

New progress in Chinese community education

Establishing a system of life-long learning and education and building a long-term social learning environment have always been the wishes and will of the Chinese people and the Chinese government. In recent years, following many rapid societal changes in China, district communities have become major players on the increasingly important educational stage. Within this context, the concept of community education was born in response to social needs.

At present, community education in China is being led by the central government. It is responsible for all community scientific, cultural, professional and leisure skills training. The aims are to fulfill various academic and professional needs of different groups of people within the community, while also providing for individualized continuing education, life-long learning needs, enrichment of the people's spiritual and cultural life and ultimately increasing community residents' quality of life.

1、 Basic history of community education

Chinese community education started in the mid-1980s. Its development can be roughly classified as having 2 stages. The initial stage of its development was from the 1980s through the 1990s. The main target population was young students. The objective was to link the school with the community and family. Education was to be extended beyond the school walls. From the 90s to present we have been in the community education experimental stage. The aim is to provide continuing education to students and beyond, thus taking a step-by-step approach to achieve comprehensive community education from school to society.

From 2001 until the present day, the Chinese Ministry of Education has established 136 experimental district education centres across China in order to learn the most effective ways to implement such a system. The experiences gained from this process will provide a model and leadership to other communities in China for initiating similar systems.

2、 The characteristics of the community education system

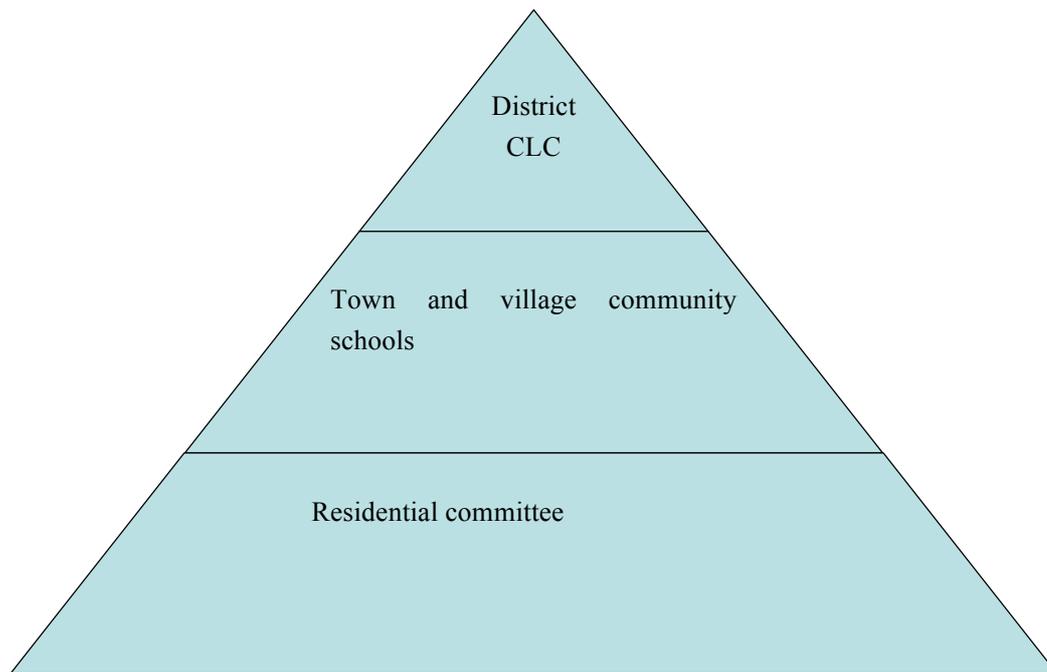
a) Community education management model:

This particular management system is the combined effort of several layers from top to bottom. The government would provide the direction. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the management of such direction. Relevant government departments would form partnerships with various community support groups. Finally

community initiatives would be undertaken by the community, with participation of people from their own community.

b) Community education framework:

The organization of the community framework, uses the district learning centre as the head of the dragon, the town and village community schools as the bone structure and the residential committee as the basis for mobilization of the community system.



c) The community education target population:

The target population includes all members of society, ranging from infants and children through to young adults, adults and seniors. It will focus on the community adults and especially disadvantaged minorities, including unemployed, disabled, seniors and migrant workers.

d) Community education content:

The system will provide life-long skill training for various groups according to their specific needs. It will develop different skill training packages for educational

purposes including infant early stimulation programs, young adult quality life skill training programs, unemployed retraining programs, special needs life skill programs, seniors' social and cultural programs and migrant workers' social life readjustment programs.

