

LEARNING CITIES AGENDA: THE UPDATE VERSION OF ADULT EDUCATION IN CHINA

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Resume:

The adult education is an important part of Chinese education system, especially for the illiteracy work since the establishment of PRC. However, the adult education is getting weak since the end of 20th century, the adult education practitioners, researchers, and who worked in the adult education need to find a new idea to update the old adult education, meanwhile, the learning society and learning cities idea are getting popular during that time, the Chinese mega-city like Beijing and Shanghai start using the term *Learning Cities* because they want to build learning society at municipal level, so the learning city idea and practice is updating as the new version of adult education, it covers the traditional field (illiteracy) as well as some new territory, such as community education, vocational training, and senior citizen education etc. Since the 2013 Beijing International Conference on Learning Cities, many cities are rethinking of the learning cities work. There some new ideas are accepted widely, such as sustainable development, new technology and media etc, the learning cities idea is getting changed and ready for the future.

Key words:

Learning Cities; adult education; lifelong learning; China

Анотація:

Дайонг Юань. Міста, що навчаються: оновлена версія освіти дорослих у Китаї.

З часу створення КНР освіта дорослих є важливим складником китайської системи освіти, особливо щодо роботи з неписьменними громадянами. Проте з кінця ХХ століття освіта дорослих децю втрачає свої позиції. Її представники, науковці й ті, хто працює у цій сфері, відчують потребу знайти свіжі ідеї для оновлення старої системи освіти дорослих. Водночас надзвичайно популярною стає ідея суспільства й міст, що навчаються. Китайські мегаміста, такі, як Пекін і Шанхай, починають використовувати термін «*Міста, що навчаються*», оскільки прагнуть побудувати суспільство на муніципальному рівні. Отже, ідея та практика міст, що навчаються, оновлюються й охоплюють не тільки традиційну сферу (неписьменність) освіти дорослих, а й деякі нові царини, зокрема такі, як освіта громади, професійна підготовка, освіта громадян літнього віку тощо. Починаючи з Пекінської міжнародної конференції з питань міст, що навчаються, яка відбулася 2013 року, багато міст переосмислили роботу міст, що навчаються. Швидко поширюються деякі свіжі ідеї, такі, як сталий розвиток, нові технології та засоби масової інформації тощо; ідея міст, що навчаються, змінюється й націлюється на майбутнє.

Ключові слова:

міста, що навчаються; освіта дорослих; безперервне навчання; Китай.

Аннотация:

Дайонг Юань. Обучающиеся города: обновленная версия образования взрослых в Китае.

Со времени создания КНР образование взрослых является важной частью китайской системы образования, особенно относительно работы с неграмотными гражданами. Однако с конца ХХ века образование взрослых в некоторой мере теряет свои позиции. Его представители, ученые и те, кто работал в этой сфере, испытывают потребность в свежих идеях для обновления старой системы образования взрослых. Между тем, в это же время становится популярной идея общества и обучающихся городов. Китайские мега-города, такие, как Пекин и Шанхай, начинают использовать термин «*Обучающиеся города*», поскольку стремятся построить общество на муниципальном уровне. Таким образом, идея и практика обучающихся городов обновляются и охватывают не только традиционную сферу (неграмотность) образования взрослых, а также некоторые новые области. Среди них такие, как образование общины, профессиональная подготовка, образование граждан пожилого возраста и т. д. Начиная с Пекинской международной конференции по вопросам обучающихся городов, состоявшейся в 2013 году, многие города переосмысливают работу обучающихся городов. Широко воспринимаются некоторые новые идеи, такие, как устойчивое развитие, новые технологии и средства массовой информации; идея обучающихся городов изменяется и устремляется в будущее.

Ключевые слова:

обучающиеся города; образование взрослых; непрерывное обучение; Китай.

The lifelong learning ideas are originally from UNESCO, OECD and other international organizations, the modern concept of a learning cities emerged from the work of OECD on lifelong learning, and then developed in two streams of Learning Cities and Educating Cities with little contact with each other (Peter 2013). Learning Cities has become a strong positive force affecting the reform of education in many regions in Europe and Asian. In China, the adult education is an important part of Chinese education system, especially for the illiteracy work since the establishment of China since 1949. However, the adult education is getting weak since the Department of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education was destroyed at the end of 20th century. So the adult education practitioners, researchers, and who worked in the adult education need to find a new idea to update the old adult education, exactly then, the learning society idea is

getting popular during that time, the mega-city like Beijing and Shanghai start using the term Learning cities in late 1990s, so the learning cities idea and practice is updating as the new version of adult education, it covers the traditional field (illiteracy) as well as some new territory, such as community education, vocational training, and senior citizen education in China.

1. The Chinese context of learning cities

There is no official definition of the term of learning cities in China, but the meaning of learning cities can be explained in both economic and social perspective.

