

Better Learning Better City: Mission and Responsibility of Open Universities

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I would like to begin my presentation by sharing with you two figures: The first one: I quote a piece of news (on Chinese Lunar New Year) from Xinming Evening News, a local newspaper enjoying over 1 million readership, that Google, the world's largest search engine, issued its hot search in Shanghai in 2007, "Dianda, or STVU" was on the top list and it became the hottest topic in Shanghai; The second figure: 46246 students were registered with STVU, accounting for 56% of the total college student population in Shanghai this year and the number of students helps the University become the largest higher education institution in Shanghai.

The above mentioned figures not only reflect that residents in Shanghai attach greater attention to "Life-long Learning" but also demonstrate that STVU plays an increasingly important role in life-long learning system in Shanghai. STVU is the NO.1 choice for "further study" among employed people. This best reflects the missions and responsibilities as an open university. Missions for Open Universities in the New Century

Study and learning is crucial for everyone. As a Chinese saying goes: "If a child loves learning, it is like the sunshine of the morning; if an adult loves learning, it is like the sunshine at noon; if an elderly loves learning, it is like brightness of a candle." Learning will make people feel achieved and pleasant; learning will make life more meaningful; learning will help the society to make progress; learning will make the city better. As a learning city, we will work together to create opportunities, to share success, to enjoy development and harmonious progress.

The knowledge economy is enjoying its rapid development and life-long learning is a compulsory task for every citizen. Thus, building a learning society so as to raise a nation's comprehensive competitiveness is the fundamental objective of development in every country worldwide. Building a learning society is the request and of the new century and the must of history. "All people learning and life-long learning" has met new challenges both in terms of coverage of people and time. Open universities have witnessed such challenges as we are the pilots and major forces in open education and we need to prepare ourselves for such challenges. "For all learners, all for learners is the mission and responsibilities of open universities in the new century and is the approach for us to survive and the theme for us to pursue further development.

"For all learners" means that open universities shall provide quality education services to every one in the society on an equal footing. "All for learners" means that open universities shall create a learner-centred learning

environment providing services based on learners' features and needs and provide them with an all-round development. Open universities shall utilize all their power and resources so as to help all learners to be successful.

Open universities shall set their feet in the "sea of people" and take a proactive altitude to provide service to all the learners. Therefore, the openness and sublimability of open universities can be realized. We must develop and adjust with the development of people and society and focus on the all-round development of people. We shall target both present and future development. Only by doing so, can open universities develop with people and obtain strong vitality and momentum of development.

Develop with the Time: The Practice and Exploring of Open Education

Shanghai is developing to become the hub of the international economy, finance, trade and shipping and working hard to be a modern international metropolis. As the most dynamic city in China, Shanghai has maintained two-digit growth for 16 consecutive years. The adjustment and optimization of industry has promoted the growing demand for talents: white-collars need life-long learning for professional and personal development whereas blue-collars need life-long learning to be competent for their current posts. It is known that Shanghai is one of the top 10 most populous cities in the world with nearly 1/3 people from other parts of the country and they are in bad need of learning to equip themselves to work and live in the city; in the meantime, senior citizens account for 1/5 of the total population and they need life-long learning to enjoy better life and upgrade their life quality.

——Involving all learners and establishing the open education concept of providing education services to all the people

"For all learners, all for learners"

We deeply feel the sublimability of missions and the significance of responsibilities of open universities and we are urged by such missions and responsibilities as exploring and practice:

Tolerance and openness is the features of Shanghai, a city of immigrants; "Welcoming all types of cultures and customs" is the characteristics of Shanghai, a city at the estuary of the Yangtze River. Because of its special development path and history, Shanghai is known to have the culture of fluidity and inclusiveness. In the Shanghai people's eyes, all the people from overseas or from other parts of the country are all the people participating in the development of Shanghai and they are all given a name of "New Shanghainess". The time requests open universities shall be more open than before and deliver education to all people on an equal footing. We shall understand that everyone is eligible to receive our open education.

Therefore, no conventional universities can rival STVU in terms of the diversified age groups of students and extensiveness of their profession. We

have students from the frontline of factories, farmers, staff from offices, taxi-drivers; we have overseas Chinese students, students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and we even have service people from satellites of “Shenzhou 5,6,7” soldiers from peacekeeping troops in Haiti. Li Bing, known as “Blue-collar Hero”, China’s model worker and Zhu Xueqing, people’s member of the NPC are all our outstanding students. The youngest students are only 16 or 17 and the oldest student, the 75-year-old Xie Baosheng is learning for her English major of junior college degree. Some students are learning for their first degree and others are for further study. Zhu Jie, PhD, expert in eye-ground disease is studying Law and Xu Yinzhe, Master of Law is studying Engineering Management. These years, we have seen a growing number of non-local students and a typical example is in No.1 Branch of Minhang District, 60% of 7912 students are from 28 different provinces of China. We have also seen many couple students, mother and daughter students studying together.

