



THE NEW UNDERSTANDING AND CONCEPTS DISCRIMINATION OF LIFELONG EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEARNING SOCIETY

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Abstract

There are still many false or partial understandings or improperly usage of the notions of lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society. Lifelong education includes all the educational forms and styles. The notion of learning society mainly relates to the learning and studying achievements and behaviors by members and individuals, and it also contains the concept of assistance and support from the social governments and public organization. The lifelong learning refers to

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The concepts of lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society were developed and spread in the world for a long period. However, it is sometimes only believed that lifelong education as the alias of adult education, or the simple compositions of the educational sections, and some other think that lifelong education is lifelong education in schools, or lifelong learning is a kind of lifelong career learning. And it is even said that the creation of a learning society is to expand enrollment of students, build more schools, or the matter which should be worried only by government or educational departments. It could be seen that on one hand, the three concepts as lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society have been accepted and used in the worldwide (Yu, 2011); on the other hand, there are still many false or partial understandings or improperly usage of them. Therefore, it is undoubtedly benefit for the improvement, perfection and maturity of understanding toward these three concepts as much as possible with proposing their meanings, explicating their definitions,

realizing their essences, analyzing their characteristics and clarifying their original purpose. From this process of mature and perfect understanding of these concepts, the social practice of these concepts will be no doubt scientifically and effectively promoted contemporarily (Yu, 2011).

Although their meanings and contents have not yet been formed a definitive conclusion on a global scale after the lifelong education, lifelong learning and learning society have been put forward, scholars have never given up exploration and efforts to form them as scientific concepts (Chen, 2012). The definition of lifelong learning has been expressed above in this article, and the following is to express the formation of a number of important definitions about lifelong education and learning society respectively based on different understandings (Yu, 2011).

1. The new understanding and definition of lifelong education.

Paul Lengrand, the then secretary for lifelong education in the UNESCO, first proposed in 1965 the concept of lifelong education with the thinking as “lifelong education does not refer to a specific entity, but generally refers to a certain ideology or principle”. Since then, he pointed out in the article <What is lifelong education> that lifelong education is certainly neither a new term which is added in the traditional educational forms, nor exactly the same as public education or adult education, etc., but it is precisely the one with much wider range, which exceeds and sublimate the others (Lengrand, 1965, 5ff). The main meanings of lifelong education exist as: First, because everyone must realize their own aspirations, bring their own possibilities into play and develop them and adapt to the problems and troubles which the society throw to them continuously, and thus, the future education is no longer terminated by graduation in any one school, but rather continued through the person's life to be carried on (Yu, 2011). The current education is school-centered with the character of “closed and inflexible”, but the education in the future will integrate the entire education and training institutions, so that people can easily get access to education according to their needs in all sectors which they live and survive in.

R • H • David, then the researcher of UNESCO pointed out that “lifelong education ought to be a kind of individual, social and occupational process which aims at improving the

institutions or personal living standard. It is a comprehensive and unified concept whose purpose is to inspire and promote the life and humanity experiences through various stages and areas of life, including of formal, non-formal and informal learning (Chen, 2012).

Italian scholar Ettore Gelpi, the successor of Lang Gland in UNESCO, believed that the lifelong education should be the integration of school education and the education and training after graduation from school. It is not only the deeper development of the relationship between formal and non-formal education, but also the central element of education policies with the maximum realizing of its cultural and educational purpose through the community life (including children, youth and adults). He also said “lifelong education aims not only to achieve personal autonomy as the human nature or cultural self-discipline, but also exists as a portion of the social and political processes” (Yu, 2011).

The book <Learn to survive> which was written by Edgar Faure and others said “the concept of lifelong education includes in all the aspects and everything of education. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. There is not such an eternal educational part or composition which could be split off from lifelong education (Ji, 2002, pp12-13). In other words, lifelong education is not an education system, but a principle of creating each comprehensive educational organization system, and as a principle lifelong learning is also throughout the development process of each part of the system.

Japanese scholar Eiichi Mochida defined lifelong education as “the lifelong protection of the right to be educated, is an integration of profession and upbringing, and the way of eliminating illiterate in the future (Yu, 2011).

Therefore, lifelong education refers to the educational process or activity being carried out not only limited in the schools or normal learning and studying places, but also in daily life, such as outdoors or informal learning or teaching places, or even in family or one’s room. Based on this notion, the lifelong education has included all the educational forms and styles in the world, and defined as the most extensive educational model or form.

2. The new understanding and definition of learning society

British scholar Jarvis stated “learning society is an ideal which is developed dependent on lifelong education. In this learning society, all members of society are offered any time in the

life to have adequate learning opportunities. Therefore, everyone ought to fully develop their potentials and achieve self-realization by learning” (Jarvis, 2000).

The UK Economic and Social Research Group defined learning society as “the society, in which all of the citizen access to the high-quality general education, appropriate vocational trainings and continually opportunities to participate in education and trainings even if they are working (Chen, 2012). The learning society strives for egalitarian, and each person will have the knowledge, understanding and skills in order to ensure the development of the national economy. In addition, the individuals in the learning society are able to engage in critical dialogue and behavior, so as to enhance the quality of life in the whole community, and to maintain the social integration and economic success”.

