An Investigation into the Current Status of Online-Offline Hybrid Teaching Competence among International Chinese Language Teachers and Strategies for Response: A Case Study of Regional Undergraduate Universities

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Abstract: *In modern educational practices, the blended teaching model that integrates online and offline approaches is becoming increasingly common. In September 2022, the "International Standards for the Professional Competence of Chinese Language Teachers" published by the International Society for Chinese Language Teaching outlined the requirements for blended Chinese language teaching. This study seeks to gain a deep understanding of the blended teaching competencies of instructors teaching Master's level courses in International Chinese Education and the challenges they face in their development. Through surveys and interviews, it was found that while instructors have strong skills and experience in offline teaching, there is a need for improvement in their use of online teaching platforms and tools, as well as in their mastery of online instructional design and interactive methods. Teachers generally agree that teacher training, institutional support, and abundant resources are key factors in improving the literacy of blended teaching online and offline. The research proposes several strategies, including providing training on blended teaching theory for teachers, strengthening infrastructure construction and technological platform training, and encouraging teachers to adapt their educational philosophy to ensure ample teaching materials and conditions for online learning are available. This study aims to offer insights and suggestions to global Chinese language education instructors on how to optimize their blended teaching capabilities, thereby promoting an overall enhancement of teacher quality and improvements in classroom efficacy.*

Keywords: *International Chinese Language Teachers; Blended Online and Offline Integration; Pedagogical Competence; Current Situation Survey; Response Strategies*

1. Introduction

With the rise of information technology and the widespread use of the internet, the blended learning model, which combines online and offline teaching, has become a significant topic in the current education sector, demanding our close attention. In the realm of international Chinese education, blended learning has been widely adopted and popularized. The proficiency of teachers in blended teaching, both online and offline, has emerged as a crucial factor influencing the quality and effectiveness of teaching. The "Ten-Year Development Plan for Education Informatization (2011–2020)" emphasized the necessity to update teaching concepts, enhance teaching methods, promote information technology, and utilize new tools and platforms to improve teaching effectiveness.

In September 2022, the International Chinese Language Education Society introduced the "International Chinese Language Teacher Professional Competence Standard" [1]. This standard, initiated by the China National Institute for Foreign Language Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, was collaboratively developed by well-known domestic and international universities, social organizations, and business entities. Its aim is to offer guidelines and a foundation for the talent cultivation, competence assessment, professional development, and career planning of international Chinese language teachers. Chapter 6, Section 3 of the "International Chinese Language Teacher Professional Competence Standard" outlines the professional competence indicators of international Chinese language teachers, including professional philosophy, professional knowledge, professional

skills, professional practice, and professional development. In the domain of professional skills, it explicitly details the competence standard for "educational technology." While the fifth item in the competence standard specifically addresses online and offline Chinese language teaching, the other items, though not explicitly stating "online," play a significant supporting role in the development of competence in online Chinese language teaching. It is apparent that the "International Chinese Language Teacher Professional Competence Standard" already encompasses relevant requirements for competence in online and offline Chinese language teaching. Consequently, the competence in online and offline Chinese language teaching has become a crucial component of the professional competence of international Chinese language teachers.

Currently, the level of educational informatization in underdeveloped areas of China is not high, warranting exploration of how to enhance the ability of these teachers to apply information technology in the teaching process. Simultaneously, educational informatization is also a crucial means to promote international Chinese education, playing an essential role in the internationalization of Chinese. This paper, based on the theory of teaching literacy, takes local undergraduate colleges as an example, conducts an in-depth investigation and research analysis on the teaching informatization literacy of international Chinese teachers in the current underdeveloped areas of China, and proposes some useful strategies for reference by relevant professional teachers.

