The Post-Epidemic Era: an Analysis of Students' Recessive Truancy in Online Classroom Universities Using Bourdieu's Field Theory

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Abstract: The breakout of the COVID-19 virus in early 2020 prompted a huge global movement in support of online teaching and learning techniques. While online education has made a great contribution to education throughout the pandemic by breaking down barriers of time and location, recessive truancy among students has been widespread and diversified. This article examines the forms and causes of recessive truancy in online classes in Chinese universities during the epidemic, as well as students' coping strategies and teachers' responses, through the lens of Bourdieu's field theory, with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness of online teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in early 2020 and its rapid spread around the world constitute a global public health disaster. Until a vaccine is produced and made available, restricting large-scale human mobility is one of the most efficient ways to break the chain of transmission and contain the outbreak.

In the field of education, school closure[1] is a critical non-pharmaceutical intervention that aids in the protection of public health against the spread of epidemic diseases. It includes the closure of school buildings, suspension of live classroom instruction, listening, and dismissal or evacuation of staff and students. As of 5 April 2020, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that countrywide school closures have been implemented in 193 countries, affecting 1.596 billion pupils, or 92.5 percent of all registered students[2] . Closing learning while continuing to use online platforms for teaching and learning is also a possibility in a number of nations worldwide[3] . On 29 January 2020, one of them, the Chinese Ministry of Education, mandated the use of online platforms for teaching and learning. Since then, an unprecedented and one of the largest online education practices has begun, posing a whole new set of challenges for teachers and students alike.

2. Concepts Definitions

(i)Post-epidemic era

The post-epidemic era, in which viruses do not vanish completely as one might expect, but rather remain a constant risk of small outbreaks, with out-of-country imports and seasonal episodes occurring on a sporadic basis over an extended period of time, with far-reaching effects on all aspects of society's developmental functioning[11][12].

(ii) Recessive truancy

The expression refers to pupils who are' present but not present '[5], that is, students who arrive on time and appear to engage actively, but do not listen to the teacher and are free to pursue their own interests. In contrast to the term 'dominant truancy' that has been bandied around in the past, the distinction between dominant and recessive truancy is whether the student is on time for class[7]. Thus, the most distinguishing feature of recessive truancy is that it embodies truancy yet does not appear to violate school regulations.

3. Research Questions

During the epidemic, the "presence of tools" displaced the "presence of teachers and students," and technology obscured the subjectivity of instruction and learning[5], with some students' lack of self-discipline resulting in distraction and non-participation. In other words, truancy occurs in online classrooms, particularly recessive truancy, in which students appear to be 'online' but are not actively participating in class, a significant factor affecting online teaching and learning.

In the post-epidemic era, humanity as a community must take the initiative to change educational methods[4]. Additionally, as technological support evolves, Internet+ education is gradually becoming an indispensible component of the education sector, and online classes will become a necessary tool in the future of education.

As a result, the following questions are posed in this study.

1)What are the different types of recessive truancy experienced by students enrolled in online classes?

2)What factors contribute to students' recessive truancy in the online classroom?

3)What strategies do students use to deal with absenteeism in an online classroom?

4)How does the teacher respond to recessive truancy in the online classroom?

4. Theoretical Foundations

This essay makes use of P. Bourdieu's field theory as a lens for analysis. Bourdieu defines a field as "a network or configuration of objective relations between objectively defined positions." [8][10] Fields are constructed by members of society in accordance with a particular logic, and these objective relations, which are based on a particular internal logic, can be expressed as domination or collaboration relations. Capital is the glue that holds these relationships together: unlike the definition of capital employed by economists, capital is accumulated labor, a resource that is exclusively appropriated by agents or groups[10]. Thus, agents with money and a specific position in the field choose methods to maintain or increase their position, while reinforcing the field's principles that benefit them. Simultaneously, external variables affecting the field do not operate directly on the agents, but rather launch a new shaping process in the form, forces, and connections unique to the field, prior to having an effect on the agents[5][8]. The subject of research is the online classroom, the external socioeconomic component is the new COVID-19 epidemic, and student learning is connected to the epidemic via online teaching and learning, i.e. the COVID-19 epidemic influences the ecology of student learning indirectly.

According to Bourdieu, field perspective research consists of three components: capital, relations, and habitus[8][9], with the agent serving as a human link between them. The interaction between online teaching and learning in universities during the epidemic is viewed as an objective field

space in which both teachers and students are agents with their own capital. The teacher's capital is composed of the right to teach online as a profession and a personal understanding of how to teach online, whereas the student's capital is composed of economic, cultural, and social forms. The teacher-student relationship is one of both dominance and collaboration. In certain circumstances, the teacher is dominating and the student is subordinate, and the relationship has shifted from a physical face-to-face interaction to an online audio-visual interaction. However, the relationship between teacher and student can be influenced by the teacher's own traditional teaching habits and life circumstances, particularly when students struggle to adapt to online teaching methods or are influenced by other factors, and may engage in opportunistic behavior to avoid online teaching, which can manifest as 'recessive truancy.'

