

TEACHING STUDY DEPARTMENT
OF GUANGZHOU ELDERLY UNIVERSITY

ON HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE IN CHINA

Universities of the third age (U3As) have a history of 32 years in China. Chinese U3A education is now undergoing rapid development to an extent that there are already 60,867 U3As nationwide, with 7,640,000 students studying in these universities and 2 million students registered for distance education¹.

1. SPROUTING AND GROWTH

In 1983, China's first university of the aged was founded in Shandong Province, getting the new cause of U3A in gear. The birth and growth of U3As in China are an objective requirement and inevitable result of historical development and the current social situation.

Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow, a report by the International Education and Development Committee of UNESCO in 1972, explains the lifelong education theory and a new education that has quickly taken shape in various countries around the world. In 1973, the world's first university of the third

Teaching Study Department of Guangzhou Elderly University; Unit: Guangzhou Elderly University; Address: No.457 Xitang West Road, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China; Postcode: 510091; e-mail: gzlngbdx@163.com

¹ Based on the statistical data provided by CAUA office.

age was established in Toulouse, France. The idea was then introduced to China and has exerted profound influence, laying an ideological basis for the generation of education for the elderly in China.

Since the reform and opening-up policy was implemented in China, the economy has undergone rapid development. China's annual average economic growth rate reached 10.1% during 1978-1988 and 9.5% during 1988-1998². Improvement of material conditions created the conditions needed for the development of elderly education in China.

In 1982, China began to comprehensively abolish the life-long cadre employment system and carry out the compulsory retirement system by age at 60 years old. A large number of old cadres and intellectuals who had a high level of education and a strong demand for continuous learning left their jobs. Thus, they were not only main groups admitted to U3As, but also the backbone running U3As. At that time, all U3As were founded and managed by several retired elderly in the initial stages.

Aging of the population is an irreversible global phenomenon. In the initial stages of U3As in China (in 1983), China's population aged 60 years old or above accounted for 7.6%³ of the total, which was under the level of "aging countries." However, quite a few scholars realized at that time that the tide of aging would sweep across China and it would surely become a country with the most serious aging problem in the world due to the evolution of its social age structure. Therefore, the running of U3As became a new strategy to cope with aging and also the objective requirement of the coming aging society.

In the initial stage, U3As in China suffered relatively slow and difficult development due to lack of clear overall management, financial support, and experience running schools. Many U3As were managed by only a few retired elderly. Without classrooms or sufficient teaching aids and professional teachers; some even had to borrow blackboards and chalk from nearby primary and middle schools to maintain classroom teaching (for example, Guangzhou Elderly University borrowed chairs and blackboards from No.17 Middle School). Later, veteran cadre departments in the Chinese Government began to be involved in the running of U3As and gave a new momentum to the cause of U3As. In 1988, the China Association of the Universities for the Aged (CAUA) was founded and began to carry out macro coordination of U3As across the country. U3As in China began to gradually get on the right track towards development. According to incomplete statistics, there were 61 U3As throughout the country in 1985, which increased to 5331 in 1993⁴. In the

² Based on the data provided on <http://intl.ce.cn/>.

³ Based on the data released by China's fourth national census in 1990.

⁴ Based on the statistical data provided by CAUA office.

process of the emergence and development of U3As, low pay was often given to school managers and teachers, among which many were volunteers.

2. EXPANSION

Since the mid-1990s, China has witnessed significant aging of its population and increasing demands of the elderly in society for learning, which promoted the accelerated development of U3As. China enacted the *Education Law* in 1995 to define the right and obligation of citizens to be educated and the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly* approved in 1996 further clarifies that “the elderly has the right to receive continuing education.” Article 31 reads “the state develops elderly education and encourages society to run various universities of the third age” and “people’s governments at all levels shall strengthen their leadership of the elderly education and make unified planning.” With strong support of national policies, China’s U3As have expanded substantially in scale and the number of schools increased to 16,676 in 1999, with more than 1.4 million students⁵.

In June 2001, the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CPC, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs and Office of National Commission on Aging jointly issued the *Notice on Carrying out the Elderly Education*, which proposed to “nurture and establish a batch of standard model universities of the third age with good conditions, high quality, sound systems and considerable size.” That July, the State Council printed and distributed the *Outline of the “10th Five-Year Plan” for China’s Aging Development*, and required provinces (as well as autonomous regions and municipalities) nationwide to “strengthen standard management of elderly education and establish 1-2 model universities of the third age.” From then on, the activity of founding model U3As began. Model U3As have been established in provincial capitals and metropolises one after another, making development happen step by step. As model universities were founded, a complete set of comparatively mature and effective school running models were popularized in different places, and the cause of U3As in China began to rapidly expand. The table below describes the development situation:

⁵ Based on the statistical data provided by CAUA office.

