



**THE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCHING ON THE ESSENCES OF THE LIFELONG
EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEARNING SOCIETY**

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Abstract

The notions of lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society have aroused great interests in the academic educational researching field. Therefore, more and more researches have been focusing on the essences of these three. From each combination of the statements of these notions, we can get the concrete and detailed analysis on the essences of these notions.

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



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The notions of lifelong learning, lifelong education and learning society have always been mentioned and used in the educational research or daily learning practices, as they stand for the modern and fashion ideological trend of the current educational ideas and thoughts. Therefore, more and more discussions have been focusing on the definitions, analysis, essences and differences as well as similarities among them. Nowadays the understandings of these three concepts are not consistent in different places. However, they are the results of respecting for the history and reality, taking full account of careful considerations on the basis of the importance, necessity and possibility in the end. Thus, the representation of each

concept contains some common understandings, or is with particular emphasis on one or some opinions. In view of this, we can analyze some special essences of the three concepts.

The analysis of the essence of lifelong education

Lifelong education is the sublimation and example of the existing education system. Lifelong education is definitely not the whim or a stylish noun, and by no means the alternative or composition form of the traditional education, or even not an expedient measure for the current educational problems, but a kind of fruit through modern and advanced thinking, which has full awareness of sustainable development (Yang, Zhang, Feng & Niu, 2012). It is a kind of innovative and systematic thinking which go beyond centuries-old tradition of school education, gets rid of limitations and obstacles from the existing education system, and finally realize the education revolution as well as outline the future prospects of education in the new era.

Lifelong education is the principle which could be used to reform the current education system, and build the education system in the future. The reform of the current education system is imminent, and the construction of the future education system is also imperative, both of which should regard the lifelong education as a guide.

Education is throughout the whole life of the human development. Men are “unfinished works”, and during this process, education is the spirit food which can guarantee the normal and correctly development of each person. Therefore, as life should not be mechanically divided into the learning and working period (Chen, 2012), education would never be artificially interrupted at a certain period of life, but just on the contrary, the development of human life should be accompanied by it forever.

Education contains all the contents of a human’s development. As “unfinished works”, the humans’ development process has inevitable lifelong characteristics, and as the physical, emotional, gender, social and spiritual exemplification, humans’ of development is ought to be with diverse characteristics. Therefore education should not only pay attention to the lifelong guarantee on spirit, but also take care of all the needs of their development, such as the practical and realistic skills. In order to realize these goals, we need then lifelong

education.

Education must turn into the all-in-one system with higher effectiveness and convenience. One of the missions served by lifelong education is to integrate the educational factors and resource which were former relatively fragmented with each other, in order to enable people to access to learning and education opportunities in all of the social educational institutions and training centers, no matter which working sectors the persons stay in (Bao, 2008). This is almost an obsession and pursuit of all lifelong education advocates.

Education plays the important role both on the personal and social development. Lifelong education aims at promoting not only the personal comprehensive lifelong development, but also the sustainable development and comprehensive progress in the society. The expression of “lifelong education should be aiming to improve the living standard of individuals or human groups” by R. H. David reflected especially clearly this essence.

The analysis of the essence of lifelong learning

Compared to the lifelong education, the definition of lifelong learning were always much more brief, but from analyzing these statements comprehensive, it can still be found the rich connotations in them. Its essences are as follows.

Lifelong learning is a style of living (Bao, 2008). In the field of lifelong learning, the learning activities are beyond the areas of the traditional education, which means it does not only relate to the educational areas, but also have more contacts with the survival areas. Furthermore, lifelong learning is becoming a critical responsibility for survival, and is also becoming a style of people’s living in the society in the future. If there is no lifelong learning, there will be neither social existence of a human, nor a person's life quality. So it is said that lifelong learning is the survival concept in the 21st century.

