

A Study on the Path of Improving the Performance of Autonomous Learning in Adult Education in Universities under the Concept of Lifelong Learning

Chuanwu Ji*

Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing 100081, China

*Corresponding author: Chuanwu Ji, 0020050053@cufe.edu.cn

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Abstract: In today's rapidly developing education, the concept of lifelong learning has penetrated adult education systems in various countries. The attention paid by leaders and major educational institutions to lifelong learning has, to some extent, promoted the reform and development of adult education. This article analyzes the role of adult education in universities and the problems in improving self-directed learning performance in adult education. It explores the path of improving self-directed learning performance from three aspects: management, learning subjects, and teaching subjects, for reference only.

Keywords: Lifelong learning philosophy; Adult education in universities; Autonomous learning performance; Upgrade path

Online publication: August 27, 2024

1. The role of adult education in universities

Adult education in universities refers to a higher education activity for adults, with the aim of further enriching their knowledge and improving their skills and abilities ^[1]. The benefits of higher adult education are mainly reflected in the following.

1.1. Growth of knowledge and skills

Through adult education in universities, adults can acquire new knowledge and skills at their current level of knowledge and skills, further improve their professional or professional standards, and better adapt to current and future workplace and social life.

1.2. Improve cultural literacy and social skills

Universities have abundant educational resources and a cultural atmosphere. By participating in adult

education in universities, adults can learn more cultural knowledge and improve their aesthetic literacy. At the same time, the richness and enrichment of their cultural heritage can provide them with sufficient discussion and confidence in their social life, increase communication and interaction between adults and obtain more friendships or workplace resources, further promoting interpersonal cooperation and social exchange ^[2].

1.3. Promote adult self and career development

Generally speaking, adult development can be divided into two categories:

(1) Self-development

It is a behavior of self-exploration and activation of inner motivation. With the continuous improvement of self-development, the material life and spiritual deepening of adults will be greatly enriched.

(2) Career development

Adult education in universities can provide adults with an ideal learning environment and professional continuing education and training courses, helping them learn and master advanced industry knowledge and skills more quickly, thereby achieving the goal of improving their vocational skills and competitiveness and making their career life more smooth sailing ^[3].

2. The problems in improving the performance of self-directed learning in adult education in universities

2.1. Inaccurate target positioning

Although adult education in universities is much higher than ordinary higher education and learners have a wide range of learning channels, greatly increasing the opportunities and venues for adults to receive education, adult education in universities still adopts the model of ordinary higher education in enrollment, teaching and professional settings, lacking consideration for the particularity of adult education, making it difficult to highlight the characteristics of adult education in universities. Meanwhile, the unclear positioning of talent goals has led to the marginalization of adult education in universities.

2.2. Unchanged teaching plan and methods

One of the main purposes of adult education in universities is to enable more members of society to keep up with the pace of the times. By implementing lifelong learning and cultivating self-learning ability, people can continuously enrich their knowledge and improve their professional skills, thereby better adapting to social development ^[4]. However, this developmental nature is almost not reflected in adult education in universities. Both teaching plans and methods still adopt traditional models and methods, which have little impact on the group of university learners. In the long run, it will fail to meet the developmental needs of learners and, to some extent, hinder the progress of today's society. The correct adult education in universities should be based on the characteristics of learners, tailored teaching methods, teaching content, and training objectives ^[5]. However, due to various factors, adult education has begun to develop towards a subsidiary direction of general higher education. In addition to the significant changes in the age and level of modern adult education groups, as well as the changing needs of society and job positions, traditional and single teaching methods and concepts will become the drawbacks and huge obstacles to improving the performance of autonomous learning in adult education in universities, ultimately making it difficult to meet the development needs of university learners.

2.3. Unreasonable evaluation system for self-directed learning

The evaluation system of adult education in universities should be diverse and open. However, due to the

reference to the general higher education model, the evaluation of learners is still mainly based on exam scores^[6]. Although this detection and evaluation method can assess the mastery of theoretical knowledge by learners, it has a certain degree of one-sidedness for the comprehensive development of learners, which is not conducive to forming lifelong learning habits. Conversely, it can also breed a psychological aversion to learning among learners. If the evaluation system remains unchanged, it will lower learners' expectations for learning, slow down the improvement of self-directed learning performance, and shift their learning goals from knowledge learning to obtaining graduation certificates, thereby changing their original learning intentions^[7].

3. An effective path to improve the performance of autonomous learning in adult education in universities under the concept of lifelong learning

Under the concept of lifelong learning, the factors that affect the improvement of self-directed learning performance in adult education in universities mainly include management level, learning subjects and teaching subjects. Therefore, starting from the above three factors, this article proposes strategies to improve self-directed learning performance.

3.1. Management level

3.1.1. Improve self-learning resources and increase investment in teaching software and hardware

The development of self-directed learning activities in adult education in universities does not require high software and hardware equipment requirements. However, if investment in corresponding teaching software and hardware equipment can be increased, the effectiveness of self-directed learning for learners can be greatly improved^[8]. Although there are many resource platforms on the internet, there are problems such as incomplete functionality and unsystematic content. Most learners can only rely on recommendations from teachers and classmates to find ideal learning resources. Therefore, universities can integrate and optimize existing high-quality online course resources, making these self-learning resources more distinctive and convenient for university learners to learn and use, later building a distinctive professional self-learning system and platform. In this way, universities need to further increase investment in corresponding teaching software and hardware to effectively improve the performance of autonomous learning in adult education in universities. In order to allocate resources reasonably, universities can try to seek support from the government and enterprises to ensure the steady improvement of independent learning performance in adult education^[9].

