggestions, according to the study (Khaldi et al., 2023). Lastly, it has been found that unlike organisational gamification, which has been extensively studied, material gamification has received very little attention. The shift towards modification and personalising in gamification has been indicated by the grouping of gamification techniques. Online educational systems in colleges and universities were previously examined in a systematic assessment, which drew comparisons between China and other emerging economies. The need of comprehending the varied strategies and obstacles encountered by these areas is growing as technology keeps revolutionising education across the world. The similarities and differences in the approaches to online education in different locations can be seen by looking at their past progression, notable systems, difficulties, and projects. This comprehensive assessment had effects that go beyond what is currently occurring, providing important factors to think about as e-learning evolves in higher education (Adeniyi et al., 2024). In particular, the results demonstrated how e-learning can transform educational practices, increase accessibility to high-quality learning, and eradicate demographic gaps. Prior research also sought to determine whether the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology-3 (UTAUT-3) model adequately explained academics' willingness to utilise e-learning in the setting of higher educational institutions, with the hope that this would encourage more academics to embrace e-learning (Gunasinghe et al., 2020). Research had discovered that academics' acceptance to e-learning was significantly impacted by achievement expectation, commitment anticipation, favourable circumstances, routine, and emotional incentive. On the other hand, e-learning was not significantly predicted by societal factors or individual IT innovation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do cultural aspects of online education influence student views? What is the impact of student views on Chinese universities?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Researchers evaluated the quantitative data using SPSS 25. Using the odds ratio and 95% confidence interval, researchers were able to determine the size and tendency of mathematical associations. The findings were considered statistically significant when the p-value was less

than 0.05. For structured survey questionnaires, statistical techniques were used to ensure reliability and correctness; for the most essential elements of the data, descriptive statistics were used.

Sampling

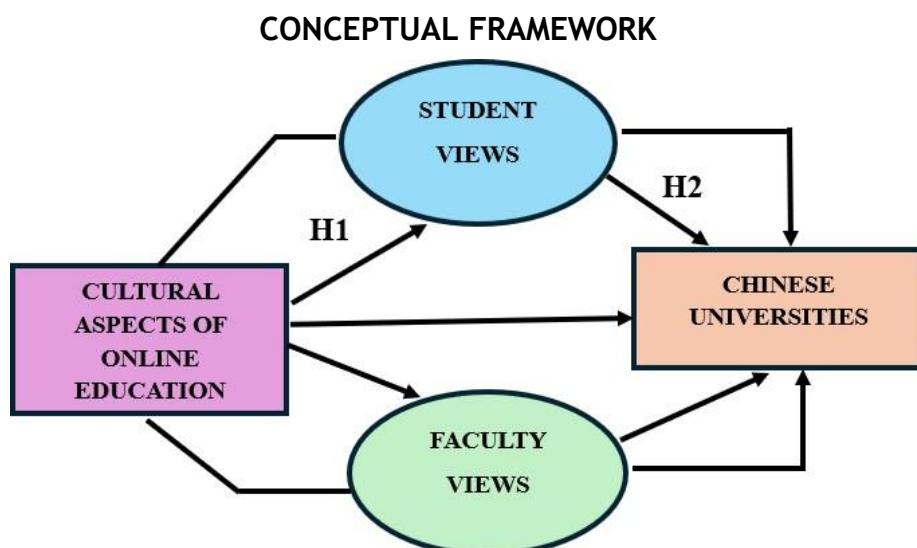
Since a simple random sampling approach was employed, every member of the defined community had an equal opportunity to be selected for the purpose of this research. To construct the study, 753 participants using the Rao-soft software were required. 1,000 questionnaires were distributed electronically at random intervals to individuals who met the sampling criteria. Investigators got 890 replies in total, although 66 were excluded from the final evaluation due to unsatisfactory reliability. Thus, 824 responders were considered because they supplied authentic data.

Data and Measurement

Data were primarily gathered using a standardised questionnaire survey. The questionnaire's two primary elements are (A) demographic data and (B) participants' judgements of the relative merits of various both online and offline mediums, as measured by a 5-point Likert scale. Additional evidence for the primary findings came from secondary data were collected from reliable resources such as formal publications and online web pages.

Statistical Software and Statistical Tools

Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 25 were the equipment employed for data analysis. A descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The investigators used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to check for differences between the two categories and factor analysis (FA) to verify that the assessment's framework was credible. For an improved comprehension of the information as well as the ability to identify significant patterns and correlations, investigators also employed descriptive statistics.