2. Relevant Theories

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Blended Learning Competencies in Online and Offline Contexts

The selection and application of theories for blended teaching literacy will influence teachers' strategic choices in different teaching environments. Proficiency in using relevant teaching and learning theories with digital technology can enhance the blended teaching literacy of international Chinese language teachers. Therefore, the comprehensive application of relevant theories to serve blended teaching in online and offline modes is crucial. The theory of blended learning based on constructivist learning theory has been widely adopted in Chinese universities. The Chinese Ministry of Education currently emphasizes educational informatization theory, advocating the discontinuation of "water classes" while promoting the development of blended "gold classes" in both online and offline modes. Educational informatization includes blended teaching literacy, a focal point of this study. While theories of blended teaching are becoming clearer, their application in international Chinese education is relatively limited and warrants further research, with implications for the improvement of teaching philosophies, teaching modes, and classroom instruction in online Chinese language teaching.

This study focuses on the research of blended teaching literacy for international Chinese language teachers in both online and offline settings. Although the research scope is narrowed down to international Chinese language teachers in the Master program, fundamentally, it aims to promote the development of teachers' teaching capabilities. The blended teaching literacy of teachers in both online and offline settings remains the theoretical foundation of this research. Utilizing the theory of blended teaching in both online and offline settings, this paper acknowledges that this theory involves immediate adjustments and learning through actual experiences and reflection in specific contexts. The theory holds significant importance for teachers' information literacy and teaching capabilities, emphasizing the reflective role of teachers in practice, helping them better understand and respond to complex teaching environments, and enhancing their teaching and innovative abilities. Finally, in developing strategies for promoting the blended teaching literacy of international Chinese language education master's program, it is possible to start by addressing various factors influencing teachers' information literacy, improving these factors, and proposing feasible plans to promote the development of teachers' teaching capabilities.

2.2. The Connotations of Blended Learning Competencies in Online and Offline Settings

Xie Youru (2019) highlighted issues with the current "gold class" construction, including unclear value orientation, lack of integrated innovative methods, and insufficient teacher capability. She suggested combining the core literacy of 21st-century teachers to form a competency framework for university teachers' "gold class" using a blended online and offline model [2].

Wang Yuefen (2021) studied the connotation, implementation, and recommendations of blended teaching in online and offline settings. The research revealed that blended teaching is not simply an addition or mixing, but an organic integration. The author introduced the concept of the connotation of blended teaching, emphasizing deep integration of online and offline teaching time and space. This

concept involves accessing resources, information environments, assessment tasks, data, and other information across five dimensions, combined with the advantages of both online and offline teaching to create new teaching methods [3].

Zhu Zhitin et al. (2021) explored a new approach to blended teaching, integrating online and offline data, structures, levels, and types to fully integrate teaching and services for personalized, precise, and intelligent transformation. This has significant implications for the innovative development of education and learning. The OMO teaching model includes blended learning and seamless learning experiences, as well as proposing design principles for the OMO teaching model. This model supports student participation in teaching activities and organically combines technology with teaching [4].

The author discussed the connotation of teachers' blended teaching literacy through the discussion by domestic scholars. The currently recognized definition is that teachers with blended teaching literacy can flexibly utilize online and offline teaching resources and tools, integrate online and offline teaching environments, and provide effective and meaningful learning experiences. In other words, teachers' blended teaching literacy refers to their ability to flexibly use educational technology in online and offline teaching environments, master teaching methods and strategies suitable for online and offline teaching, and conduct effective teaching assessment and feedback. It emphasizes teachers' in-depth understanding and proficient application of online teaching platforms, educational technology tools, and online and offline education, as well as their ability to rationally select and integrate online and offline teaching resources in different teaching scenarios. Blended learning, as a major direction in curriculum and teaching reform in recent years, is an important approach to improving teachers' teaching quality and learners' learning efficiency. I believe that teachers' teaching literacy is actually the cultivation of various aspects of their own comprehensive educational quality, and it evolves with the changes of the times, continuously following the law of adhering to tradition and innovation, and adapting to the needs of society.

3. Design of the Current Status Survey

3.1. Surveyed Subjects

The study focuses on teachers from local undergraduate colleges in underdeveloped areas of Guangxi Province, China, namely Hezhou College and Wuzhou College, both of which are local applied undergraduate colleges. The survey specifically targets teachers in the international Chinese education program at these two colleges. A total of 10 teachers were interviewed, and 60 valid questionnaires were collected as part of the survey process, which included teacher interviews and questionnaire surveys.