3.1.1. Clarify the positioning of self-directed teaching goals based on the actual situation of adults

The formulation and clarification of autonomous learning goals for adult education in universities should be based on the actual situation and learning needs of adult learners to enhance the characteristics of adult education in universities. In the process of carrying out adult education, universities should fully understand the local economic development characteristics and main economic structures to determine the level and type of adult education, reasonably allocate existing educational resources, formulate talent training goals and self-learning goals that meet the needs of learners and local economic development requirements and thus point out the path and direction for improving the performance of adult education self-learning^[10]. At the same time, universities also need to deeply tap into local educational resources, positioning self-learning goals as serving the needs of learners themselves or local enterprise economic development and providing diversified practical training bases and platforms for adult education to help learners achieve their expected learning goals.

3.2. Learning subject

3.2.1. Utilize various teaching methods to activate learners' motivation for self-directed learning

More time, stability and flexibility are the biggest characteristics of university full-time adult education. Therefore, most learners hope to learn more comprehensive knowledge and skills. However, in reality, many learners experience a significant decrease in their learning motivation and self-control during online learning, making them easily attracted to the content they perceive as learning, which affects the improvement of self-directed learning performance and the development of their professional abilities. To reactivate the learning motivation of learners, teachers can use various means to help learners overcome the influence of unfavorable factors. For example, when a learner completes a goal slightly higher than or in line with their level in a learning activity, they can give themselves a certain reward, which can be food or games, in any form. When the goal is not achieved, self-motivation methods are used to encourage oneself to continue striving and gradually improve the effectiveness of self-directed learning, thereby achieving the goal of improving self-directed learning performance ^[11].

3.2.2. Utilize diverse evaluation methods based on the individual characteristics of learners

In teaching, no matter which evaluation method is used, it is not perfect. Therefore, when evaluating learners, teachers should choose appropriate evaluation methods or adopt diversified evaluation methods based on different teaching content, learners' learning needs and ability characteristics to drive learners to actively develop independent learning awareness and habits and establish a lifelong learning concept. At the same time, it is necessary to break the traditional habit of using evaluation methods, from exploring the advantages and disadvantages of maturity to addressing the problem and further enhancing the practical value and role of teaching evaluation ^[12]. In addition, a combination of diagnostic and process evaluation, qualitative and quantitative evaluation and summative evaluation can emphasize the process and development of learner self-directed learning behavior and consciousness evaluation. For example, evaluation methods include case interviews, group discussions, level assessments, on-site observations and tests. The comprehensive application of evaluation methods can make teaching evaluation more in line with the actual situation of learners, fully leverage their advantages and strengths in self-directed learning and quickly compensate for their shortcomings and deficiencies, achieving the goal of improving learners' self-directed learning performance. However, it should be noted that the purpose of evaluation is not to evaluate but to improve teaching activities and promote learner skill enhancement and individual development through evaluation.

3.3. Teaching subject

3.3.1. Strengthen teacher training efforts and optimize the team of self-directed learning teachers

At present, the experience and teacher training activities for self-directed learning teaching are not comprehensive enough, and many self-directed learning teaching activities lack a former model. There are also certain misunderstandings among teachers in applying self-directed learning models ^[13]. The main reason is that teachers must be busy with lesson preparation, teaching and other college activities, so they do not have more energy for research on self-directed learning and teaching. For the confusion and problems teachers face regarding self-directed learning, universities can form a research group on self-directed learning, specifically collecting and organizing related knowledge and content and making it into a training manual to distribute to teachers. At the same time, the research group can also regularly hold specialized training meetings for teachers on self-directed learning and establish a team of self-directed learning teachers with clear positioning, clear division of labor and adequate responsibilities so that they can learn the connotation and implementation methods of self-directed learning, thereby achieving improvement and even innovation in self-directed learning

performance.

3.3.2. Combining lifelong learning theory and improving the evaluation mechanism of course learning

The imperfect evaluation mechanism will somewhat hinder the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning in adult education in universities^[14]. Lack of reasonable evaluation and single evaluation methods in online and offline learning lead to unclear feedback and feelings towards teachers and learners, making it difficult to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning accurately. To improve this situation, universities should further improve their teaching evaluation mechanisms, introduce diverse forms and objects of evaluation, respect and highlight the subjectivity of learners, attach importance to their evaluation content and suggestions, and continuously improve the autonomous learning situation of learners, enhance the teaching level of teachers, and recommend the implementation of lifelong learning concepts in adult education in universities.

3.3.3. Guide and supervise activities to awaken learners' lifelong learning awareness

The guidance and supervision of teachers on self-directed learning activities will directly affect the implementation of self-directed learning performance. Therefore, university leadership must attach importance to the management, construction, design and guidance of learning community discussions and continuously increase the learning investment cost of learners^[15]. At the same time, it actively provides a large number of convenient shared educational resources, allowing learners to quickly and directly search for various educational resources they need. In addition, university teachers should actively enhance their information technology literacy, utilize multimedia teaching tools, continuously enrich the information capacity of university classrooms and activate the classroom teaching atmosphere. In addition, university teachers should also invest more energy in the design of self-directed learning plans based on detailed and interesting course implementation plans to improve the initiative of learners in classroom activities while also providing clear self-directed learning guidance for learners, thereby enhancing their self-directed learning ability and awakening their lifelong learning awareness.

4. Conclusion

In summary, various aspects of social work and life are undergoing tremendous changes every day, and many learners choose adult education based on this. Therefore, this also brings new opportunities and challenges to university adult education. Adult education in universities will inevitably have broader development space in the future development of the education system. However, for more people to pay attention to adult education, universities need to endow adult education with a new mission based on completing basic teaching, actively cultivate learners' ability and awareness of self-directed learning, instill the concept of lifelong learning in every learner's brain, and promote the construction and development of a "learning-oriented" society.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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