

## Rethinking about MOOC: MOOC and Confucius' Study Tour

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**Abstract.** The paper introduced the overview of Confucius's Study Tour and the meaning of MOOC, compared and analyzed the same characteristics with MOOC and Confucius' Study Tour, then concluded the teaching value and educational significant of MOOC and Confucius' Study Tour for modern education.

### Introduction

With 5000 years of civilization, China has 5000 years of education history, and "study tour" is the early form of education activities in ancient China. With the rapid development of modern educational technology and the gradual popularization of higher education, will the traditional "study tour" have teaching value and educational significance for the development of modern education?

### Confucius' Study Tour

"Study tour" is an important life activity of ancient Chinese intellectuals [1]. In the development of "study tour", Confucius was one of the earliest sages to carry out tourist learning. He pioneered private schools and civilian education, led his disciples to travel from state to state and initiated "study tour" to teach. Confucius often inspired and taught his disciples on the way of mountains, rivers and fields in nature. What he saw, heard, felt and thought during his journey were recorded, which became a solid foundation and source of Confucianism and had a long history to show the learning and dissemination of later generations.

Confucius's "study tour" is a way of visiting teachers and learning, teaching and official affairs, investigating society [2]. The Master said, "When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them." (The Analects) [3]

During his many years of study tours, Confucius visited various places to seek historical sites and understand the people's conditions, to understand the world in the beauty of natural mountains and rivers, to experience different customs and customs in extensive inquiry, to learn rich regional culture and political and religious customs, and to broadcast his own political ideas and political propositions.

"Study tour" not only made Confucius one of the earliest cultural communicators in China [4], but also the pioneer of ancient "Tourist learning". Confucius initiated the culture of "traveling to study" of ancient Chinese scholars. Of course, there were many Chinese scholars who participated behind him. From the Spring and Autumn Period to the Qin and Han Dynasties, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang Dynasties, Song Dynasty, Yuan Dynasty, Ming and Qing Dynasties, "Study tour" became a tradition of ancient Chinese education, and the spirit of "study tour" continued to develop, evergreen and innovative heritage.

### MOOC

MOOC, Massive Open Online Course, is commonly translated as "Mu Course" [5] in China. MOOC teaching model originated from open courses based on the internet, which can be traced back to 2008. It was proposed by Dave Cormier of Prince Edward Island University in Canada for the teaching practice of online courses [6].

Since then, many famous universities have tried this course model. In 2011, former Stanford University professor Sebastian Thrun's online course "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" and Stanford University professor Andrew Ng's online course "Machine Learning" were registered by more than 100,000 people from all over the world. In 2012, they founded Udacity, Coursera Platform [7], MIT and Harvard University invested to create edX[7].

Many MOOC platforms, with the aim of mass education and the enthusiastic participation and recognition of network learners, offer more excellent course resources of the world's top universities free online to people all over the world on the open resource platform. Since then, the MOOC storm has swept the world, setting off the climax of MOOC learning and MOOC research all over the world. In 2012, MOOC received unprecedented attention. This year is called "Year of MOOC [6]". Many countries, Britain, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Australia, Japan, India and other countries also launched their own MOOC platforms. In China, Tsinghua University formally joined American education platform edX in May 2013.

The development of MOOC has brought about a subversive impact on education. Significant changes have taken place in the teaching mode and curriculum mode. The popularity of MOOC has created a crisis in today's higher education and modern education. Some people even believe that some universities will disappear due to MOOC in the near future. Is MOOC a huge opportunity or a serious challenge? What kind of value and significance will MOOC bring to modern education?

### **MOOC and Confucius "Study tour"**

The characteristics of MOOC come from its name, which is massive, open and online. On the one hand, it can improve the quality of teaching by combining intramural teaching with information technology. On the other hand, the most important thing is that MOOC courses are free and open, which bring more opportunity of systematic learning for more people. This large-scale, wide-ranging and free course learning, like a torch of hope, ignites people's enthusiasm for learning.

It is necessary to rethink the educational value of MOOC now. Some common characteristics of MOOC and "study tour" are found in the rethinking, and some enlightenments for higher education reform are realized.

**Civilian Education.** Coursera, Udacity, edX etc., and such as Netease Online Open Course, China University MOOC etc. MOOC platforms, were originally published online open courses to promote online education. Just like going to college online, learners can learn public courses free of charge through special learning and management systems, and eventually get course certificates after passing examinations, which brings more opportunities for those who miss or aspire to go to college for studying systematically. This model is very in line with the needs of the development of education in China, and fully reflects the current educational reform policies which to benefit the whole people. And this is also reflected in the spirit of Confucius "study tour", Confucius pioneered civilian education, opened private schools, accepted disciples, and provided more people with opportunities for learning and communication. What MOOC and Confucius "study tour" can offer to all levels is access, free or inexpensive, and they can enjoy and participate in the educational opportunities themselves.

