

THE EXPLORATION AND PRACTICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION OF CHINA'S RADIO AND TV UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEW AGE

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[Abstract]: *Based on the study entitled 'The Investigation of the Status Quo of Radio and TV University's Continuous Education', some experience and practice of continuous education of CCRTVU in the 21st century is presented. Some questions are discussed including: developmental position, cooperative fields, communication between formal education and informal one, application of modern remote education technology on the training program, the accumulation of theoretical and empirical fruits and flaws in the continuous education of RTVU. In addition, some thought on the future development of continuous education of RTVU is also proposed in this paper.*

[Key word]: *the new age; continuing education of China Radio & TV Universities; exploration*

The continuing education of China's Radio and TV Universities (RTVUs for short) began amidst the backdrop of China's innovation and opening as well as its fast economic development. In the last twenty years, it has exerted a positive function on promoting professional development of various types, supplying quality continuing education service for society, and so on. And it has become an important force to promote the forming of China's learning society and the construction of the lifelong learning system. But with the development and changes of the social situation in recent years, RTVUs are facing new opportunities and challenges.

In order to answer the challenges and embrace all opportunities, from May to September 2006, China Central Radio and TV University (CCRTVU for short) set up and completed a study entitled "The Investigation of the Status Quo of Radio and TV Universities Continuing education." This study comprehensively concluded the development status of RTVUs continuing education in recent years, analyzed and studied the existing problems, and clarified the future direction of development. Based on the research achievements of the study this paper will exhibit some exploration and practice of continuing education of China's RTVUs in the New Age.

I. The practice and exploration of continuing education of RTVUs in the New Age

Since the advent of the era of knowledge-based economy and the development of market economy, the circumstances surrounding continuing education of RTVUs have changed both within and without the system. Facing the ever-intensifying economic competition and multitudinous pressures, the continuing education of RTVUs have actively explored the education service, the training models and the operation mechanisms under the market economy, and acquired certain achievement and experience

1. Developing the diversification and multi-layering of continuing education, enforcing the service ability and consciousness, and satisfying the multifaceted learning needs of the society

During the last three years, the programs of continuing education, developed by RTVUs, have included not only the training of various types of applied technology, the training and examining for the certification of vocational and professional qualification, but also the supplying of support services for other universities to conduct degree education. Among these, certification education exhibits particularly rapid development. The content of the training programs displays diversity, involving education, judicial administration, finance, medicine, insurance, fire control, traffic safety, and other pop social industries. With regards to the trainees, study participants include civil servants, teachers, corporation administrators, professionals, in-service employees, students, managers of villages and towns, farmers, supervisors and inhabitants of the communities and so on. The learners range from the young to the elderly, showing that the continuing education of RTVUs supplies learning opportunities and services for people from all walks of life, thus satisfying the increasing volume and variety of learning needs of the society.

2. Striving to open up the cooperative channels and constantly enlarging the areas of cooperation

In recent years, the continuing education of RTVUs has sought to open up the cooperative channels and constantly explore the new modes of cooperation in the development and promoting of continuing education programs. Investigative data has shown that, from 2003 to 2005, among the programs of continuing education developed by RTVUs throughout China, sixty-one percent of the programs were developed by cooperation with other institutions or corporations. (See Table One)

Table 1: The cooperative institutions of the continuing education programs

Areas No. Of the Programs Cooperative Institutions	North China	North East	East China	Middle South	South West	North West	Total
Government offices	24	21	32	46	20	34	177
Enterprises	7			7	5	2	21
Corporations	3		2	8	2	2	17
Self-funded education institutions	8	3	13	3	1	1	29
Conventional universities		1	9	4		11	25
Online colleges	5	3	14	4	6	13	45
RTVUs (self-run)	32	35	54	37	17	22	197
Total	79	63	124	109	51	85	511

Characteristics of the cooperation:

Noteworthy characteristics include the improvement of cooperative styles with government departments, the implementation of educational training about which the government cares, and the consolidation of the cooperative relations with government departments. Cooperation with government departments has always been the primary form of RTVUs to develop continuing education. In the last three years, there have been one hundred and seventy-seven cooperative programs of continuing education jointly run by RTVUs and government departments, which constitutes approximately one-third of all the programs. The number of the trained personnel totals nearly three million. Working with government departments, RTVUs have turned from simply appeal for favorable government policies to closely following the issues of the government's focus and concern. The training programs reflect concerns for those aspects which the government concerns, actively upholds the training programs proposed by the government, and diligently strives to successfully implement teaching support services. In doing so, RTVUs have won the government's confidence and support, and have formed new effective styles of cooperating with the government. For instance, Jiangsu Radio and TV University followed the concerns of the local government, namely, the continuing education of the deactivated soldiers. It held Jiangsu Province's "Special Education for Deactivated Soldiers," an event attended by forty thousand persons, having received the praise from the local government. Hebei Radio and TV University cooperated with the provincial office to provide assistance for indigent families and developed a distance education project to aid poor families throughout the

entire province, which covered fifty-two poverty-stricken counties. Shandong Radio and TV University cooperated with the Provincial Office of Business Administration and developed career training programs for business managers, which trained a total of about sixty thousand persons. Guizhou Radio and TV University cooperated with the Provincial Ministry of Personnel and developed civil servant training programs. Jilin Radio and TV University cooperated with the Provincial Fire-control Office and developed the training for fire protection. In addition, it cooperated with interrelated offices and bureaus to develop the training for production safety. It can train ten thousand persons every year.