From an economic perspective, I believe the learning cities is a city that can self-innovate and self-upgrade within a global context, innovation should be the key for development. A learning city is a city that does not rely on the outside world for innovation; it is a city that can create new ideas

itself. To achieve this, the city should have a well-established education structure and a learning resources provision system that allows the public and private sectors to work closely together to improve citizens' learning.

From a social perspective, the learning cities must be an inclusive city that promotes the all-round development of all its citizens. A learning city should not only rely solely on the Ministry of Education; all the government departments and public institutions as well as the private sector should participate in promoting the learning city together. All stakeholders have their own role to play in building the learning city, and the city should provide different learning resources for different groups of people.

From historical perspectives, with the ongoing deepening of reform and the processes of opening up, as well as the gradual development of its economy and society, China has put forward and promoted the development of lifelong learning and is building the institutions needed to support it. Between the systems of lifelong learning began with the publication of 'An Outline of Educational Reform and Development Planning' by the Communist Party Central Committee (1993) and the National People's Congress passed the 12th Five Year Plan for the National Economy and Social Development. This reinforced the commitment to the implementation of lifelong learning (2011) the lifelong education system in China has grown gradually and today it permeates all areas of society. The idea of learning society also appear in government leader's report both national and municipal level, the president of Jiang Zemin announce China will "construct the lifelong education system, building the learning society" during the APEC meeting in Shanghai in the year of 2000.

3. Different Stages: From Learning Society to Learning Cities

3.1 *The beginning stage of learning cities.* Learning society is a holistic idea, China as the centralization country with the unitary system, each region need to achieve it. So we can see many cities announce their strategy of building learning cities since the end of 1990s, such as Beijing (1998), Shanghai (1999), Dalian (2001), Changzhou (2001), Nanjing (2002), each city has their own meaning, method, task, and vision. As the same time, many research reports were published during this period.

3.2 *The continuous development stage of the learning cities.* In the begging of 21 century, many cities have good experience, the learning cities initiatives can help to solve social and economic problems. More cities involve the learning cities movement, not only the big cities but some small and remote area also joins this, to find their own special features in learning cities movement.

(1)The learning cities theory then is not only from the lifelong learning, also try to find some useful ideas and method from Learning Organization of Management, for example Peter M. Senge, Beijing city use the *Systems Thinking* idea from *The Fifth Discipline* as the bible of learning cities (Sun, 2014.)

(2) The many new learning models were created such as learning school, learning government, learning family, etc. Learning became a big and popular umbrella to cover every group need improve.

(3) The evaluation was used commonly, each city has their criteria method, and the experts group discusses the index and criteria with the stakeholders, when finalized. The index became the most important tools for the government and learning region practitioners to follow. Many research books was published in this stage, but most books are case study

3.3 *The updating and innovation stage of the learning cities.* Since the year 2013 the first conference of learning city was held in Beijing, many cities start to rethink about the learning cities policy and practice. (1) The first national policy report was published with the name of *Learning Cities*, it is co-publish by 7 different ministry which are also the stakeholders in this field. And Chinese Learning City Network is organized by Chinese Adult Education Association, now it has 3 batches of members, now it is the loose network for sharing information, maybe the Network will organize the national evaluation in the future, to form some of the Chinese learning city models.

4. Chinese Style: The Features of Chinese Learning Cities

In modern society, the economic globalization, modern science and technology changing, knowledge and innovation updating, Against this background, the learning cities agenda became reality from theory in China, the learning cities practice was officially appear at the beginning of 21 century, and the learning cities ideology was written in government documents nationally and locally, it was considered by some Chinese municipal government as the strategy to help to develop adult and continuing education, even became the MASTER idea of education.

4.1 *China's top down administration with the strong political ambition.* China is a huge country with large population and diverse cultures, only if the central government has the power to make learning cities from idea into reality. The achievement of learning city/region in being treats as the mission statement of government official paper. There is hidden slogan for each president of China, such as *Scientific Approach to Development* and *Building a Harmonious Society* by President Hu Jintao (2002-2012), the New Xi Jinping

administration (2012-) use *Great Renewal of the Chinese Nation* and *Chinese Dream* as the slogan. In this situation, the learning society and learning city ideas were written into CPC working agenda, all the stake holders need to follow the direction.

4.2 *Integration of different partners with the system design.* In most of the learning cities in China, with the leadership of the municipal government, many partners can be working together in the same program, both the government departments and other third sector organizations, such as NGOs, enterprises, museums, private sectors as well, all the stakeholders are with the leadership management systems and operating mechanisms to coordinate.

4.3 *The learning city initiatives are problem-based model.* As the big country, China is facing various problems in different regions socially and economically. So the learning cities are facing the different situation, also the model of learning cities in China is seems similar, but they are different indeed. Such as the big cities need to solve the social inclusion; some of the small cities maybe want to improve the education quality, try to make learning became the key value all the citizen can accept.

4.4 *The culture building is a good way to enhance the learning city environment.* Chinese Ministry of Education focus on the culture building in different regions, and each year has *National Lifelong Learning Festivals* across every city, during the festival, many learning actives are organized and good learning program and citizen were reward during that period.

