Constructing China's Distant Education from English and American Experience especially after the Covid-19 Period

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Abstract: The extraordinary development of computer and multi-media transmission has enhanced us human beings to the social stage of both knowledge and information, and the Internet has stimulated the reform of traditional education value and means. Distant education, as the embodiment of modern technical education, has occupied a certain share in the educational field. The negative widespread of COVID-19 has forced students almost all over the world to study on line at home. Distant education has become an increasingly important issue for governments all over the world, such as, how the government could develop a new mode of distant education, how to establish a sound guarantee system, etc.

This paper, based on the introduction and analysis of the present distant education both home and abroad and the enforcement of the online teaching during the present COVID-19 period, is to discover the major problems in domestic distant education and to construct the new management mode of China's distant education.

1. Introduction

The extraordinary development of computer and multi-media transmission has enhanced us human beings to the social stage of both knowledge and information, and the Internet has stimulated the reform of traditional education value and means. Distant education, as the embodiment of modern technical education, has occupied a certain share in the educational field. The negative widespread of COVID-19 has forced students almost all over the world to study on line at home. Distant education has become an increasingly important issue for governments all over the world, such as, how the government could develop a new mode of distant education, how to establish a sound guarantee system, etc.

This paper, based on the introduction and analysis of the present distant education both home and abroad and the enforcement of the online teaching during the present COVID-19 period, is to discover the major problems in domestic distant education and to construct the new management mode of China's distant education.

2. Distant education and the related theoretical analysis

In 1999, the Education Department of China has issued Suggestions on developing modern distant education. And the super highway network has been constructed by the end of 2000. Dozens of universities have been allowed to conduct distant teaching afterwards and they are endowed with a lot of authorities, for example, they can decide the number and standard of students independently. By far, many universities in China have already established distant teaching as part of their teaching objects.

To apply the advanced foreign distant teaching management experience is to be a good reference for domestic distant educational theory and it can complement the related domestic research and play actively in advancing management mode and improve education.

2.1 Concept of distant education

Distant education is defined differently in different countries, while in the US, it is named as "family learning", "audio-visual education", or "independent learning", in Japan, it is regarded as "corresponding education", in Australia, it is "education out of school", and in the UK, it is the "open education". In China, it is named as "corresponding education", "radio broadcast education", "network education" etc. and in 1998, the "Higher Education Law" has named it as "distant education" officially and legally. In modern distant teaching, computers, multi-media tech, and especially the rapid development of the network has assisted the fast development of distant educational transmission, which has made modern distant education supported by distant technical means and combined with face-to-face teaching, corresponding education, and self-study.

Network education, from the narrow sense, is defined as distant education. It is organized and enforced by certain educational institutions, and it is to provide service for students' educational actions. Taking teaching objectives as the presupposition, distant education in the narrow sense also covers some of the collective learning activities organized for students by making use of modern technical means. It is the coverage of all the practices aimed at helping and promoting students' distant learning. Modern distant educational organizations are usually located as the distant teaching department of the universities. This paper is to take distant education in the narrow sense, which covers the radio broadcast education and the distant teaching department in universities, vocational schools, and enterprise training, as the research object.

2.2 Features of distant education

Openness, compared with the close-circuit traditional education, is the very fundamental feature of distant education. The teaching resources of traditional education are just located within the campuses and only a few people can receive the elite education, while the distant education has lowered the limitation of education, enlarged educational opportunities, and enabled a large scale of people to learn.

Extension, is the feature of distant education which has covered a wider scale of aspects. Traditional education has centralized the teaching resources with campuses, while oppositely, distant education has broken the limitation of area and integrated the education information and education resources to learners anywhere, this is good for equalizing educational resources and laying a solid foundation for the construction of lifelong education.

Flexibility, means that distant education targets at learners of all ages, all levels, and even all kinds of working fields. This requires one to establish more comprehensive courses especially in individualization and autonomous management.

Management, is conducted objectively, interactively under a certain system of requirements to direct educational activities. Distant education is with its unique mode and system, but this openness and flexibility don't mean that it is with randomness and blindness.

2.3 Contents and qualities of distant education

Distant education refers to a certain kind of project management, which covers five elements, namely, strategy management, cost management, quality and risk management. Industrialization and service are the two qualities of it. So the industrialization of distant education is regarded as the combination of traditional industrial producing mode and service. Educational service is the product and the service target includes learners in distant education, so learners are the center to be valued and meanwhile, educational quality has become the key influencing factor in distant educational service.

3. China's management of distant education

China's distant education originates from higher education.

3.1 China's distant education development

The radio broadcast universities are the first means of China's distant education, and gradually,

many universities have set up their own distant educational department as the complement of higher education's necessity.

Those means of distant education have to be aided with proper management and service. The "school-third party-learning center" management mode is born with the increase of students and the involvement of non-governmental capitals in distant education. On the one hand, with the enlarged number of students, the duties of management have been added or even doubled or tripled. It is almost impossible to complete the task with the original staff, so there are some local study centers to help solve these problems, which can be classified as the third party- management center with the endowed management power.

In China, modern distant higher education has acquired a certain market share in the educational market, and there are thousands of elementary educational web schools on line, among which there are more than 200 very influencing elementary educational web schools on line. The registered students total up to 100 million, and more and more families are taking the net schools as the children's study-assisting means.

With the enlargement of distant education market, many non-governmental capitals have been invested and to cater for the demand of management, many public service institutions and net schools emerge accordingly. Those net schools have to concentrate on the teaching, evaluation of teaching, and researching on core courses while the third party institutions have to take over the less important daily routines. This gradually has formed a very effective and efficient industrial operation and management mode.