The representation of Edgar Faure on learning society is “this kind of society must not only develop, enrich and increase primary and secondary schools and universities, but also go beyond the scope of school education, as to expand the functions of education to various aspects of the society as a whole. We could no more say that the educational function of the society is one of the social privileges, but instead, all departments, government agencies, industrial and transport sections must participate in educational work” (Faure, 1972, 162).

Chinese Taiwan scholar Mengjing Hu believed that “the learning society is based on the lifelong education system, learner-centered, the ideal society in which each learner has the right of achieving lifelong learning. In this society, the basic right on learning can be guaranteed, educational opportunities can be fairly provided learning, obstacles in learning can be reasonably removed and the lifelong education system can be properly established (Wang, 2003). The purpose of constructing a learning society is to provide an ideal learning environment, so as to promote the comprehensive personal and social development. The construction of learning society should possess six basic conditions, such as learning individuals, learning families, learning organizations, learning communities, learning government and learning network.

Therefore, the notion of learning society mainly relates to the learning and studying achievements and behaviors by members and individuals, who constitute the society. Only if each citizen and social member could form the habit and idea of learning throughout their

whole life and promote the learning and studying atmosphere in the whole society to influence others' learning behaviors and thoughts as well, it could be called as a learning society constituted by such members in it. The learning society also contains the concept of assistance and support from the social governments and public organization, which could offer the adequate learning opportunities and time for social members to develop their potentials and habits, with learning by their free willing. The main function and aim of forming such a learning society is to maintain and develop the social eternal intelligent power based on the high-qualified social persons, in order to keep the society make progress in the future, without falling behind others. It is also aiming at the development and realization of one's own potential and capability with learning for the whole life.

3. The new understanding and definitions of lifelong learning

Japanese Central Council for Education stated in the consultation report in 1981 that: According to the circumstance of the rapid developing society nowadays, people would like to seek appropriate learning opportunities in order to have self-enrichment, inspiration and improvement of life. The basic of these learning behaviors implement throughout one's life according to individuals' free wishes and in accordance with the need of their own to select the appropriate means and methods by themselves. In this sense we'd better call it as "lifelong learning" (Li, 2012). The Central Council for Education of the Japanese Education Ministry summarized the concept of lifelong learning as follows in 1991 in the <Integration of the basic notions of lifelong learning> (Wu, 2007, 52ff): Lifelong learning is the activity which is aiming to enhance the quality of life, improve the professional capacity and enrich oneself. Its basis exists in the individual self-willingness. It is also the activity with which a man could spend his lifetime according to the suitable, actual and legal means or methods by personal choice. And it includes not only the intentional learning activities which are organized in schools and society, but also sports, cultural activities, interests, recreations, volunteer services and so on.

The first International Lifelong Learning Conference (also known as the Rome Conference) was held in November 1994 in Rome, Italy, which brought forward the agenda for lifelong learning action in the 21st Century, and also prepared to organize the International Promotion

Association for Lifelong learning. The most complete, authoritative and modern definition based on the results of this conference could be described as follows: Lifelong learning is an international education thoughts and the survival notion in the 21st century. It plays as a continuing process which can help a human to exert his potential and encourage and enable him to obtain all the knowledge, values, skills, and professions which are needed in his lifelong, even to apply them in any circumstance, situation or task confidentially, creatively and enjoyably. The upgrading of lifelong Learning to the concept of a man's survival means the positive response to the knowledge economy and society from the human, and also means that the learning conception will have fundamental change in the era of knowledge economy, as learning will be expanded from simple and periodical school learning or a small number of elite education to the action of all the humans through the whole life, no matter how the status a man has or the properties he has; from the passive learning to active learning, so that learning could actually become the lifelong habit and conscious action of all humans (Li, 2012).

Professor Zunmin Wu, the Chinese researcher who is specializing in lifelong education and learning research, said: "Lifelong learning is the whole process which a man could learn and know how to explore and make good use of his knowledge, technology and learning attitudes in his life. The basic characteristic of it is the meaningful learning, and the learning places are not only limited to families, schools, cultural centers or enterprises, but all the general educational facilities and resources which could be taken advantage of by individuals or groups (Wu, 2007, 20ff).

Generally speaking, based on the above explanation and definition, we can find that lifelong learning refers to such a kind of open learning activity, which occurs everywhere, not only in schools, but also in daily life, such as working, living or even family environment, when people want to learn, and there is no limitation of the learning contents, but including all the learning forms and styles, such as formal, informal and non-formal learning (Peter, 2015). This notion has focused more on the functions and effectiveness after one's learning behavior, as from lifelong learning, one could have much more skills and ideas about how to make good use of knowledge, technology and other capabilities with more efficiencies. It is also an

activity aiming to enhance the quality of life, not only help with the surviving skills or basic living standards, but with the free willing choices on lifelong learning, one could lead a better and more meaningful life

Thus, the notions of lifelong learning, learning society and lifelong education has referred to different objects, as lifelong learning is mainly about the individuals' behaviors, thoughts, ideas and habits on learning; learning society is constituted by each learning members and aiming at the promotions and development of the whole society and the capability of each one in it. However, the lifelong education particularly refers to the places and periods of educational behaviors occurring and the forms, styles, aims, methods of teaching and learning. In this way, these three notions could not be confused or mixed together to indicate for one learning behavior or thought.

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