Lifelong learning is a transfer process of subject. In the past, learners were often seen as the object ought to be shaped and governed, while the teachers were considered to be the principal force to influence them. However, when the factors as responsibility, initiative, and creativity (Yu, 2011) show its value and influences and gain more and more concern while the personal growth and social upheavals, the learning began to occupy a more prominent

position during the contradiction with teaching. After all, learning is much more important than teaching, so the learners eventually are more important than educators. Therefore, with the appeal of lifelong learning, the learners are increasingly becoming the subjects of the teaching activities and not the objects any more. Lifelong learning is based on the learners' autonomy. Since the objects become the subjects, the teaching-learning activities should be positioned in the wishes and needs of the learners, and are also asked to respect the demands, the cognitive style and unique characters of each learner's. Just as the thinking which Japanese scholars pointed out, "lifelong learning is a spontaneous activity which is based on the wishes of each individual's, and is practiced by selecting appropriate means and methods of their own. And the social responsibility lies in "giving the necessary response to their demands", which in the end forms the continuous support mechanism to encourage the development and showing the potential of the humans.

Learning is a lifelong process. In a society with continues changing in each sector and department, people must not have a pause for a moment in his understanding and cognition. There is no reason for a normal one to refuse to perform the different development tasks in different life stages during the whole life. Therefore, almost all the lifelong learning advocates believe that the meaningful learning is advancing "through their lifelong". Learning is a comprehensive process. Learning is not only a continue process during the whole life, but also a process calls for comprehensive learning. The reason for it is that the development themes and topics which the society produces and invests to ordinary people are diverse and confused, always are beyond the normal people's understanding about the current society and world (Wang, 2003). And also the personal growth is producing and investing different and sometimes hard tasks to the individual development. It is a specific interpretation of lifelong learning as a comprehensive learning process when we consider about all the knowledge, values, skills, and understandings, as well as applied technology and learning attitude which are all needed in their lifelong time (Ye, 2005, pp20-22).

Lifelong learning exists everywhere. As mentioned by the popular definitions above, lifelong learning occurs in all human life space. That is to say the learning places are by no means

limited to the families, schools, cultural centers or enterprise. Generally speaking, all the educational facilities and resources which could be taken advantage of by individuals or groups should be included in.

The purpose of lifelong learning is to construct self-confidence and the ability to adapt to the changes in society. The process of lifelong learning is a process of knowledge accumulation, use and creation. Each person can confidently, pleasantly and comfortably use, master and create knowledge in this process when he faces new challenges, tasks, situations and environments in the rapidly changing society,.

The analysis of the essence of the learning society

Almost all the representation of the learning society defining makes efforts to outline a colorful picture. When we look into these perspectives, we could find out “this picture” containing the following important contents.

Learning is the fundamental right owned by everyone. In the learning society, all citizens, regardless of their family background, gender, race, income or living areas, should have the right to acquire knowledge and access to education in their lifetime.

A learning society has and obeys a lifelong education system. As it is said by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and the American quality education committee, that all citizens can continue to participate in education and training for life, constantly learn from childhood to adulthood, develop themselves with the changes of the world with the help of this system. Its scope has already goes beyond the school education, but the whole community is involved in. In the learning society, the educational function is no longer proprietary to schools, but on the contrary it belongs to the community as a whole. In other words, the educational opportunities are far more than the traditional learning times (Yu, 2011). Not only schools, but also families, workplaces, libraries, art galleries, museums and science centers, and even all the living places people work and live in which are mature and developed for the learning activities. It adheres to learner-centered and to meet the learning needs of learners. The basic strategy of the educational activities shifts from the traditional

school- and teachers-centered to the modern learners-centered in the learning society. The education and learning has diverse, open and flexible network, which is able to meet the different learning needs of different learning groups and individuals.

The basic conditions of achieving learning society are both requirement of the participation of individuals in learning, and the participation of groups in learning. As stated by the Taiwan scholar Mengjing Hu, prerequisites for the establishment of a learning society are learning individuals, learning families, learning organizations, learning communities and learning policies, which mean the whole society (Li, 2007). The functions of learning society are conducive both to the development of the individual, but also to the progress of society (Kloas, 2006). So we could see that the establishment of a learning society is aiming at promoting the development of the individual, and also promoting the social progress. That is to say, a learning society can not only improve the quality of individuals' life standard, but also realize the social integration and economic success. In short, it is to provide an ideal social learning environment, so as to promote the comprehensive development of the society and individuals.

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