

# Reflections on the Long-term Development of the Open University of China

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**Abstract.** In recent years, The Open University of China was recognized by the community with its strict and flexible teaching management mode and has become an indispensable part of China's higher education system. This essay elaborates the positives of the university's establishment from the national macro level, the university's meso level, and the learners' micro level. Putting forward the questions of developing the teaching information technology, strengthening the faculty and constructing the campus culture, this essay also meant to explore the methods of its long-term development: emphasize the education running system to perfect the reform on the talents training system, keep up with the times to promote the construction of educational info, and direct the education in the right way to clear up related institutions.

## Introduction

In 2012, the Ministry of Education official released related documents to approve the establishment of the Open University of China, and since then, it was included in China's higher education system. Based on the Central Radio and Television University, the Open University of China, relying mainly on the modern information technology, serves all the members of the society and is the new model of open and distance colleges.

Having the fundamental educational philosophy of "open and international", it combines the non degree continuing education and the degree one. With the application of the fusing character of information technology and education, it realized the new opportunities of life long learning.

It could be said that the establishment of the university not only caters the trend of higher education's becoming less elitist to more representative, but also the inevitable result of China's rapid economical development. From its current situation, the university is playing a positive role in the higher education. Undeniable however, problems do exist in it with the eco-tech springing up and the diversification of educational reforms. Therefore, exploring a practical and reasonable method of long-term developing on the basis of current situation is vital to it.

## Positives of the Open University of China establishment

### *A. The national macro level: better for developing a learning society*

From China's National Medium and Long Term Educational Development Program, one important goal for the Open University of China is to provide learning opportunities for all levels of the citizens to serve for a learning society. Therefore, for the university, its educational principle of serving the whole society is a significant movement to the development of a learning society.

On one hand, the university has its own specific advantages of a vast covering area from the provinces to the cities and then to the county regions, allowing the open learning groups from incumbents to migrant workers and even the disabled having the convenience of learning. The learning group's inclusiveness cultivate a benign learning atmosphere and improve their sense of identify and trust to the country [1].

On the other hand, the educational philosophy of "open, quality, international, informatization" held by the university is positive for the development of the learning society, which has a spiritual

connotation promoted by its combination of internal teaching and external practice. And under the strict teaching quality, it cultivates droves of talents.

In the national macro level, therefore, the construction of the Open University of China not only affect the learners, more importantly, it serves for the building of a learning society, an inevitable result adopting to today's higher education.

#### *B. The university's meso level: better for quality improving of distance education*

All the time, the Open University of China focuses on the quality developing, which to some extent helps the improvement of teaching quality. At the same time, it promotes the quality of distance education by largely applying it. There are three points.

First is the campus culture. It cultivates a benign communication atmosphere getting rid of the old rigid one, better for stimulating the enthusiasm of the learners [2]. Second is the orderly management. It has a management system of "one to one" and "point to point", which to some extent improve the learning efficiency and smooth the process of distance teaching. The third is the application of information technology, the main mode of its education. The info tech is the key and foundation of the university, which hardly can has a long development without its support. Thus in the aspect of info tech, the university has somehow improved the distance teaching quality [3].

Thus for the university itself, the many factors of its internal development all motivate the quality developing of distance education to certain extents.

#### *C. The learners' micro level: better for the overall quality improving of students*

The Open University of China has been regarding cultivating practical students as its main goal. From the learners' perspective, the university's establishment is good for their overall qualities developing.

For one thing, in the aspect of fundamental professional courses, the university has a growing diversified and practical curriculum setting, which in some degrees helps the learners to better suit the society development. In another word, learners can have a long-term understanding to their own professional courses after studying the knowledge, thus planning their job future[4].

For another, in the practice aspects of the learners, they can share, learn and study the flexible resources anywhere and anytime due to distance teaching of the university. It matters a lot not only for easy access to abundant resources, but also for the learning goals clearing.

Thus in the learners' micro level, the university is playing an active role in both professional and practical courses developing.