5. Forms of Truancy

The online classroom accentuates students' "recessive truancy" behavior; "physical presence and cognitive absence" or "physical presence (online) but not mental presence" are the distinctive characteristics of truancy in the online classroom.

(i) Taking the opportunity to have fun

The online classroom is a vehicle for teaching and learning, where the physical classroom with teachers and students present becomes a virtual classroom with mobile phones and computers as carriers. In this field, the role of mobile phones and computers has changed, from the entertainment tool they often served in the former epidemic era to the primary medium for undertaking students' lessons. However, in students' daily lives, computers and mobile phones have become a major impediment to their learning. A survey[6] shows that more than half of students are unable to concentrate on their studies because they play with their mobile phones after school, more than 30% of university students play with their mobile phones frequently in class, and more than 40% of university students have been criticised for playing with their mobile phones in class. When an entertainment tool that once hindered learning becomes a necessary learning tool in the context of online teaching and learning, its negative habitus may explode in the short term, thus weakening its own positive effect on learning.

Students frequently use another smart electronic device (e.g., a smartphone, a computer, or a tablet) to chat with friends, play games, catch up on TV shows, and read novels while attending online classes. This means that one device "connected" to the online class demonstrates the ability to attend class on time while simultaneously using the other smart device for entertainment, relying solely on the auditory presence. Additionally, this form of truancy necessitates a large number of devices and network conditions, and the economic capital demonstrated in this field (online classes during the epidemic) is significantly more advantageous than in economically depressed areas.

(ii) Tied up with chores

Due to the pandemic, the initial field of physical education has been displaced by the family, and the student's function has slightly changed as a result. The student's position in the family is not just that of a student; it is also that of a family member, partaking in the family's duties and serving as the family's 'workforce.' When a student's role conflicts with that of a family member, and the latter's role requires physical proximity to the field, the student in the online classroom is frequently 'absent in form,' referring to a purely auditory presence, because he or she has departed from the specific physical environment (such as a desk) required for online teaching. Students are confronted with a variety of domestic duties in their home setting, including welcoming guests, cooking, and drying clothing. Due to traditional Chinese family principles such as filial piety, students frequently opt out of class by wearing headphones and performing home duties.

(iii) Physical Departure

Online education eliminates the physical classroom space associated with traditional education, disguising the teacher's subjectivity, while allowing students to expand their horizons beyond the physical sphere of the home, facilitated by the inherent features of technology. When kids leave the confines of their home domain and enter society, they encounter a more complicated learning environment. Students may leave the home field to visit parents, relatives, friends, or coworkers, or for personal reasons such as picking up siblings from school, shopping, meeting friends, attending a family meal, or visiting the hospital. Due to the complexity of the tasks students perform in these out-of-home arenas (e.g., going to the hospital requires registration, listening to numbers, and seeing a doctor), even though students wear headphones, the headphones serve only to monitor classroom movement and are intended to be used for teacher checks (e.g. roll call, questions, etc.). The student's body is therefore displaced from the field of view, while the sense of hearing is also displaced significantly.

6. Reasons for Recessive Truancy: Field, Habitus and Context

If online education is considered a field during the epidemic, the agents inside it, teachers and students, interact by utilizing the capital at their disposal, and the process of interaction is influenced by both parties' behavioral habitus [8][10]. From the student's perspective, the truancy habitus becomes more obvious when the teaching field shifts from a fixed physical area to an online space in which the teacher's subjectivity is disguised by instrumentality.

(i)The field: weak monitoring power

The outbreak occurred quickly, and the teaching space was also rapidly transformed from offline to online, making it difficult for teachers and students to adjust in such a short amount of time and damaging teaching relationships. During the epidemic, the majority of teachers did not require students to turn on their webcams during online instruction, and some teachers did not turn on their own. When neither professors nor students turned on the camera, it was impossible for both to see one other, producing a sensation of 'distance', 'illusory', and 'separation'. Additionally, some students believe that the teacher cannot see them, fostering the belief that "the teacher has no idea what I'm doing," demonstrating that online education is less regulated. On the other hand, online teaching systems frequently have a replay option, which enables students to rely on them. Unlike in offline classes, when missing a class means missing out on content, the cost of missing a class in online classes is smaller.

