

# Teaching Practice Exploration of Distance and Open Education in the Context of Learning Society\*

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**Abstract**—The construction of a learning society puts forward new requirements for distance and open education. The practical exploration of teaching reform aiming at meeting the needs of learners has always been the core task to ensure the teaching quality of distance and open education. Based on this, this paper expounds the connotation of the learning society, and then analyses the significance of the open and distance education service in the learning society, and the problems existing in the teaching of open and distance education in China. It finally tries to explore a resource-sharing mechanism that meets the diverse learning needs of ordinary people and is more applicable as well as the build path of adult independent learning system through integration of innovative teaching target, teaching resources and changing the teaching mode.

**Keywords**—*learning society; open education; blended teaching*

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the progress and development of human society, lifelong learning has become a way of life. Distance and open education has been playing an irreplaceable role in the process of building a learning society. In the learning-oriented society, the lifelong nature of learning and education, the general character of learning subject, and the keeping pace with the times of learning objectives and learning methods are emphasized. All these fit the characteristics of distance and open education, such as the openness of educational objects, the diversity of school-running types, the flexibility of learning mode and the mixed teaching mode, etc. In view of this, under the background of building a learning-oriented society, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to grasp objectively the current situation of distance and open education in China, grasp the key problems restricting the development of distance and open education in China, and actively discuss the new characteristics of distance and open education under the new situation.

## II. THE CONNOTATION OF LEARNING SOCIETY

The Learning Society was first proposed by Prof. R. M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago in the book "the Learning Society" published in 1968. In this book, Prof. Robert Hutchins shows that adult education should not only stay in the regular and customized education, but also regard people's growth and forming excellent personality as the ultimate goal. System reflecting this goal will contribute the realization of it and move the society in a more orderly direction, and the society will gradually become a successful society in the process. Later, UNESCO also pointed out that learning society should be the leading direction of education system reform in all countries. The education system that people need to create in the future should be a new open and harmonious social form that can realize lifelong education and takes the comprehensive development of people and the improvement of people's values as the goal, which is also the learning society that people need to build.

For today's society, learning society has become a common goal that all countries in the world need to achieve in the aspect of education development, and in the process of realizing this goal, there is a main force that is distance and open education. Distance and open education is an integral part of lifelong education and learning system. The connotation of learning society generally includes the following aspects:

### A. Emphasis on Lifelong Learning and Education

The two concepts of "lifelong education" and "lifelong learning" were put forward in the second half of the 20th century and they have been closely connected with the construction of a learning society. Lifelong education is the cornerstone of a learning society. It covers the whole educational process, instead of just referring to a specific entity, and thus has transcended the traditional distinction between schooling and continuing education. The thought of lifelong education has become the direction of social progress. Lifelong learning emphasizes efficient and meaningful learning in the learning process, which is also one of the most basic characteristics of lifelong learning. It emphasizes that learning is unrestricted, whether at home, at school or in the office, the learning place is unrestricted and people can start learning at any time at any place. For an

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\*Fund Project: The Adult Education Scientific Research Planning Subject of China Adult Education Association — "Teaching Practice Exploration of Distance and Open Education Based on Learning Society" (Project Number: 2017-104Y).

individual, learning is required in every stage from birth to death. And the learning society provides exactly the different types of learning that people need in each stage. In this way, learning can be a lifelong thing. It can be said that it is never too late to learn, and eventually this will become a normal state of society.

#### *B. Emphasis on the Change of Learning Objectives*

The learning society should aim at human harmony and self-realization ultimately. Education itself must be fully open to the society and transfer its value orientation from the traditional formal school education and emphasis on professional ability training to the realization of human self-perfection and personality development. That is, everyone learns to express himself, communicate with others and explore the unknown world through learning in various ways. The important thing is to acquire learning ability and develop everyone's potential to the maximum extent. In this way, people's all-round free development can be promoted.

#### *C. Emphasis on the Change of Learning Styles*

A learning society emphasizes the need to fundamentally change the traditional way of learning and focus education on learning rather than teaching. The subjects it emphasizes are the learners who need to carry out independent learning according to their own development needs, independent choice of learning content, rather than passively accept a variety of education. Moreover, with the continuous development of the Internet and information technology, learning is more convenient and can be carried out anytime and anywhere without any restriction of time and space. In addition, nowadays, people have various channels to acquire learning contents, and the learning contents are increasingly abundant. Meanwhile, learners are encouraged to exert their own creativity for independent learning.

