

Policy and Practice of Later-Life Learning in China: A Critical Document Discourse Analysis

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Abstract : Since the 1980s, a series of policies and practices have been implemented in China in response to the unprecedented rate of ageing population. The paper provides a detailed narrative of what later-life learning policy discourses have been advocated and gives a description on relevant practical issues during the past three decades. The research process based on the discourse approach with a systematic review of the government-issued documents. It finds that the main practices taken by central government at various levels were making University of the Aged (UA) available in all urban and rural regions to consolidate the newly student enrollments; focusing social-recreational, leisure and cultural activities on 55-75 age group; and utilizing various methods including voluntary works and tourism to improve older adults' physical and mental wellness. Although there were greater achievements with 30 years of development, many problems still exist. Finding reveals that the curriculum should be modified to meet the needs of the local development, to promote older adults' contact and contribution to the community, and to enhance technical competences of those in rural areas involving in agricultural production. Central government should also integrate resources from all sectors of the society for further developing later-life learning in China. The result of this paper highlights the value to promote community-based later-life learning for building a society for active ageing and ageing in place.

Keywords : ageing population, China, later-life learning, policy, University of the Aged

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