3.2. Teacher Interviews

The interviews and questionnaires for this study were specifically designed to reflect the real-life context. When creating the questionnaires, the research methods of Xu Qiuxia (2014) and Zhou Ting (2019) were consulted. Structured interviews were conducted, with predetermined questions asked to subjects in a consistent order. The study then progressed to addressing key questions, including five thematic questions posed in chronological order: "(1) Why did you choose to become an instructor in international Chinese education? (2) How do you integrate online and offline teaching in your lessons? (3) How do you implement blended teaching in your practice? (4) What challenges have you faced in implementing blended teaching? (5) How does blended teaching impact students' learning outcomes?" [5,6].

3.3. Survey Questionnaires

The questionnaire comprises 18 items, which are broadly divided into three main sections. The primary section focuses on gathering basic data from teachers, including gender, age, and aspects related to their overseas experiences such as studying abroad or teaching experience domestically and internationally. Items 1 to 6 cover gender, age, higher education history, position rank, overseas study, and teaching experience. The second section investigates teachers' practices in online and offline teaching according to the Likert scale, distributed in questions 7-16. This section is further divided into three subsections, covering understanding and cognition, use of technological tools and platforms, and encountered challenges and strategies for resolution. The third section, distributed in questions 17-18, aims to understand the surveyed teachers' demand for developing blended teaching literacy at their

respective institutions.

4. Analysis of Survey Results

4.1. Insufficiency of Theoretical Knowledge on Information Technology

Based on the survey, just 38.33% of the international Chinese teachers interviewed are familiar with blended teaching. This suggests a low level of awareness and a lack of information literacy. Teachers lack sufficient knowledge of information technology theory, showing a need for more systematic study and in-depth research, as their understanding remains superficial. To address this, teachers should enhance their understanding of information culture theory, educational technology theory, and explore integrated teaching literacy based on constructivist learning theory, hybrid education concepts, and the framework of educational informatization. Additionally, they should adhere to scientific media application guidelines. Currently, teachers' study and practice of information technology education are limited, as they only superficially integrate information technology into teaching, lacking a deep understanding and application of theories such as constructivism, blended teaching, and educational informatization, thus failing to fully leverage the advantages of blended teaching. Educators should deepen the integration of network technology and teaching, promote the reform and innovation of traditional teaching methods, and enhance the development and promotion of global Chinese education. However, many global Chinese language teachers currently have a limited understanding of information and struggle to align educational tasks with informatization seamlessly. It is recommended for teachers to strengthen their learning of information technology theory and to delve deeper into the concept of integrated teaching in online and offline classrooms. By organically combining informatization education with teaching practices, they can enhance teaching quality and student development.

4.2. Shortcomings in the Information Technology Teaching Environment of Universities

Research has shown that despite Chinese universities purchasing a significant amount of foreign language education equipment in the early 21st century, the current utilization rate is low. The development of infrastructure has limited the effectiveness of online teaching in higher education. Although technical teams design online course platforms, they often do not meet the actual needs of teachers and students. Distance learning cannot provide the same classroom interaction with students, making it difficult to accurately assess their understanding and manage their progress. Additionally, online interaction relies more on teachers, leading to less student participation and hindering university teachers' ability to improve their technological literacy. To optimize the education and training of teaching staff, teachers need to keep pace with the informatization era and use innovative methods such as online teaching. The growing demand for learning Chinese as a foreign language brings new opportunities and tremendous pressure to teacher education. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the quality of teacher and student training, strengthen multiculturalism and technological skills, and make effective use of advanced technological tools to promote growth in foreign language and literature teaching. In today's rapidly changing educational environment, teachers need to continually improve their technological literacy to adapt.

4.3. Deficiencies in Teachers' Educational Information Technology Skills

Research has revealed that despite universities investing significantly in foreign language teaching equipment, such as language labs and online testing systems, the utilization rate remains low. The online teaching environment's development is impeded by limited infrastructure, and the platform's functionality lacks teaching practice experience, resulting in insufficient student understanding and challenges in managing learning progress. Both teachers and students possess weak operational skills and require continuous communication with the technical team to optimize the online teaching platform. Additionally, this remote learning mode restricts actual classroom interaction between students and teachers, leading to delayed assessment of student abilities and dependence on teachers' proactive output.