In the nearly two decades, the program of learning cities is getting more popular, many excellent examples are show up since the beginning. To summarize the key element of a good learning city, it includes:

- building up a lifelong learning structure and system;
- mobilizing educational resources;
- creating a learning atmosphere and culture;
- establish good conditions for learning (funding)
- attracting experts with an innovative and dynamic spirit.

5. The Assessment of Learning Cities: Beijing case

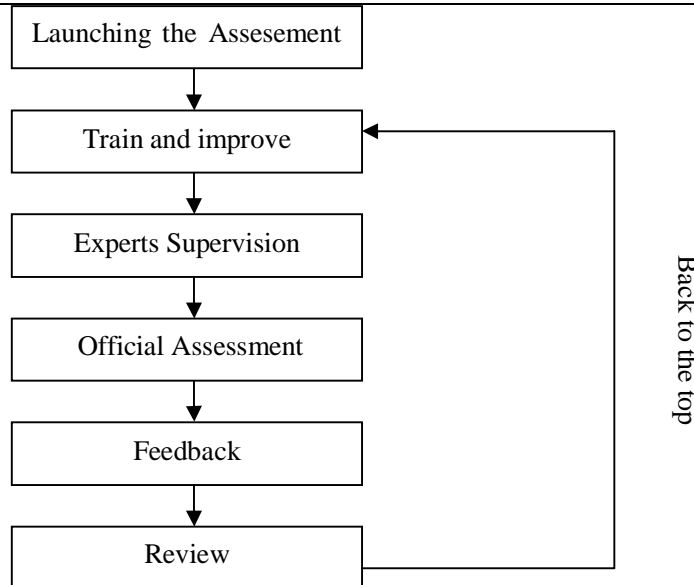
There are some cities have the learning cities initiatives, which development very well in different regions. Most of the cities have the project to

evaluate the result of learning cities, let us take Beijing as an example, the other Chinese learning cities did the similar project to make sure the learning cities can have a good performance.

As for the Beijing learning city initiative, it has a coalition committee, named Beijing Municipal Leading Group for Constructing Learning City, 29 municipal departments plays different role in this committee, such as the financial, culture, news agency, S&T, education departments, they are all involve with the learning city agenda and make contributions. The learning city became the common vision for most of the government office, and one important and unique factor to push learning city in China is the Communist Party, the political leader advocate to build a Learning Party, so the learning activities and different programs were undergoing, after a serious funding into learning region program, the government need to make sure they make the right thing, so the assessment is strongly need to find out the learning result.

In order to make a good assessment, the Beijing government organizes a group of experts to conduct the whole process. With the expert help, Beijing creates a series of auditing index to evaluate the learning region, the region under assessment will receive the training to know the meaning of the index, the experts will go the different regions to give the guidance, this will take more than one round, and they will come back and forth. After the experts' supervision and guidance, the region will have a formal assessment, during the formal one, the region government leaders (like the head of the region) have to make a report to show their process and result, share some innovations, they need to do a self assessment, finally, the experts will give their formal feedback. If the result is not good, the assessment will come back to have more training. The diagram below shows the basic step of the assessment.

The purpose of the assessment is to make sure the lifelong education have enough and suitable supporting policy and funding, every citizen can find learning resource easily, the labor force is qualified for the economy and social development and so on. The experts group discusses the index and criteria with the stakeholders, when finalized. The index became the most important tools for the government and learning region practitioners to follow. The index is showed by the diagram below.



First-level index	Second-level index
1. Learning and understanding	1.1 National policy
	1.2 Laws and regulations
	1.3 Scientific theory
	1.4 Propaganda in media
2. organization and management	2.1 Planning
	2.2 Organization construction
	2.3 Network
3. condition and guarantee	3.1 Institutional guarantee
	3.2 Human Resource development
	3.3 Funds
	3.4 The learning environment
	3.5 Research
	3.6 Inspection assessment
4. Implementation and effects	4.1 Preschool education
	4.2 Adolescent education
	4.3 Adult education
	4.4 Elder education
	4.5 Migration population and disadvantaged people education
	4.6 Informal education
	4.7 Learning organization
5. Characteristic and innovation	5.1 Characteristic
	5.2 Innovation

Conclusion

At last, adult education has some new meaning in the context of learning cities, learning cities enrich the mission, method, research of adult education, it is a new and upgrade level of adult education, and not just focus on adult illiteracy issue, the learning cities initiatives can get more development with more partners, more diverse, and more attractive in the future. In the education sector, when the Chinese mentioned educational resources, the adult education working well under the label of

learning city, at the same time, adult education could be learning community, or learning organization, is that possible the learning city can replace the adult education in the future? I am not sure, but at least learning cities is a update version for the adult learning and lifelong learning, some new ideas are accepted widely in learning cities, such as sustainable development, new technology and media etc, the learning cities is getting changed and ready for the future.

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