RESULT

Factor Analysis (FA): One way to get to the bottom of seemingly indiscernible data is utilising Factor Analysis (FA). When there are no obvious visual or medical indicators, regression values are frequently utilised in assessments. Finding vulnerabilities, violations, and potential observable links is what simulation is all about. Data collected from multiple regression analyses are evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test. Estimates based on the statistical framework and its sample parameters have proven to be accurate. Possible presence of duplicates could be uncovered by the data. The data becomes more apparent when the ratios are reduced. The researcher receives a number between 0 and 1 from KMO. For an example to be considered satisfactory, the KMO value must be between 0.8 and 1. The following, according to Kaiser, are the permitted categories: The standards that Kaiser has established for authorisation are as follows:

An appalling 0.050 to 0.059; well below the usual range of 0.60 to 0.69; The typical range for middle grades is between 0.70 and 0.79. A quality point score between 0.80 and 0.89. The interval from 0.90 to 1.00 astounds them. According to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin scale: 0.951. The results of Bartlett's test of Sphericity are as follows: 3768.753 is the approximate chi-square value; 190 is degrees of freedom (df); sig =.000.

Table 1. Examination of KMO and Bartlett's Sampling Adequacy.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.951
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3768.753
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

In majority of instances, this makes it easy to apply the requirements for selection. If the correlation matrices showed statistical significance, then the researchers determined it using Bartlett's Assessment of Sphericity. A sample, which have a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score of 0.951, is to be considered sufficiently vast. The p-value of 0.00 has resulted from the Bartlett's Sphericity test. The correlation matrices are not unique, as confirmed by the positive outcome of Bartlett's Sphericity test.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Cultural aspects of online education: The cultural setting has a significant impact on the development, implementation, and reception of online education. Both students' and instructors' interactions with technological devices and the organisation of distance learning

programmes are shaped by norms of culture, conventions, and beliefs. In these types of settings, students could feel more at ease with instructor-supervised lessons rather than more autonomous or participatory online options (Virvou et al., 2023). The opposite is true in individualistic cultures like several Western countries, where online education is seen as a chance for students to learn at their own pace, participate freely in class discussions, and work together to solve problems. While certain learners may feel comfortable speaking up in class discussions, others may be more reserved out of regards to authority or humility, both of which can be influenced by cultural norms. Further cultural elements that impact online learning include vocabulary, interpersonal techniques, and perspectives on technology. Students from more technologically advanced cultures may find it easier to navigate online resources, while those from less tech-savvy backgrounds may struggle owing to a lack of awareness (Ghosh et al., 2021). Both the reception of online education and its ability to provide useful educational opportunities across varied contexts are ultimately influenced by cultural characteristics.

MEDIATING VARIABLE

Student views: Student views on studying online are frequently contradictory, highlighting both the benefits and drawbacks of this kind of learning. The convenience of being able to study whenever and wherever it is most convenient for them is a major selling point of online education. Those combining schoolwork, employment, and domestic obligations will appreciate this versatility the most (Abdur Rehman et al., 2021). Online education also gives learners exposure to many digital materials, collaborative instruments, and possibilities for international learning, all of which they perceive as enhancing their educational experiences. Studying online presents both opportunities and obstacles, according to some students. Solitude and an absence of drive might result from not being able to talk to teachers and classmates in person. Additional challenges to their perspective come from technological issues, such as unreliable internet connections or a lack of available digital gadgets (Maatuk et al., 2022). Additionally, numerous learners question if online education is as legitimate as conventional classroom training and while online evaluations are as successful.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Chinese universities: Considering the fast technological shift caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, online education has become a more integral part of Chinese universities' educational institutions. Many Chinese universities have embraced hybrid educational approaches, which integrate online courses with conventional classroom instruction to provide students with more freedom and access to more materials. Both local and multinational students have been able to take advantage of the exceptional online instruction and massive open online courses (MOOCs) offered by highly regarded colleges including Peking and Tsinghua University (Bao, 2020). Learners in Chinese universities like digital education's adaptability, availability and diversified resources for learning, collaborative systems, and international learning chances. Uneven availability of technological resources, curriculum

effectiveness, and online student engagement are persistent issues. Cultural elements like regard for instructor authorities and organised education affect how pupils adjust to digital settings (Cui et al., 2021). Chinese universities also encourage adequate technological development, internationalisation, and diversity, making China a worldwide pioneer in higher education.

Relationship between cultural aspects of online education and student views: The relationship between cultural aspects of online learning and student views is apparent in how students interpret and communicate with virtual surroundings. Confucian customs, which stress the power of teachers, dignity, and collaborative learning, have a significant impact on educational institutions in several nations, including China (Chan, 2024). As an outcome, learners have been exposed to the world of online education via the lenses of cultural preferences, preconceived notions, and prescriptive direction from teachers instead of totally individualised learning outcomes. Student engagement and communication are influenced by cultural factors as well. Learners from cultures that place a premium on decorum and deference to authority may be less likely to speak up in class debates or question the validity of others' arguments. Online platforms may be seen by learners from cultures that value freedom of speech and personal development as places where they may openly communicate ideas and work together (Mensah et al., 2022). Concurrently, students' outlooks might be altered by the novel opportunities presented by online learning. Students can gain self-assurance, flexibility, and the capacity to study on their own when they are exposed to a variety of educational methods, engaging resources, and interactive environments from across the world. Consequently, students' perspectives on online learning are influenced by their cultural experiences and change over time. The subsequent hypotheses about the relationship between cultural aspects of online education and student views were developed based on whatever has previously been established at this stage:

“H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between cultural aspects of online education and student views.”