(ii) Habitus: weak self-control

Behavioral habitus, according to Bourdieu, are stable and permanent from the moment they are created, and experience reinforces them [10][8]. According to Muraven and Baumeister (2000) [14], self-control refers to an individual's ability to actively suppress impulses, desires, and self-regulation in order to facilitate the achievement of long-term goals. Thus, self-control is a solid behavioral habitus that an individual develops. As a result, students who lack self-discipline in the offline world but have acquired a habitus of recessive truancy in the online realm will continue to miss courses. Additionally, the online classroom's flaws will promote this agent's (the student with a lack of self-control) habitus of truancy in that particular field (online teaching).

(iii) Situation: Household chores

During an epidemic, the teaching field shifts from school to home, and various disturbances to students will result from the home's physical and social environment. Individual behavior is determined by the field, according to K. Koffka [13], and it is worth noting that individual behavior encompasses not only easily observable physical movements associated with the field, but also individual experiences such as psychological changes, i.e. the behavioral environment. Thus, home schooling, as well as numerous living situations such as family membership structures and

relationships, as well as neighborhood relationships, can all have a range of negative effects on students' brains and bodies, resulting in the potential of truancy. When parents disregard their children's position as students, as indicated above, students 'have to' skip school in order to assist with childcare, transport children to and from school, eat together, and shop.

7. Coping after Truancy: Self-Help and Mutual Help

Bourdieu views fields as being teeming with power, referring to persons contending in fields that each have a dominant and a dominated, and that every domination entails confrontation [5][10][9]. The logic of confrontation is capital, and the agents use their capital to consolidate and optimize their position in the field. Bourdieu asserts that "those who control a certain field have the ability to manipulate it to their advantage." The teacher's capital in the field of online instruction is his or her pedagogical power, and he or she attempts to maintain order and authority in the classroom through a variety of monitoring strategies, such as random check-in times and random roll-call questions. However, it does not appear that teachers will easily accomplish their goal of monitoring students in the online field because students, as another agent in the field, employ strategies to improve their position in the field. These strategies can be classified as self-help or mutual help.

(i) Self-help

The most common method of self-preservation is to use a variety of excuses to explain one's absence, such as missing check-in or failing to respond to a teacher's inquiry. In the case of online education, the most frequently used excuse is a problem with network circumstances, such as network lag caused by signal difficulties, a lack of equipment or unfamiliarity with the equipment, or a power outage. In most circumstances, the teacher chooses to believe the student and provides a another opportunity, such as signing in or repeating the question.

(ii) Mutual help

Even though students do not interact in the online teaching space, they can communicate effectively with one another through the internet, and in a more discrete and undetectable manner than they could in the offline teaching space. The key objective of this technique is to leverage the characteristics of online teaching strategies: online delays and the utilization of time windows to solicit assistance from classmates in order to accomplish the goal of suppressing truancy (completing the essence of the act of truancy, but still ostensibly not breaking school rules). For instance, in the event of signing in, 'reminding' classmates in advance so that they can alert the instructor to the truant when it is time to sign in or take roll. More helpful techniques emerge in terms of questioning, such as truancy, where truant pupils are frequently cognitively absent from the hearing presence and thus seek assistance from their classmates via the internet as soon as possible to fix the 'crisis' when the teacher asks questions.

8. Consequences of Truancy: Teachers' Responses

Penalties and records. During epidemic online education, the majority of teachers will increase the percentage of normal grades, i.e. increase the percentage of process assessments, in order to prevent students from skipping class to the greatest extent possible. Teachers frequently record roll calls in person or utilize an online platform to monitor data, which means that student absenteeism will damage their typical score, and the stakes are much higher with an increased percentage of process evaluations, which will have a greater impact on their final grade.

9. Conclusion

Recessive truancy by students was prominent in online classes during the epidemic. The main forms of truancy were taking the opportunity to have fun, being tied up with chores and being physically present. The sense of "distance" created by the inability to meet in the online classroom is a direct cause of recessive truancy, the weakness of individual self-control is a fundamental cause of recessive truancy, and the home environment as a context is also an important factor in whether students choose to skip class. In this context, students tend to use two coping strategies, namely self-help, i.e. looking for excuses, or mutual help, i.e. asking for help from peers in order to achieve the goal of recessive truancy. Teachers, in turn, use different strategies to punish students in order to stop their truancy behaviour, such as raising the stakes of process evaluation.

As the globe approaches the post-epidemic period, humans will be forced to accept long-term coexistence with viruses. When combined with the development of the information society, the growth of large-scale online education is an unavoidable trend for the future of education. As a result, it is critical to analyze recessive truancy in online teaching and learning in order to maximize the effectiveness of this new form of education: online education.

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