Teachers encounter difficulties due to their lack of information literacy and must adapt to online teaching and innovative methods to enhance teaching efficiency. The rapid growth of information has created a heightened demand for learning Chinese as a foreign language, presenting new opportunities and increased pressure on teacher education. To meet the demands of foreign language learning, it is essential to enhance the development of teacher quality, bolster their multicultural and technological skills, and harness advanced technology to drive the advancement of foreign language teachers.

4.4. Limited Teaching Resources Leading to Low Student Engagement

The analysis suggests that blending online and offline teaching methods has heightened the demands and skill requirements for teachers. Newer educators excel in using modern technology, showcasing exceptional communication skills and extensive interpersonal networks, resulting in significant teaching outcomes. However, older teachers, due to limitations in technology usage and resource gathering, exhibit somewhat lower effectiveness in online education. The survey revealed that the majority of interviewed teachers are over forty and mostly rely on traditional teaching methods, lacking a deep understanding of contemporary education. Their teaching skills do not meet standards, and they have an insufficient grasp of how information technology can drive modernization in teaching, leaning more towards traditional educational models. In a digitalized society, there is a need to enhance digital skills, become familiar with online teaching tools, and continuously update professional research and teaching methods to adapt to the changing times. Teachers from different disciplines and backgrounds have disparities in digital literacy, with younger teachers being more willing to improve their literacy. International Chinese teachers should bear the responsibility of promoting Chinese language teaching and cultural dissemination, but they face the challenge of integrating online and offline teaching.

5. Response Strategies

5.1. Conducting Teacher Training to Enhance Knowledge of Online and Offline Theories

Research shows that international Chinese language teachers have limited theoretical knowledge of integrated online and offline teaching skills. This is linked to the rapid growth of blended teaching and the ongoing advancement of information technology. As deep integration teaching models become more prevalent, teachers must enhance their teaching abilities through continual practice and exploration. The significance of teachers in informatized education cannot be overstated; they must adapt to the demands of the new era, foster students' capacity to obtain, analyze, and utilize information, and encourage creative thinking. Teachers should actively delve into relevant knowledge of online courses and take part in training for integrated online and offline teaching to bolster their teaching skills. Simultaneously, educators should conduct research and engage in practice in informatized education, staying abreast of the latest research findings and cutting-edge technology to continually enhance their theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

5.2. Strengthening the Construction of Hardware Infrastructure and Training for Platform Technologies

The university has made strides in enhancing education quality and broadening teaching experiences through the implementation of various methods like flipped classrooms and smaller courses. Nonetheless, there are still deficiencies in software support, necessitating more fitting teaching systems for classroom instruction. Ensuring educational quality demands an environment conducive to fostering teachers' information skills, establishing specialized technical service agencies, and strategically planning training programs based on data-driven teacher needs, while also maintaining ongoing training activities. Prioritizing the enhancement of teachers' information skills is an ongoing and intricate process, requiring the educational technology support department to adopt a data-driven approach. Additionally, training content should be determined by the teachers themselves, with flexible timing to bolster teachers' online information literacy.

5.3. Continuously Improving Teachers' Educational Information Technology Proficiency

To improve the information collection and processing skills of global Chinese language teachers, schools can provide training in various ways, such as holding regular information skills lectures, planning relevant training courses, and participating in conferences on informatized education. Additionally, it is crucial to build a communication and sharing network among teachers to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing. A survey has indicated that most teachers prefer interactive training based on examples and education application led by frontline educators. Therefore, it is important to actively support and promote integrated online and offline teaching methods, implement personalized courses, and cultivate innovative future leaders. Teachers need to deeply understand and master the core concepts of integrated online and offline education, as well as possess the ability for self-learning, reflection, exploration, and continuous improvement. When facing traditional classroom and online environments, teachers need to

continuously enhance their action planning, management skills, coaching techniques, and cross-disciplinary collaboration abilities. Importantly, educators need to adapt to the ever-changing teaching environment in order to achieve the goals of educational reform.