“H₁: There is a significant relationship between cultural aspects of online education and student views.”

Table 2. H1 ANOVA Test.

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36,487.840	292	4576.587	825.432	0.000
Within Groups	320.770	531	7.286		
Total	36,808.61	823			

Important details were uncovered by the examination. Considering the alpha criteria, there is a difference that is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value of 825.432 and the p-value of 0.000. The findings indicated that the “*H₁: There is a significant relationship between cultural aspects of online education and student views*” has been accepted, and the null hypothesis has been rejected.

Relationship between student views and Chinese universities: There are advantages and disadvantages to distance learning, as shown by the correlation between student opinions and Chinese colleges' policies on the matter. When it comes to conquering geographic or organisational obstacles, numerous learners find that digital platforms offer the versatility and connectivity they need. Conventional demands for classroom instruction may be at odds with their worries about less communication, fewer applications for involvement, and an excessive dependence on independent learning (Mensah et al., 2022). Conversely, Chinese educational institutions are making efforts to reconcile student viewpoints with organisational objectives. Their goal is to incorporate electronic resources into the classroom in a way that maintains the cultural norms and rigorous academic standards that are deeply ingrained in China's pedagogical heritage (Chan, 2024). To meet the requirements of their students for more participatory learning experiences while yet preserving instructor competence and a well-structured curriculum, institutions are turning to mixed systems. The importance of student input in enhancing online courses, especially in the domains of digital assistance, participation, and evaluation is acknowledged by institutions. The researchers in the present investigation intended to assess the following hypothesis about the relationship between student views and Chinese universities depending upon what has already been stated at this point:

“*H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between student views and Chinese universities.*”

“*H₂: There is a significant relationship between student views and Chinese universities.*”

Table 3. H2 ANOVA Test.

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	52,723.773	292	8604.866	967.223	0.000
Within Groups	528.479	531	8.952		
Total	53,252.252	823			

The investigation found some significant things. The F-value is 967.223 and the p-value is 0.000, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference under the 0.05 alpha standard. The results determined that the “*H₂: There is a significant relationship between student views and Chinese universities*” has been accepted, and the null hypothesis has been rejected.

DISCUSSION

The study found that cultural aspects shaped online learning efficacy in Chinese universities. Learners and educators agreed that collective thinking, authoritarian interactions between educators and pupils, and examination-focused learning shaped technological usage. Online education offered versatility, convenience, and international connectedness, but cultural standards and instructional and educational techniques influenced its effects. Learners expected teacher leadership and organised guidance when studying online. This dependency restricted individual education and analytical thinking but gave online learning environments structure and regularity. Teachers also found it difficult to adapt conventional teaching techniques to engaging and student-focused strategies, particularly when using digital contexts, to encourage open conversation and intellectual curiosity. Regardless of these restrictions, cultural elements did play a favourable role. Collectivism encouraged participation in internet forums, collective initiatives, and peer-to-peer education. Students regarded their online classes very seriously because of the cultural value placed on knowledge as a path to social mobility. Dissimilar accessibility to online resources affected engagement and results, perpetuating inequities amongst cities and rural students. In general, the research showed that cultural norms and technical advancements had to be seamlessly merged for online education in China to be successful. Higher learning needs culturally appropriate ways to improve participation, inclusion, as well as efficiency in future generations.

CONCLUSION

The investigation discovered that the efficiency and acceptance of distance learning in Chinese universities were greatly affected by cultural aspects. Conventions including collective thinking, authoritarian relationships between educators and pupils, and examination-oriented learning impacted the implementation and practical experience of online education, according to both students and professors. While educators struggled to make the transition to more participatory and student-focused methods, students depended significantly on guidance from their instructors, providing organisation but restricted flexibility. The investigation advised universities to create culturally appropriate online education platforms that followed Chinese customs and progressively promoted independence and analytical thinking. Collective learning practices including cooperative assignments and peer guidance were recommended for institutions. Investments in infrastructure in rural areas and educational opportunities were also needed to address the gap in digital literacy. The research investigation recommended that Chinese educational institutions may improve diversity, participation, and ongoing viability in digital educational settings by connecting online education with cultural norms and implementing progressive revolution.

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