**Humanistic Education.** With the rapid development of information technology and the gradual deepening of educational reform, as well as the proposal of lifelong education, it is still of great significance for modern education to take a panoramic view of ancient China's "study tour". Confucius' "positive participation and active accession to the reality", Chuang Tzu's "free and unfettered", and thought of "seeking truth and reality", and the "practical learning practice" of "study tour" spirit, the cultural character of Chinese scholars are still suitable for modern humanities education, which has a positive demonstration significance.

Higher education is becoming more and more popular. The boundary between non-academic education and academic education is gradually weakening. The purpose of education is not only to obtain diploma, but to "charge" with knowledge. Through education, we can enrich knowledge, master skills, improve humanistic quality and enhance realm and enrich life.

With the continuous development of MOOC, more and more free courses and high-quality learning videos are released, not only for universities, but also for students, working groups, freelance professionals, retirees and so on, which have many high-quality and high-participation courses for special needs. And more courses on humanistic quality and related skills can be offered for everyone who is aware of promoting.

**Educational Resources.** Confucius founded private schools to a large extent to make up for many shortcomings of official schools. He led his disciples to travel around the states, and led more aspiring scholars to participate in them. On the other hand, "study tour" spreads cultural exchanges from one region to another, provides a vast open learning space for thirsty scholars, and virtually coordinates the unbalanced development of educational resources.

The massive, open and abundant online courses offered by MOOC platform also cover a wide range of areas. As early as 2013, Coursera offered 434 courses of the world's top universities[7]; Udemy website released nearly 5,000 courses in 2012[6]...Netease launched 1,200 episodes of public courses of world-class universities such as Harvard University in the first batch of the "Global Famous School Video Open Course Project"[8]. There are launched more than 1,000 courses at top-quality universities such as Peking University and Tsinghua University in the first batch of courses offered by MOOC of China University[9]. These open courses cover cultural history, arts and humanities, financial, architecture, technical science and other aspects, including self-promotion, technical skills, humanistic quality and other basic, applied and humanistic content, providing a rich and varied learning platform for everyone who thirsting and aspiring to study, fundamentally breaking the unbalanced distribution of educational resources, and achieving the goal that all people can share high-quality educational resources.

**Educational model.** Confucius advocated the three realms of "knowing, doing well and enjoying learning"[10]. His "study tour" education mode was flexible, which satisfied the enthusiasm and desire of aspiring people to study. It had a pioneering significance to the learning methods and concepts of ancient China, and also had a great impact on modern education. With the continuous development of modern educational technology, MOOC is a refreshing educational model. MOOC platform provides learners with learning services such as course video, course discussion, online testing, etc. It is not limited by time and space, geographical and national constraints, and learners can enjoy open courses from top universities all over the world. However, although learners are actively registered on the MOOC platform, whether they can adhere to the course and study seriously is also a very concerned and controversial issued.

This non-face-to-face MOOC class model needs to mobilize learners' enthusiasm, initiative and participation, which is similar to Confucius' teaching. Confucius set an example persistently in his teaching, in the Analects of Confucius, we can also read Confucius' questions along the lines of good guidance and heuristic situational education through moral dialogue. Confucius encouraged students to ask questions freely to guide students to think independently and participate actively. In MOOC teaching, it is necessary to develop a new method and style with the interactive mode of forum discussion, online question answering and flipping classroom etc. to try to mobilize learners' enthusiasm and promote learners to adhere to the completion of curriculum learning.

**Educational Exchange.** From 2500 years ago, Confucius "study tour" to more than 1200 Confucius institutes and classrooms in 123 regions around the world today[11], Confucius "traveled learning around the world" to disseminate academic culture and academic ideas, opened a door for cultural exchange, and shouldered the responsibility of culture exchange.

MOOC changes the mode of classroom teaching, which not only brings more opportunities and challenges to higher education and quality education [12], but also lays a solid foundation for the development of lifelong education. With the rapid development of the Internet, international cultural exchanges are becoming more and more important. With the rise and promotion of MOOC, different educational systems and forms of running schools are also quietly rising. To rethink the role of MOOC in modern education, the reform of educational mode and system brought about by MOOC has set up a new way of international cultural exchange, strengthened educational exchanges and cooperation among regions and countries, and also played an important role in cultural exchange[13].

## Conclusion

Of course, Confucius is not the only one in the Chinese traditional "study tour", there are many "study tour" inheritors and practitioners after him. Unlike the traditional "study tour", there are some differences. Different from the traditional "study tour", MOOC is the product of the combination of information technology and modern education [14]. Some experts criticize MOOC for lacking interaction between teachers and students, lacking of learning supervision and urge, which makes many learners unable to insist on completing course learning independently, but some experts are confident that MOOC will replace some colleges and universities.

No matter how brilliant MOOC is, it is not all-powerful after rethinking. MOOC also has its own limitations [15]. It is a challenge, an opportunity and also a crisis. Only by reorganizing its characteristics and limitations, seizing its essence, taking this opportunity, can it play an important role in China's educational reform and has a great influence on modern education.

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