Working widely with industrial systems and the offices of enterprise and business is another feature, which enlarges the area and influence of continuing education. From 2003 to 2005, China's RTVUs developed comprehensive cooperation with well-known enterprises, educational companies, and industry systems in society. Included are more than sixty cooperative programs, approximately fourteen percent of all the programs. For instance, China's CCRTVU cooperated with Higher Interactive Learning to launch the program "Certificate of general management proficiency" and to introduce, develop, and reform all the educational resources of "Certificate of general management proficiency". The present number of textbook users has surpassed five hundred thousand. RTVUs in Gansu, Hubei, Hunan and other provinces successively cooperated with the Internet company of America to develop the "Future of the Internet" training, which improved elementary school and middle school teachers' ability to apply modern educational technology and received admirable achievements. They also learned advanced concepts, training styles and experiences of the "Future of the Internet" program, thereby improving the training quality of RTVUs. Henan Radio and TV University has successfully undergone long-term cooperation with insurance, securities, and banking systems, and has developed programs of continuing education for practitioners. Sichuan Radio and TV University cooperated with enterprises and developed computer training program for skill recognition, which has become this province's leading force of computer training groups. The cooperation efficiently improved the reputation of RTVUs and enlarged the social impact of RTVUs in general.

Taking full advantage of the Radio and TV University system, the continuing education has supplied the services of study and support for the self-funded education institutions. In recent years, the number of programs in which RTVUs cooperated with self-funded education institutions, conventional universities and online colleges has reached ninety-nine, constituting nearly one-fifth of all the items. The cooperation mainly uses the nation-wide system of RTVUs and the resources of conventional universities, and is based on the win-win principle. The cooperation has not only enlarged the service areas of RTVUs and improved the level and reputation of the RTVUs' continuing education, but also enabled RTVUs to learn from the cooperative party's experiences of school-running and administration, thus promoting the RTVUs' reforms in education and teaching.

In doing so, it has also reinforced international cooperation and improved its level and reputation. In recent years, the continuing education of RTVUs has successively

cooperated with some international organizations and, through various domestic agencies, has introduced some training resources which are well known throughout the world and are in great need in China. A typical example is the cooperation with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Deloitte & Touche in Hong Kong to hold the program “International Finance and Accountant Certification”, which was successively promoted in more than ten RTVUs and trained almost twenty thousand domestic enterprise managers and senior finance administrators. Furthermore, the following programs have also been developed: the international certification for “Project Management”, “Personal Development and Team Management,” “International Trainers” as well as other training programs. Introducing these programs is of great significance in promoting the development of the RTVUs’ continuing education, enriching the continuing education resources, and improving the level and reputation of the continuing education’s programs in RTVUs.

3. Exploring approaches of promoting communication between formal and informal education

Practice has proven that if the RTVUs’ informal education could effectively communicate and coordinate with its formal education, it would lead the whole education of RTVUS to a new step. In recent years, it has experienced breakthroughs in these aspects. Investigative research shows that there are thirty-five provincial RTVUs that have realized mutual communication between formal and informal education on most courses and majors. (See Table Two)

Table Two: Approaches of mutual recognition between formal and informal education

Approaches of mutual recognition	The quantity of courses
Introduce the career qualification training into degree education	340
Introduce the training courses into degree education	84
Introduce the courses of degree education into the training of informal education	85
Co-produce and share textbooks with both formal and informal education	20
Accumulative credits of formal education substituted by the courses of informal education	391 credits

The approaches of setting up communication between formal and informal education have achieved remarkable diversification, including, for example, the sharing of courses, textbooks, resources, substitution of credits, reforming of examination methods, the system of multi-certifications and so on. These explorations have established a solid basis for the share and interchange between formal and informal education, and have supplied many approaches and experience worthy of reference.

4. Supplying convenient learning methods through the technical advantages of distance education

The modern technology of distance education is playing a role of ever-greatening

importance in modern education and the establishment of a learning society. In recent years, the use of modern technology in distance education to conduct training for those lacking formal schooling is becoming an important highlight of the development of RTVUs' continuing education, serving as an important means to improve the competitive ability of RTVUs' continuing education. According to incomplete statistics, the proportion of programs adopted by RTVUs that use modern technology to conduct training totals forty-eight percent of the total number of programs. Typical examples include the Internet-based program "Distance Continuing Education Platform for the Professionals in Guangzhou," established by Guangzhou Radio and TV University. This platform is used specifically for the continuing education of industrial systems. The learning, discussions, tutoring, assignments, exams and administration of learners can all be readily realized on the platform. Presently, six thousand four hundred and forty-three persons have completed the course. Shandong Radio and TV University has successfully utilized two-way video conferencing systems to conduct the career training for the grassroot-level business administrators in the province, training a total of about six thousand persons within a short period of time.