3.2 Survey of China's distant education market

According to a recent net survey, nearly 40% of the surveyors or their family members have accessed distant education service in the past three months, and China's distant education market is developing rapidly but with severe competition. The contents involve vocational technique training and children's extracurricular tutoring, and the platform of distant education has been highly used formally. The educational quality is more valued by the learners and they value price the second important element, which illustrates that they are with less consumption potentials and educational values. Some even do not know about distant education. The market expansion cannot be independent from the macro-direction of the government.

4. Experience from America and Britain

China's distant education development can be enlightened by the American and British experience from governmental macro-management, strategic management, organizational structure, quality, cost, and risk management.

4.1 American management mode

American government manages distant education by using double university management system which conducts both campus face-to-face education and the open distant education.

Virtual university is first proposed in the US and taken as the orientation of its future distant education development. Virtual university refers to the purchase of education service, a kind of expertise or technique from one-time training, and the collection and match of its high flexible collocation according to practice. In virtual university management, the fixed staff and design departments are unnecessary. The teachers in distant education are usually non-full time staff, and elites from presidents of companies, high-rank technical supervisors, financial supervisors and specialized researchers from the society.

Many distant courses have been set in American traditional universities. These have to be acquired by those formally registered distant learners and are fulfilled by the feasible techniques made by the educators. And America's distant education is with the feature of cooperation. Many cooperative distant colleges are organized together with certain agreements, and each still possesses its own gift of bachelor's degree. Actually, these distant colleges integrate into virtual universities step by step by offering a large percentage of or even total teaching as the service means, and they

are with both service of entity of universities and industrial marketing.

American distant education development is closely connected with its technical enhancement. As for cost management, in the 1990s, Columbia University has invested on it. Besides, it also persuaded many key universities in the world, such as the Cambridge University, Chicago University, and even the British Museum, to join in its association. And this cooperation mode was quickly applied by many other universities. This budget was not profitable and within ten years, many universities closed their online teaching and some even went bankruptcy. These universities have underestimated the risk in the market and overemphasized the teaching part while neglecting nurturing, which lead to the failure.

4.2 British management mode

The British Open University is the major institution of British distant education, and it has become the largest university and business colleges in Europe. It is with tens of thousands of students every year, while with 40-50% online students and it cooperates with more than thirty countries or areas.

British government always values its macro-management on distant education. It open university originated from 1970s, and it was quickly duplicated by many countries. In updating its techniques of distant education, the British government funded a very large amount to enhance its development of distant education. To stress the quality, the British distant education is with flexibility and openness and it is centered up "humans". On the technical basis, British distant education has combined many means of techniques, ranging from the original postage to the teaching platform with new technology, and caters for the teaching targets from all social classes.

British distant education has been regarded as the model by many other countries for its experts on teaching, techniques, networks, soft-wares, and the teaching assistants. As for the educational service, it has opened more than 3000 learning centers located in about 13 districts of the UK to provide the support teaching service. Whoever the learners are will complete the higher education and be awarded with the corresponding degrees from distant education after having afforded the learning costs. The courses, besides the degree education courses, also include interest education, including natural science, art, social science, etc.

5.   Enlightenment on China's distant education from the US and the UK.

By analyzing the American and British distant educational experience, we can simply conclude that those developed countries have strengths in developing their distant education on macro-management, strategic management, organizational structure, cost and quality management. There is some enlightenment.

5.1 Transferring and improving strategic target

Lifelong study and whole national learning have to be deeply rooted by all the people. In this way, the periodic or motivational learning purpose can be replaced by the new and upright educational value. The online teaching has to improve its quality so that the educational service system could be perfected.

5.2 Reconstructing the distant educational mode

The distant educational mode has to be suitable for China's reality and the development of global open universities. It should observe the market economic rules and be regulated by the government. The legal protection cannot be ignored and the open universities have to be with their own autonomy to guarantee its regular management. The teachers can be linked with the teaching activities and quality so that the essence problem in distant education can be conducted well.

5.3 Improving the efficiency of information technology

Distant education is provided on the platform of multi-media and networks, so as the base of distant education, information technology is also the key project.

The traditional distant courses are usually set without a united guidance, so many universities are offering similar courses, which is a severe waste of educational resources. Additionally, the distant courses are usually about the popular majors in the society and the competitive courses of some universities have been overshadowed by them so some of the special strengths of the universities cannot be spread. The educational resources have to be standardized and open part of the lower levels to more people, so as to motivate the technicians. Distant education focuses on teaching different people in different areas to take the best advantage of good educational resources, so it has to stick to economical principle.

5.4 Method of constructing distant educational platform

Distant educational resources have to be based on the large scale network instead of Lans, especially during the COVID-19 period, people all over the world have to share the teaching resources, the Lans cannot provide accessible materials for all the learners. Sharing the resources in a wider range of platform means that the technical support has to be advanced and many related resources can avoid reproduction.

6. Conclusion

This paper, on the basis of summarizing domestic distant education, studies American, and British distant education development, and analyzes the enlightenments on domestic distant educational development from western experience. This has to be with the governmental and legal support. To organize the multi-level universities with certain autonomy systematically, to set the efficient human resources training and motivating mechanism, to set quality-management system, and to improve the effectiveness of information technical cost and evaluate and control educational risk are co-related in perfecting the sound distant education system of China, especially during and after COVID-19 period.

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