



THE NEW ANALYSIS OF THE SIMILARITIES AMONG LIFELONG EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE LEARNING SOCIETY

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Abstract

Although there are differences among lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society, it is also necessary to research on their similarities among them to clarify the basic relationship of them. From the historical and experiential point, they have the similar backgrounds. They are also aiming at creating beneficial social atmosphere, helping with the adaptability to the social matters and changes, demanding on the revolution and reformation of teaching and learning process and requiring the comprehensive knowledge and learning contents to be taught and learnt.

Keywords: *lifelong learning; lifelong education; learning society.*



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Although the three notions, as lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society refer to different social relations or objects, they point to the same direction, as promote and develop the society and individuals in it to be much better through education and learning. From their backgrounds, developing path, ultimate goal, basic theory and notions, realizing method, as well as their requirements on social atmosphere and preparations, we can find that there are a lot of similarities among them. Until nowadays, it could be seen easily that the connotations of these three concepts have both the same and different points, and it is necessary to get further comprehensive comparison and revealing the similarities among them, so as to clarify the basic relationship among them and to deepen the understandings and awareness of these three notions.

1. The similar backgrounds

The background of establishing these three concepts is the complicated and fickle international circumstance in the 60s and 70s of 20th century, which means they are produced at the time under the overlapping of extremely confused social factors and the influence of combined effects of both positive and negative aspects (Yang, Zhang, Feng & Niu, 2012). So lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society share the original intentions. According to my observation, the almost common original intention exists mainly in the following ten areas.

2. Aiming at creating beneficial social atmosphere for the comprehensive development of humans.

According to the traditional opinions, only students who learn at school or are trained in an educational institution are the main body of learning activities, so based on this opinion, the government and most people just attach importance to the learning behaviors at schools but ignore the needs of other learners out of schools (Zhong & Wang, 2009). Moreover, during quite a long period, the principle form of learning is teachers' teaching and students' learning, which means the teachers are the main source of knowledge which the students obtain (Wu & Huang, 2008, pp5-7). But the learners occupy an increasingly important position and even become the subject of the learning process, when responsibility, initiative, creativity, etc. gain much more concern and attentions, even show their own values in the process of human's growth and social development. It can be said that the process of obtaining learning capability for the lifelong span is a process of acquiring, taking use of and creating knowledge. And just according to this process, anyone, who is in the face of new challenges, tasks, situations and environments in a society with dramatic change, is able to master and create knowledge so as to give play to his own inner potential (Xie, 2007).

They also aim at the adaptability to social upheaval acquired by normal ones. The people living in modern era have to face variable and sustained changes as a destiny, and to accept a new rule: either to adapt themselves to the world, either to disappear from this world or experience the danger of distress and insanity. Education in the future must be a lifelong education, the learning in the future must be also the lifelong learning, which both help

people not hesitate to choose the former life style in the choice of these two roads. The society in the future must be learning society, so that every member of the society is able to be equipped mentally and spiritually and ultimately be led to a state of constantly adaptation to change in the world.

3. Helping with the adaptability to the social matters and changes.

Social changes, especially scientific and technological progress, produce various negative effects while they bring to mankind civilization and intelligence. The content of lifelong education, lifelong learning and the learning society make people remain on high alert on these negative effects through obtaining a real wise capacity on choice of behaviors, such as the ability of judging true and false, good and evil, right and wrong, according to continuous education and learning. In the end the humankind can harmoniously develop with the nature with changing the attitude of conquering, and destroying natural to sustainable developing and respecting nature.

They are to improve the initiative of the advancement process of human civilization. Nowadays, although it is a fact that our society and human civilization have made much progress, the crises appear more and more in this process is also true. Although it is said that education is not a master key to open all the door of ideals, it is indeed an important way which can guarantee more harmonious and reliable development of the human civilization (Yu, 2011). During the process, or we can say, during the course of promoting lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society, people can learn knowledge, practice, how to survive and the skills to live together, further more acquire the real ability to care about others. They can ultimately form such an active life style which cares for others and the family members, the community and the nation, the state and human, finally leaves humanity and descendants as far as possible away from the mutual mistrust, misunderstanding, even poverty, ignorance, conflicts and wars (Yu, 2011).

4. For the further development of humans

The emergence of lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society idea generation is not only to meet from the demand from external, but also from the internal. Studies have shown that the adults have also the same physical and mental transition and crisis as the

young ones, and there are also many new problems to be solved and new situations to be mastered by them (Guo, 2010). Therefore, one of the most obvious original intentions is to take care of and strengthen the education and learning in adulthood, so that the individuals, especially the middle-aged can promote and achieve lifelong development continually.