5. Maintains the balance between practical exploration and theoretical research

All along, RTVUs have attached importance to the theoretical research of continuing education during its practice. CCRTVU has published six volumes of the series "The Collection of Papers of China Radio and TV University's Continuing education" to date, which have collected about three hundred and fifty papers. The contents cover virtually all the hot issues in the development of RTVUs' continuing education. In particular, in 2005 the Continuing Education College of China Central Radio and TV University successively applied for and were approved two researches entitled "The Research and Practice of An Education Program for the Self-development of Beijing Workers ", a program that pertains to the reforms of higher education in Beijing, and "The Investigation of the Status Quo of Radio and TV University's Continuing education", a program established by China Central Radio and TV University. New breakthroughs have been achieved in the research, indicating that the specialized research of RTVUs' continuing education has taken a new step to deepen its foundations.

II. The existing problems in the continuing education of RTVUs

Compared with the social needs and the rapidly evolving external circumstances, the continuing education of RTVUs are facing exigent challenges and problems that demand timely resolution.

1. The strategic position of the continuing education needs further advancement

As a whole, the position assumed by the continuing education within the RTVUs is still feeble. Many leaders of RTVUs do not attach importance to informal education as they do to formal education. Continuing education regarding policy, human resources, material

resources, financial resources, etc. has not received the support it deserves.

2. Reforms in the administrative system and operation mechanism in continuing education need further deepening

At present, most of the continuing education departments of RTVUs' are operating under a system of economic contractual responsibility, and, to a certain extent, this system once promoted the development of continuing education. But some RTVUs unilaterally emphasize the economic aims, ignoring the education's particularity and complexity, and corresponding policies and incentive systems are unhealthy, which has restricted the market development and operation of the continuing education programs.

3. The "trademark effect" and the marketing abilities of continuing education need further improvement

Compared with the continuing education of conventional universities and self-funded education institutions, the RTVUs' ability in independently developing programs is weak. In particular, the creative programs possessing independent intellectual property rights are few, and the training of the high-level, quality, unique continuing education trademark is still in want. In addition, professionals who engage in developing projects, promoting trademarks, and marketing are in shortage. And the personnel structure is far from professional.

III. The perspectives of the RTVUs' continuing education in the new age

Along with the advance of our country's lifelong learning system and the learning society, the position of continuing education occupies ever-greatening importance. In the new circumstances, how do we achieve a new leap forward in the development of the RTVUs' continuing education? By this status quo investigation and research, we propose that we should start with the following aspects.

1. Further define the strategic position of continuing education for the development of RTVUs

In order to propel the development of continuing education, the key lies in resolving the strategic position of continuing education for development of RTVUs. Therefore, we should first combine the continuing education's development with the school's strategic development plan and regard it as one of the important guidelines used in the evaluation of RTVUs at all levels. The RTVUs should regularly engage themselves in research and resolve the crucial problems in the development of continuing education. Second, we should increase investments in terms of human resources, financial resources and material resources in continuing education to ensure the healthy operation of continuing education and assist the production of program resources and development of projects. Third, we should formulate plans for the development and training of the continuing education staff, and improve their professional levels and operational abilities. Fourth, we

should harmonize internal relations, integrate the educational resources, establish smooth coordinating systems and effective operation mechanisms, and mobilize the enthusiasm of all parties to take part in the continuing education.

2. Establish and perfect the operation mechanisms and the incentive mechanisms

From governmental planning to the market-orientation, continuing education is facing the new problems in the development and promotion of the programs. Therefore, we must establish and perfect the operation mechanisms and the incentive mechanisms that can suit with this new situation.

With regards to administration, we should confer on the operative institutions of continuing education the managing rights in which responsibility, authority, and benefit are consistent. With regards to operation mechanisms, we should establish mechanisms providing for “win-win” and “win more” cooperative advantage, and fully mobilize the enthusiasm of all parties. With regards to internal administration, we should deepen the reforms of the employee system and the rewarding system, combine the employees’ performances with the programs’ social and economic outcomes, offer timely encouragement and commendation to the units and individuals who have greatly contributed to continuing education, fully mobilize the employees’ enthusiasm, and inspire their sense of social responsibility and achievement. With regards to program administration, we should establish the mechanism for assessment, including costs, profits, scale and quality of the programs, gradually accumulate and develop high quality training resources, and improve training quality.

3. Strive to build up the social trademark of the RTVUs’ continuing education

First, we should strive to produce the training resources and courses that possess independent trademarks. Second, we should fully exert the advantages of modern distance education of RTVUs in continuing education training, and improve the support and service abilities for persons in need. Third, we should fully integrate the training resources of informal education in China's RTVUs, establish a communal sharing system of quality training resources and the interacting mechanism in operation, and realize the maximum benefit of resource utilization. Fourth, we should enforce the system’s cohesion through running of the programs. At the same time, taking the advantage of the nation-wide system and coordinating organizations, we should reinforce the development and promotion abilities of the programs, as well as their competitive edge in the market.

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Curriculum Vitae

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