#### *D. Emphasis on Learning for All Citizens*

In a learning society, it is emphasized that the whole society and all people should be subject of the participation and education is the responsibility of society. All citizens of society, regardless of social status, income, race, gender or economic base, should be provided with full and equitable opportunities for learning at all times in their lives and the right of learners to learn at all times and everywhere should be ensured. Society should form open and diversified learning places to provide learning space and security for different individuals. Therefore, in this way, the society should improve the relevant education system, and ensure the rights and interests of citizens through the education system, so that people can realize their right to lifelong learning.

### III. THE ROLE OF DISTANCE AND OPEN EDUCATION IN BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY

Distance and open education can be said to be an effective way to achieve a learning society. The so-called modern distance and open education refers to a new type of education mode, mainly based on a variety of modern

information technology, including digital technology, network communication technology and computer multimedia technology and so on. It differs from traditional education in that it is more open and makes learning networked. It can be regarded as an organic integration of two forms of education, including modern distance education and open education. Open university is an effective subject of distance and open education. It not only has the characteristics of modern distance education, but also has the advantages of open education. It can be used remotely in teaching and learning, breaking the limitation of teaching space. Meanwhile, in the teaching process, teaching means, teaching facilities and learning methods are all open in the teaching process. What the Open University can do is to manage teaching with the existing modern educational technology. This kind of Open University can be said to be an important approach and carrier to realize the learning-oriented society, as well as an important force to realize the learning-oriented society.

#### *A. Distance and Open Education Is an Important Way to Build a Learning Society*

The construction of distance and open education can realize the openness of educational objects and make educational means more technical and people's learning methods more flexible. Such a way of learning is exactly what the learning society needs. Therefore, to achieve a learning society, it is a very important way to develop distance and open education, which cannot be replaced by other ordinary higher education. It can be said that distance and open education is an effective supplement to the academic qualifications of ordinary higher education. It can not only realize the teaching content of ordinary colleges and universities, but also provide some training and education services in non-academic education, so as to meet the learning needs of different learners from multiple aspects and perspectives. In this learning process, people can find a learning type and method suitable for themselves, and enrich their learning life according to their own needs. This learning mode completely meets the needs of a learning society.

The development of distance and open education in China mainly relies on the system of open university. Covering a wide range, the radio and television university system radiates from central to local. This kind of distance and open education is available in every place, from the national open universities to the video universities of all cities and counties, and the school-running system covers the whole country. The scope of running schools involved in this system is very extensive, including not only the education degree compensation system, but also the community education system, the elderly education system and some other non-academic education. The system has rich learning resources and solid technical organization as logistics support, diversified learning means, personalized learning needs. Distance and open education can break through the limitation of time and space, make it possible for anyone to participate in learning at anytime and anywhere, and better realize the vision of nationwide learning and lifelong learning in the society. It is an important part of the lifelong

education system in China and also an important part of the realization of the learning-oriented society.

#### *B. Distance and Open Education Provides Equal Opportunities for Building a Learning Society*

The systematic running system of distance and open education in China, the opening of educational resources, educational objects, and educational space and time can all promote the whole people to accept lifelong education and create the possibility of realizing the learning-oriented society. This kind of distance and open education provides people with free and independent learning space. It is all over the country. No matter in provinces, cities or counties, video universities can bring great convenience to people's independent learning. Because in this way, people can choose the content they want to learn according to their own learning needs. For anyone who wants to learn in this way, they can find their own learning method, and the learning time is very free. Video universities are test-free and have cheap fees which have not changed for years. Everyone can afford such learning as long as she or he has the intention. From these characteristics, is not difficult to see the fairness of modern education. All learners have equal access to education.

#### *C. The Flexibility of Distance and Open Education Conforms to the Development Trend of Learning-oriented Society*

As far as the development of the current learning society is concerned, its future development direction and trend will inevitably be informatization and ubiquity. For distance and open education, its development is based on information tools such as computer, communication and network, integrating information technology with education and teaching. Learning methods include face-to-face learning, online learning, or using mobile terminals such as mobile phones for learning. With various methods of learning, it is able to provide relevant educational services for learners anytime and anywhere. At the same time, the combination of online education and offline education enables learners to obtain educational resources at any time and place, and make learning more flexible by selecting suitable learning mode. The flexibility of this learning mode is well adapted to the development trend of ubiquitous learning in the learning society.