Data of National community education training in experimental districts

	2008 (88 experimental districts)			2009 (93 experimental districts)			2010 110 experimental districts		
	Residents in total 649,610,000			Residents in total 8,104,420,000			Residents in total 9,265,300,000		
	Total number 10,000	Person time 10,000	Training rate %	Total number 10,000	person-time 10,000	Training rate %	Total number 10,000	person-time 10,000	Training rate %
Annual training in total	3719.64		57.3	4811.95		59.37	4702.28		50.77
Young adult quality life skill training programs	671.8	543.9	81	926.49	666.17	71.9	1148.75	740.40	64.45
Migrant workers' training	1608.5	570.2	35.4	1821.02	760.74	41.78	2517.20	1048.71	41.66
Farmers' training				1173.32	525.60	44.8	1391.50	668.67	48.05
unemployed retraining programs	177.1	134.0	64	186.78	142.93	76.52	224.72	154.79	68.88
seniors' training	893.5	631.5	70.7	992.99	602.38	60.66	1448.86	765.30	52.82

e) Community education format:

The community education format takes a multi-faceted approach to satisfy the educational needs of various age groups and diverse learning needs. It is to be combined with different training styles from various community learning centres, such as, “Day for life-long learning”, “Double-rest-day educational park”, “Family learning centre”, and “Young adult job consultation centre”.

At the Community farm-learning centre, activities are geared to the farmers’ practical needs, using “Science skill big wagon”, “Mobile school”, “Agricultural techno- knowledge traveling team” using electronic media, internet and digital imaging and audio technology to enhance the presentation of the service.

f) Community educational resources

All the community education resources can integrate with each other. Every experimental district is encouraged to utilize fully the community school space and educational resources. Government has requested the community school educational resources including track field, library, reading rooms, computer rooms, be opened for utilization by the community. At the same time, all experimental districts are encouraged to initiate and develop utilization of the educational resources of other institutions to establish learning centres outside the school base system.

g) Community education management and teaching staff:

The management and teaching staff is comprised of three groups of people. The first group consists of people who are professionally trained and engage full-time in community education management and teaching. The second group comprises of people who are professionally engaged part-time in community education management and teaching. The third group is mainly volunteers.

h) Community education funding sources:

Revenues come from the local government, social support groups and individual fees. Fundraising activities would be part of the funding formula too.

3、Community education evaluation and standards

In August 2010, in order to strengthen the quality and establishment of the community education system, the Chinese Ministry of Education has stipulated the *Community education model area evaluation standard*. It consists of 13 fundamental benchmarks,

clearly listed in 5 major categories, and 16 appraisal standards. At present, the Ministry of Education is enforcing various standards to ensure the quality of local community evaluation is being maintained.

4、 Community education system trends and development:

a) Development and trend perspective

The community education system is spreading from eastern China and gradually expanding to the mid-west, from the city centre to the edge, from city to villages, and from developed district villages to under-developed villages.

b) Development depth perspective

First, all educational resources within the community must be fully utilized. At the same time, we must fully engage all educational resources from different non-academic establishments. Secondly, we must use all electronic media, such as community home televisions, computers, video and audio equipment to promote and extend long-distance learning capacity and quality, gradually building up a modern community long-distance education network.

5、 Community education issues and challenges:

a) The concept of district education has to be actively promoted further. The goal is life-long learning for everyone in the community. However, some places are still slow in recognizing the importance of such a system.

b) There is an imbalance in the development of district education due to the different economic climates of different parts of China. There can be a huge gap between cities and villages. Along the east coast, cities have moved faster than in the mid-western region of China. On the whole, cities are much faster in developing such system than towns and villages.

c) Participation from local communities is still not as high as might be wished. At present, the main thrust of supporting community education is still coming from the central government as a guiding light. Government would be best to function at the policy-making and regulatory level, providing direction and auditing standards. The building of the basic organizational structure of the community education would be most effective if coming from the roots of the communities,

so to become a truly population-driven initiative. It would then be truly a grassroots based social education system.

6、 The future mission of the community education and development targets

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a) The mission is to provide skill-training programs to low-income people, migrant workers, unemployed workers, and disabled people. Basing on the practical needs of the society, we should provide appropriate and relevant educational programs, develop new skill training programs, explore new education resources, innovate new learning and teaching methods, and focus on the student-centred learning approach. In order to select programs appropriate to their career requirements, students are to be encouraged to engage in retraining programs with the understanding of their own learning needs and styles.

b) By strengthening the professional skill training and trade skill programs, the community workers would have more opportunity to receive appropriate job skill training, thus increasing their chances to be hired by the industry, service or business sectors. The relevant skill training may also lead to trainees opening up their own businesses and becoming active entrepreneurs in their respective communities.

c) Life-long learning is a student-centred educational system. If the focus is on motivating the learners from within and paying attention to each learner's unique learning style and needs, fully utilizing the long-distance learning and mobile learning serves to serve the masses, and counsel and support the students, the community education would become lifetime learning and an effective educational platform for generations to come!