They also aim to promote and realize the comprehensive development of human beings. The negative effects of social change to a large extent led to the differentiation and overall rupture of human's life styles, communications with each other and moral regulations. More over, the education system which always regards intellectual development as the center and aim of teaching and the examination-oriented system which ignores creation have isolated people's intellectual education from other education aspects, bounded and suppressed the creation, eventually led to the hyperplasia of the substantial and most important part of human's life—the young period, and even in a terrible state of temporary paralysis of the human's personality. These three concepts desire to make man get out of this situation as quickly as possible, and look forward to caring about and meeting all of the body, emotion, sex, social, as well as the spiritual presence needs, say, the needs in all aspects and various areas through lifelong education (Wu & Huang, 2008, pp38-40). So the personal values of all members in the society could be maximal realized through constructing lifelong learning system and a learning society.

5. The demanding on the revolution and reformation of teaching and learning process

The International Commission on Education of the 21st century pointed out that lifelong education and lifelong learning are the key to enter and adapt to the development in the 21st century, and also called on the whole humanity to move forward to the learning society. Therefore, the education mode in the future as well as lifestyle has no reason to artificially separate all of educational activities in the whole of human life from working, daily life and the needs by personal development. It can be called a thorough reform when the education and lifestyle reforms are established all the harmony and unity of education in human's life, with organic combination of education and working, life and each of the different development needs.

As the famous saying of lifelong education is “Education, from the cradle to the grave”. The

lifelong learning reminds us “You can never be lazy or have a rest in the changing times; otherwise you will never wake up (Zhai, 2004). The knowledge learning should never have a pause even in a moment, and learning is in the whole life”. Learning society's motto is “Constantly learning from childhood to adulthood, continue to learn with changes in the world”. Just as the report <Education wealth hidden in it> published by UNESCO, lifelong education is just day-to-day life experiences, and the whole life is a learning life in the future. They all advocate the breadth and comprehensiveness of the content of teaching and learning. The interpretation on this point of lifelong education is education should not only go throughout the development of a human's life, but also cover all of the aspects of development process. The interpretation of lifelong learning is learning is not only a continuous process during the life, but also a process which contains multi-aspects. Comments of the learning society are the principle of learner-centered in the education process could meet the different learning needs of different individuals and groups. The UNESCO generalizes them as teaching and learning should both promote the comprehensive development of each person, such as the physical and psychological development, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility, spiritual values.

They all call for the openness, freedom and sociality in teaching and learning space. The aims all existing in the repairing the fragmentation of the education system, eliminating the obstacles of schooling, integration of education facilities and resources, expansion of social functions and participation on education, in order to make teaching and learning to be omnipresent (Zhai, 2004). The representatives thought of lifelong education is people in the society, in which education has become effective and convenient all-in-one system, can easily access to education and learning. The thought of lifelong learning is that lifelong learning can occur in all human life space. And the pursuit of the learning society is that the learning goes beyond and far more advance than the school education and education obtains the participation of all sectors in the society.

They all advocate the duality of the purposes in teaching and learning. The viewpoint of lifelong education is education ought to serve in the lifelong comprehensive development of individuals, as well as service in the sustainable development of society. Lifelong learning

insights the purpose of learning is the own the capability of establishing confidence, in order to adapt to the social changes and challenges. The statement of the learning society is social learning environment should be provided to promote the comprehensive development of society and individuals (Chen, 2007). The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in Hamburg in 1997 repeated the thought as the education and learning contents should be provided and decided the one hand based on changes of the economic, social, environmental and cultural background, on the other hand designed carefully according to the diversified and personalized needs of learners, so as to further promote the mutual development of the individuals and society (Chen, 2007).

6. Comprehensive knowledge and learning contents are required

Moreover, based on the implement of them, the realistic basis for the comprehensive development of humans could be supplied. Most of the contemporary people generally focus only on learning “practical” knowledge, but ignoring the learning of “decorative” knowledge. This kind of situation has led to the spiritual emptiness of the learners (Shi, 2008). However, lifelong learning stresses the comprehensiveness of learning contents, and regards that learning contents should be able to relate to all aspects of the people daily life, but not just one level or simply a part of the society. “Comprehensive” in this definition means the learners should treat learning content in a holistic way, but not the learning contents should be exhaustive (Chen, 2007). The “practical” and “decorated” knowledge are equally important under the concept of lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society. People can get spiritual enjoyment by learning “decorated” knowledge. Generally speaking, the value of learning not only manifests as the external practicality, but also reflects on the perfection of humans’ spiritual world. “Decorative” knowledge leads us to recognize the spirit world of our own, and to experience the infinite possibilities in it continually (Huang, 2003, pp35-38), so that we can be the true ones which proceed to the next step as becoming a comprehensive developed man.

From the analysis above, we can find that there are plenty of similarities among lifelong learning, learning society and lifelong education. They are aiming almost at the same general point, which is for the better development and promotion of social conditions and individuals’

capabilities. There are also demanding from them on the revolution and reformation of teaching and learning process, as well as the comprehensive knowledge and learning contents to be learnt by ordinary people in their daily life. Based on the similar backgrounds, their purpose is always consistent at the further development of humans, and the enhancing of adaptability to the social matters and changes by human beings. The ultimate goal for these notions is aiming at creating beneficial social atmosphere for the comprehensive development of humans, and therefore to construct the world much better. In this way, these three notions have the similarities on their fundamental principles and mechanisms, with the same aims and values.

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