### IV. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE DISTANCE AND OPEN EDUCATION IN THE PROCESS OF SERVING THE LEARNING SOCIETY

#### *A. The Teaching Objectives Attach Too Much Importance to Traditional Academic Education, and the Function of Socialized Service Is Inadequate*

It is an important strategic goal of China to build a learning society. The implementation of China's distance and open education has always been relying on the platform of the radio and television university system. Since 2012, six open universities based on radio and television universities have been established in China from the central to local

places. The purpose of such universities is to better promote the learning of the whole people and realize the lifelong learning of the people. It emphasizes that the development of education should always meet the needs of social development and the development needs of the people themselves.

From the practice of various places, China's distance and open education pays more attention to academic education, whether in terms of teaching objectives or in the process of education. This makes the content of education, professional settings and other links have greater limitations. Some grassroots radio and television universities have a single teaching goal, and only pays attention to the transmission of knowledge, and their teaching concepts only stay on academic education, not paying enough attention to the cultivation and teaching of learning ability, nor to practical education or heuristic education, which counters the construction of a learning university. Therefore, the development of non-academic education China's open universities and some basic radio and television universities is far from enough, and there is still much market to be explored. Their participation in community education is only in an initial stage and the overall social service functionality still needs to be improved.

#### *B. The Teaching Resources Overemphasizes Construction Yet Underrates Application and There Is Still Room for Improvement in the Mechanism for Jointly Building and Sharing*

The construction of distance and open education is inseparable from online teaching resources. Using online teaching resources is both a common practice to carry out distance and open education and a necessary condition to realize ubiquitous learning in a learning society. For the online learning platform of radio and television universities, the three-level learning platform of "central, provincial and grass-roots radio and television university". The three levels develop online course resources independent of each other. However, for online learning platform of radio and television universities, the online resource construction of each level lacks an overall planning, with each information system in a decentralized state and a low system integration degree. In addition, the three-level platform has no communication function and cannot share resources, so it is necessary to further improve the mechanism of jointly building and sharing educational resources.

In addition, for the teachers of radio and television universities, they need to invest a lot of energy to build their own curriculum resources because of their own teaching needs and internal assessment needs. Therefore, repeated construction of educational resources is likely to occur in this process, which will result in waste of human and financial resources. At the same time, for students, insufficient motivation for online learning and unscientific supervision and assessment method used by online resources result in the low actual utilization rate of online resources.

### C. *The Teaching Mode Still Focuses on "Teaching", and the Independent Learning System Is Not Explored Enough*

One of the basic features of the learning-oriented society is the emphasis on learner as the center. Learners acquire new knowledge through active learning according to their own development needs, so as to promote their overall development. For many years, distance and open education has been adhering to the "3L" model of "teacher-led learning + teacher-assisted learning + learner's self-study". However, in the process of teaching practice, adult students' learning motivation is insufficient, learning ability is poor, and the habit and atmosphere of independent learning have not been cultivated. On the one hand, teachers pay insufficient attention to the guidance of adult students in independent learning methods and have insufficient interaction with them in teaching. On the other hand, grassroots radio and television university generally adopts the face to face teaching in curriculum setting, and pay more attention to impart knowledge, rather than cultivate students' independent learning ability. This leads to the difficulty in the construction of independent learning system, so there are still deficiencies in the establishment of a learning society.

## V. EXPLORATION OF DISTANCE AND OPEN EDUCATION TEACHING REFORM BASED ON LEARNING SOCIETY

### A. *Innovating the Teaching Objectives of Distance and Open Education and Exploring the Diverse Learning Needs of Ordinary People*

In the era of knowledge economy, ability is obviously superior to education. Under the background of learning society construction, it is necessary to innovate the goal of distance and open education, which should be a combination of knowledge and ability. A more important goal of education is to enable students to learn new knowledge and improve their skills, rather than simply to conduct exam-oriented teaching in order to bring them a degree. Therefore, efforts should be made to strengthen the training of students' application ability and pay attention to the improvement of students' comprehensive ability, so that they can not only obtain academic qualifications, but also improve their professional level in the learning process. Such teaching goal should be run through the whole teaching process, so that the educatees have the ability of lifelong learning, and the goal of improving their comprehensive quality can be achieved.

With a large population, a wide age span, extensive distribution and a very complex structure of students from all walks of life, learners of distance and open education have very diversified learning needs due to the educational background, regional differences and other subjective or objective reasons. Therefore they require more personalized learning support. In terms of information, resources, personnel and teaching facilities, distance and open education should further innovate knowledge objectives, ability objectives and teaching methods in teaching, so as to meet learners' personalized and diversified learning needs. So it is necessary to provide learners with diversified

learning support services corresponding to their learning needs.