5.4. Providing Teaching Resources and a Stable Internet Environment.

To enhance the online education experience and keep students engaged, teachers must understand students' learning attitudes and behaviors, create diverse strategies for Chinese language courses, foster independent thinking and problem-solving skills in students, improve their own teaching abilities, and identify opportunities for personalized education. They should use various teaching tools, class discussions, and simulated performances to encourage active participation, collaboration, and creativity. However, individual efforts may not be enough to address online teaching issues comprehensively. Schools should provide support by offering improved teaching platforms, stable network environments, updated course content, and necessary equipment. Universities should provide teacher training, and governments and educational institutions should promote digital education progress, establish relevant standards and regulations, and provide financial support for online education development and investment.

6. Conclusions

In the realm of informatization, improving the overall teaching capabilities of international Chinese language instructors, both in online and offline environments at local undergraduate institutions, has emerged as a pivotal concern in the educational and instructional reform of higher education establishments. Drawing from recent research and statistical data, this study integrates the concept of merging online and offline education and embarks on an initial exploration of leveraging informatization to enrich course content. It presents personal insights and strategies with the aspiration of motivating more educators to actively pursue contemporary educational methods and systematically and reasonably apply information technology systems to advance educational and instructional reform across various disciplines.

Since September 2007, major Chinese universities have progressively established specialized courses for foreign instructors teaching Chinese, known as the "International Chinese Education" program. With the global surge in individuals learning and mastering the Chinese language, this burgeoning field has witnessed rapid development. Nevertheless, there is currently a dearth of research and exploration of this type of teaching cohort in society, and they receive relatively scant academic attention. International Chinese education in China is still a swiftly evolving field and should also possess a corresponding knowledge and skill system.

The amalgamation of online and offline education in the "Internet Plus" era is an adaptive teaching approach that depends on the support of online education to foster the innovative arrangement and amalgamation of educational resources. This is viewed as an effective means to address the unequal distribution of educational resources and ensure educational equity in the future.

With the continuous advancement of technology and the transformation of educational paradigms, blended learning has gradually become the core direction of global Chinese language education. Consequently, teacher training should emphasize enhancing their skills in integrating online and offline learning methods, as well as guiding them on how to effectively utilize various educational technology devices and systems to fulfill their teaching responsibilities. Moreover, teacher training should underscore the importance of interactivity and heightened student engagement. Future educational methods should be student-centric, with teachers serving as facilitators and collaborative partners. Throughout the training process, it is crucial to concentrate on enhancing teachers' abilities to stimulate active student participation, particularly within an online educational environment where teachers are tasked with creatively designing interactive activities and learning tasks to better engage student interest and nurture their autonomy. Finally, teacher training should actively encourage educators to engage in educational research and innovative practices. The ongoing reform in the education field necessitates that teachers possess the ability to self-renew and be creative. Through providing opportunities for teachers to participate in educational research, imparting the latest educational ideas and techniques, as well as motivating them to be adventurous in exploring new methods during practical application, such training aims to elevate their teaching standards and improve students' academic performance.

However, this manuscript does have certain limitations and flaws. Primarily, due to data access

restrictions, this study only collected and analyzed the current state of blended online and offline teaching competencies among Chinese as a Second Language instructors at two universities. The sample size is relatively small, which might affect the accuracy of the analysis regarding the situation of international Chinese language educators. In future research, we aim to expand the scope of our survey, gathering more representative data and information to ensure that our findings and analyses are more comprehensive and precise, thus providing stronger support for the development of a blended educational talent training system for Chinese language instruction. Furthermore, our sample size of instructors is relatively limited, and the questions posed during interviews were somewhat generic, resulting in some instructors being unable to articulate their perspectives clearly. The needs analysis for teacher training also requires improvement, as we did not delve into factors such as the respondents' work experience, years of teaching, or academic qualifications, which could potentially impact variables related to the quality of blended online and offline Chinese language instruction. Hence, there is a need for an enhanced design of inquiries. Additionally, the scope of questions within the survey questionnaires was relatively narrow, limiting the ability to fully and accurately display actual outcomes. Our research acknowledges these deficiencies and is committed to continuous exploration in future endeavors to incrementally deepen the related content, thereby contributing to the advancement of global Chinese language education.

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