### **Main problems exit in today's Open University of China**

#### *A. Improvements is needed in the teaching information technology*

The Open University of China, based on the Central Radio and Television University, has a relatively advanced information technology. But with the extensive and diversified development of China's IT in recent years, problems do exit in the teaching information technology of the university. There are two aspects.

In one respect, the too conservative teaching information fails to update its teaching resources library lead to the lagging behind of the teaching information technology, which is unsuitable to the modern IT.

In another part, the application ability of IT fails to suit with the teaching. This phenomenon is particularly evident in some colleges. To the information technology, application is the key point, without which the teaching informatization can be nothing but day dream.

The teaching information technology urges for a solution to today's Open University of China.

### *B. Weakness in the faculty construction*

Universities and colleges have always concerning the faculty, which is also the focus of the Open University of China, as its overall quality needs improving [5].

On one hand, the faculty construction of the university is inadequate due to its large scale and the relax gate keeping. Besides, the application of distance education leads to a scatted faculty and imperfect management system. On the other hand, the teachers' qualities, which to some extent directly affect the improving of teaching, are uneven. Because of the informatization of teaching, teachers' relying on technology may lead to the low quality of their teaching.

All in all, the faculty of the Open University of China, still uneven, fails to keep up with the overall higher education's pace.

### *C. Insufficient input to the campus culture development*

Despite the particularities in the teaching method of the Open University of China, the construction of campus culture, the key of the university, is vital and plays increasingly significant role in the current situation. Two prominent issues exit.

One is the insufficient investment to the virtual campus construction. For the Open University of China, the campus culture construction includes the virtual one and the entitative. The former, due to the university's relying to information, is particularly significant. However, the investment to the virtual campus culture founded on the internet still remains weak, unable to keep pace with the university's development.

The second is the ignorance to the entitative one. Due to the relatively high proportion of investment to the software infrastructure, the proportion to the entitative campus culture development is relatively low, which lead to the unbalance that hinder the process of the whole campus culture development to a certain extent[6].

## **The long-term developing method of the Open University of China**

### *A Keep up with the times and promote the educational informatization construction*

The long-term development of the Open University of China calls for multi-joint forces, which requires the university walking in step with the times and innovate its developing ethics.

For one thing, keeping pace with the higher education development, the university should orient itself to the mainstream. School principles cannot be forgotten to guarantee the teaching quality.

For another, closely follow the innovative characteristics of modern information technology to promote the construction of education informatization. Attention should be paid to the education resources refreshing to synchronize with the times to avoid the biased overlooking to teaching quality in the pursuit of informatization. At the same time, the Open University of China needs to take account of synchronizing time and information, and improve the teaching quality on the basis of modern information technology.

### *B. Focus on the school running system and perfect the talents cultivating mode reform*

As for the school running system, a full range of considerations are needed to make a comprehensive plan. And the reform to perfect the talents training mode is also indispensable.

On one hand, a macroscopic reform on the talents training direction is needed. The Open University of China has a massified and extensive range of students, and referred careers suited for the whole society are diversified. It needs practical reform to change the talents training mode into the skill direction.

On the other hand, in the reform and cultivation of faculty, specialized professionals are the points. A platform for teachers' talent expression should be provided by relative performance mechanism and evaluation system. The school system can perfect by building a comprehensive evaluation index system.

In other words, in the reform of talents training mode, a balance is needed from both the students' and the teachers' perspective. Therefore, talents training system and school running system are integral and only by perfecting the former that the later can be complete.

### *C. Keep the right orientation and regulate related institution construction*

The Open University of China is a new type of university of modern society, based on the internet technology, this learning education mode is a popular one centred on the students. It can be said that it built a platform for online teaching and web based learning. In the school running direction, the university should persist in the original theory and keep up with the times.

In regulating related institutions, for one thing, the university should perfect the internal management system and explicit the educational function to apply it into practice. The education is restrained by the institutions. For another, related measures to protect the interests of teachers and students are indispensable. A comprehensive evaluation system for teachers to guarantee their legal interests and a one-stop service system for students from their entrance to the graduation to make sure that they are benefited meant that institutions are essential to constrain.

Thus from the long-term development, institution perfecting and constraining are necessity to direct the schooling into the right direction.

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