### B. *Integrating the Teaching Resources of Distance and Open Education and Exploring a More Suitable Resource-sharing Mechanism*

It is a long and complicated systematic project to construct and use the teaching resources of distance and open education. One of the basic conditions for the vigorous development of distance and open education is the integration and sharing of its teaching resources. Whether open education can achieve breakthrough progress depends on whether the relevant school-running subjects in the society can provide suitable resources to learners and whether these relevant teaching resources can effectively help learners to complete their studies and make full use of them. The integration of teaching resources includes the integration of resource construction and resource utilization.

As the main carrier of distance and open education, the open universities should give full play to their advantages in constructing and utilizing online teaching resources. Under the guidance of The Open University of China, efforts should be made to establish a teaching resources open center for academic education and non-academic training and organize and coordinate the professional teachers of radio and television university in various provinces and cities to set up development teams for specific curriculum resources. It is necessary to unify the development of quality standards, implement the responsibilities of all links, and establish a sharing mechanism in the application, review, investment, evaluation and other links of resource construction to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of grassroots teachers of the radio and television university. First of all, strategic and overall planning should be carried out for the teaching resources of key courses that are in great demand of learners. In the resource construction, radio and television university at each grassroots level should work on the principle of division of labor, complementarity and overall arrangement, so as to avoid repeated construction of cities and counties. After the development of the course project, The Open University of China will conduct unified acceptance, update, integration and review of relevant course teaching resources, which can be tried out in the system first and shared with social institutions after further maturity and improvement. With the forces joined together in the whole system of the radio and television university, the construction and sharing of high-quality online teaching resources can be realized step by step in an organized way, so as to help more learners and better serve the construction of a learning-oriented society.

At the same time, the grassroots radio and television university in provinces and cities should also standardize and guide students to develop online independent learning by formulating and improving the online and offline integrated teaching plan, so as to improve the enthusiasm of teachers in the system to use network broadcast platform to carry out course teaching. At the same time, the radio and television university at the grass-roots levels should also establish and improve the evaluation index system of teaching resource utilization rate, the process supervision system and incentive



system of teaching resource integration and co-construction and sharing, so as to ensure the effect of integration and co-construction and sharing and ensure the smooth progress of integration and co-construction and sharing.

### C. *Changing the Teaching Mode of Distance and Open Education and Exploring the Construction Path of Adult Independent Learning System*

In the process of building a learning-oriented society, what are needed are not only the help of policies, but the most importantly the consciousness and ability of self-directed learning of learners. Self-directed learning is an important feature of open education. Since face-to-face teaching still dominates the teaching models in grassroots radio and television university, the improvement of teaching mode is needed. To combine face-to-face teaching with independent learning, it is necessary to establish a set of effective adult independent learning service system, with independent learning as the central link, so that the platform can provide diversified learning approaches for independent learners. Distance and open education, represented by open universities, can break the institutional barriers between various educational institutions, integrate and connect the resources of learning platform in community colleges, amateur universities, continuing education colleges, vocational colleges and other educational institutions, and provide more opportunities for adult learners to learn independently. This way, adult learners can be provided with more opportunities for independent learning. In this process, learners can freely control their learning time and freely choose their learning places and their own learning methods. Relying on the independent learning platform effectively, independent learning can become faster and more effective.

In addition, in the context of a learning society, it is also important to inject the internal dynamic system of independent learning in the process of constructing the independent learning system, such as good demand and consciousness of independent learning, mastery of independent learning methods, and ability of independent learning. And the external motivation system of independent learning is needed, such as the attraction of learners to complete network learning resources, the guidance and supervision of teachers, the assistance and communication of study groups, timely policy support, moral encouragement and the relevant incentive system of the government, enterprises and educational institutions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in the context of building a learning-oriented society, the concept of lifelong education and lifelong learning is gradually gaining popularity. Distance and open education plays an important role in the construction of learning society. Therefore, the study of distance and open education teaching reform is of important theoretical guidance and practical significance to the construction of learning society. Teaching reform of open education is a long-term, complex and systematic project, and it is also the important responsibility and historical mission of open education in a long period of time. This paper analyzes the

problems and puts forward specific suggestions from several aspects, such as meeting the diverse needs of learners with the goal of open innovation teaching, building and sharing the teaching resources of open education, changing the teaching mode and constructing the independent learning system, so as to provide reference for the practical exploration of distance and open education in China.

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