We have also seen disabled students with strong mind: Zhong Yanchun, a cancer patient who keeps on studying during her lifetime and obtained her graduation diploma in the last minute of her life; Yang Jie, who lost both his arms uses his mouth to paint and overcomes difficulties to learn to use computer and finished his study with distinguished scores; Zhong Haihong, an infantile paralysis patient, is a member of sitting volleyball player of Shanghai Team. She prepared for both 2008 Beijing Paralympics Games studying in STVU and finally won the championship in the Games.

Education conveys civilization and knowledge changes one’s fate. STVU helps to achieve many students’ dream of studying in college. Providing education to general labor force, open education is different from elite education. We know that general labor force is the major force in the society and the society will achieve an all-round and harmonious development only if the general labor has achieved their development. We strongly believe that education must face to all the people and we, as an open university must provide service to these people so as to improve our value and gain support from all the people.

——Mastering the demand of the time, providing quality education to learners

Open universities shall have sharp insights of social issues so as to provide open education opportunities to potential learners, thus its flexibility and social functions can be realized. We have successfully grasped the opportunity of huge demand of talents in Shanghai’s “Four centres” development. We take a proactive approach and set up Finance, Logistics Management, Business Management and other sought-after disciplines in line with Shanghai’s Most Urgently Needed Talents Training Program. In the meantime, we keep on improving our courses and our education mode and provide a considerable number of qualified talents with practical skills for the modern service industry. The animation industry is booming in Shanghai and

there is a huge demand for such talents and we set up a discipline of “Animation Design”. This year, we focus on set up a new discipline: Metro Transportation, to fulfill the need of 20,000 talents in the filed.

We conduct various technical training programs so as to meet the diversified needs of people at different levels. Some successful programs are as follows: The program of the Computer Application Capability Examination, which has witnessed its 15 years of exploration, innovation and optimization, is still a popular program in Shanghai and so far 4.1 million candidates have participated in the training, among whom, 1.89 million achieved certificates; ACCA, a Sino-UK-Hong Kong joint program has received over 700,000 trainees; 55,000 students have participated in EBA, which has become a famous program in quality education among the blue-collar workers in Shanghai; we have also played an important role in an initiative: “Welcoming the 2010 EXPO, To Learn English and Mandarin”, in which 1 million people in Shanghai involve . Various course-books with integration of multi-media have been published and this has provided people in Shanghai with learning materials and environment.

The practice has proved that learners are dominant in running educational institutions and open universities shall be learners-oriented. The foundation of a guaranteed quality education is that open universities shall understand that their responsibility is to provide learners with high quality education. If this foundation is becoming solid, open universities can get supports both from the government and from the society so as to achieve a sustainable development. Over the past years, we have independently designed and developed different multi-media teaching resources and, by making full use of our advantages in technology, we set up such sub-websites as “E-time”, “Literature Gallery” and virtual teaching practice bases including “Virtual Court”, “Virtual Machinery and Electronic Lab”; 10 study support platforms have been established; a “Mobile Campus” has been developed applying MP3, SMS and other technologies and it is very popular among the students.

——Utilizing open education resources and know-how, actively promoting the development of a learning city

History of development, ancient and modern, /Chinese and foreign, has shown that the run of the process of any modernization contains different economic and cultural strategies. Shanghai, known for its modern cultural facilities, such as the Oriental TV Tower, Shanghai Library, The Grand Theatre and Shanghai Museum together with its abundant community facilities has witnessed a new framework of a “Metropolis with New Cultures”. People can enjoy diversified cultural festivals in the communities: Study Festival, Reading Festival and non-profit public lectures. All of these have demonstrated that Shanghai is in the process of becoming a learning city.

So what can do we do to contribute to such a process as open universities? How to bring our advantages into full play and how to make “For

all learners, all for learners” into practices? I believe that we should work hard as a promoter and contributor to create more life-long education opportunities in the building of the learning city and to provide quality education resources to establish a large life-long learning platform for the broad masses of the residents.

A “Virtual Campus” across city and suburbs of Shanghai has already been established and a “Three-in-one Network”: satellite communication network, telecommunication network and teaching system network are integrated. We have enjoyed our network capacity of 3130G, 265,841 course-wares, over 30 million visitors of our education resource database. The magnificent Learning World was set up; using the newest concepts and this helps us to enjoy the integration of campus and education service industry and a platform for different education institutions. We are also managing and maintaining the operation of “Shanghai Teacher Education Network” and “Shanghai Vocational and Adult Online Education Network” and other education networks. In the meantime, we are implementing our life-long education philosophy via our Online University for Senior Residents. The Online University for Senior Residents dispatches 3,559 connections in 19 districts and townships in Shanghai working for 276,000 senior learners and this accounts for over 50% of the total number of senior learner population in Shanghai.

Thanks to the support from Shanghai Municipal Government, the Guide Centre of Shanghai Learning City Development was set up in STVU, whose responsibilities include providing guidance as well as coordination to the work of conducting life-long learning education and the Centre has become a hub of Shanghai’s life-long learning education system. The Centre opens a more effective and easier channel for open education to be accessible to the communities and the concept of “For all learners, all for learners” will enjoy its further development with the help of this platform.

Over the past years, together with its over 50 branches, STVU is implementing its principle of “For all learners, all for learners”. The University has maintained its position as a Mega University for 6 consecutive years with 230,000 graduates at undergraduate and junior college levels. Over 500, 000 learners have participated in different training programs in the University annually and this accounts for 25% of the total number of trainees citywide. At present, the total student population is 112,500, which means that 1 out of 3 adult college students is from STVU.

Known for its No.1 in student population, rich education resources, sophisticated open education concepts and advanced IT, STVU is always working for the people in Shanghai and provide them with appropriate learning opportunities, resources as well as service and indeed the University is Shanghai people’s “University by your side”. We are working hard to contribute to the development of building a learning city with a modern, flexible, open and harmonious concepts.

Progressing with the Time: The Strategic Thinking of Open Universities

Today's achievements and brilliance will become the past results, but the mission and responsibility of "For all learners, all for learners" will accompany us to move forward. We have received praises and positive comments, nevertheless, we believe that STVU has only achieved certain progress and we need to develop our concepts and exploration.

—Open universities shall focus and enhance the establishment of brand of a quality open education

Quality is the lifeline of open universities. Open universities shall not only focus on the quantity issue, but more importantly, we must attach great importance to quality issue. With an increasing number of people recognize the concepts of equal education and open education; we have seen that today's conventional colleges and training institutions have also been introduced in the open education sector. Therefore, only when open universities improve their development of quality education and brand building can they gain strength and competitiveness and achieve a stable and sustainable development.

There are many factors impacting the quality of open education which include the establishment of high quality teaching faculty, quality education resources and a well-established learning assistance, strict assessment system and comprehensive quality monitoring approaches. These years we have adopted an approach combining open entrance policy with strict teaching process and assessment management. We work with enterprises to cultivate talents seeking for a close tie between theory study and practical skills. The "Teaching quality assurance committee" was established to conduct the study, guidance and consultation for the issue of teaching quality. We are now working hard on a key program: establishing criteria evaluating the quality of our 110,000 learners with different learning and working background and this criteria will be used to guide our daily teaching practices.

—Open universities shall continuously better its tailor-made learning support system facing all the residents

It is an important component part of running an open university to establish and perfect its learning support system and it is also the fundamental issue of our ultimate goal to carry out "All for learners". We have broadened our views in open education development and with the implementation of our target: "For all learners", diversities have been both observed in the features of learners and their learning demands. The general public have a high demand in education products and education service and we have seen the necessity and the urgency of building a comprehensive, perfect and tailor-made learning support system.

Over the past years, we have conducted positive exploration in learning assistance and certain examples are: Student contact centre, One-stop

learning support centres across Shanghai and learning support platforms such as IT-based enrolment system, Online classroom platforms and Dissertation design and guidance system. However, these approaches are only the first step of diversifying learning assistance. The fundamental issue is the establishment, upgrading and improvement of such learning support modules and to achieve a tailor-made learning support to serve the diversifying, increasingly broad masses of the learners.

—Open university shall have the globe in view and venture in the international open and distance education market

The globalization and internationalization of open universities is an unavoidable trend. Therefore, we need to open to the world and take an active part in the international exchanges and collaborations. I believe that this is one of the reasons why we have observed a great number of international conferences on open and distance education have been held and this is also the reason why we see so many presidents of universities are here with us. Over the past years, joint programs have been set up with the US, Australia, Korea, Japan and other local universities. The sharing of education resources is also promoted in STVU. We believe that education resources and more importantly, education experiences shall also be shared internationally as we are in the time of globalization and internationalization. In June of this year, ICDE auditing experts were invited and we have learned from them the objectives, standard and requirements of open universities in today's world. We have also published a series of books: "International Distance Education Classics" aiming at providing our Chinese colleagues with the research results of the international open education for us to learn and to share. If we say the fundamental issue of internationalization of open universities is the establishment of a "Non-boundary" strategic mentality, then we have achieved the first step of our "Inviting external experts and going out to learn". But there is a lot more for us to do if we would like to achieve full openness to the world and venture in the international open education market.

Qu Yuan, China's ancient great poet once wrote: There is a long way to go, we will have to keep on exploring through this adventure. After 48 years of development, STVU is in its mid age and we are decisive with rich and valuable experiences to face and deal with our next challenges. Shanghai, a beautiful city, has provided STVU its life, its strength, its opportunities and courage. In return, STVU will be working hard for this beautiful city. Taking the philosophy: "For all learners, all for learners", we will work together with all of you to create the glorious career of open education!

Thank you for your kind attention!

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