Tab. 1. Statistics of the Development of U3As in China by Stage⁶.

Year of statistics	Number of schools	Number of students	Enrollment rate (%)
1985	1	586	
1993	5331	471,000	0.47
1999	16,676	1,413,000	1.16
2002	19,306	1,810,000	1.37
2010	41,887	4,824,946	2.65
2013	59,700	6,770,000	3.49
2015	60,867	7,643,100	3.8

3. CHARACTERISTICS

The first country to become an aging society was France. China has been aging since 2005, when Chinese U3As had already spread throughout urban and rural areas.

In 2012, the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to “establish a sound lifelong education system and construct a learning society,” with the elderly education, as the last link of lifelong education, also included. In September 2014, the Ministry of Education began to develop the *National Elderly Education Program*, which is expected to be enacted and implemented in 2016, formally bringing the elderly education and the cause of U3As to the level of national policy.

On March 17th, 2016, Xinhua News Agency was authorized to broadcast the full text of *The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China*, which clearly proposed to “develop education for the elderly.” In China, elderly education is a basic public service provided by the government to citizens. It is gradually becoming an important symbol that reflects social civilization and progress. The central and governments at all levels are giving steadily increasing importance and investment to U3A education.

Most U3As in China are funded by local governments, which only charge low tuition. In recent years, governments at all levels have constantly increased investment, so that quite a few universities have built modern, new school buildings. For example, the financial investment in building Guangdong Elderly University was 320 million yuan. The newly built Hubei Elderly University cost 217 million yuan⁷, and there are numerous provinces and cities which invest tens of millions into building U3As.

⁶ Based on the statistical data provided by CAUA office.

⁷ Based on the data released by Departments of Finance of Guangdong Province and Hubei Province.

Universities of the third age in China sprout, grow, and develop in unique social and economic conditions with human factors, thus having distinct characteristics which can be summarized as “two scales” and “two types of riches”.

“Two-scales” means that both the total number (macro scale) and individual size (micro scale) of U3As in China are large. As a whole, China has the largest number of U3As in the world. From an inside view, there are 18 U3As with the number of students reaching more than 10,000, among which Tianjin University of the Elderly has the largest scale. The number of students there has reached 25,000.

Tab. 2. List of Universities of the Third Age with More Than 10,000 Students (Statistics as of May 2016)⁸.

University	Number of majors	Number of classes	Number of students studying at the university now	University area (m ²)
Guangzhou Elderly University	91	278	11,029	8,000 (new m ² campus: 43,000)
Xi'an University of the Elderly	40	200	60,000 (including branch schools)	20,000
Qingdao University for the Aged	80	352	15,000	9,131
Jinling University of the Elderly	72	268	11,325	8,000
Wuhan University for the Aged	127	494	13,800	Two campuses: 12,500 in total
Ningbo University of the Elderly	113	252	12,149	15,513
Harbin University of the Elderly	168	566	20,299	7,240
Shanghai University for the Elderly	150	370	13,488	Main campus: 4,800
Tianjin University of the Elderly	66	701	25,891	15,277
Shandong University for the Aged	60	770	18,000	Main campus: 5,400
Kunming University for the Aged	61	235	10,200	7,422

⁸ Based on the data released by Department of International Liaison Department CAUA.

Suzhou University of the Elderly	68	167	10,400	10,000
The University for Veteran Cadres of Changsha	47	113	10,090	5,000
Chengdu University of the Elderly	43	200	10,000	15,000
Zhejiang Elderly University	56	153	10,000	23,000
Hubei Elderly University	17	210	10,000	35,502
Guangdong Veteran Cardes University	20	200	11,200	43,500
Jilin Elderly University	54	320	13,269	18,000

U3As have gradually formed an all-round, multi-level, multidisciplinary, multi-functional, and open network system that basically covers all provinces, cities, and districts in China, of which the social influence is constantly increasing, changing from an individual action of educational training to a new type of normal that is recognized by the society.

“Two types of riches” refer to rich varieties of courses and rich teaching results. U3As in China have a large course system which contains 350-400 majors, covering culture, history, philosophy, science, medical science, art and so on. Presently, U3As which offer the most courses include Harbin University of the Elderly (168 courses), Shanghai University for the Elderly (150 courses), Wuhan University for the Aged (127 courses)⁹, etc. Among these courses, those on song, dance and instrumental music, calligraphy and painting as well as health care are comparatively popular with older Chinese people so they occupy a larger proportion. Following the arrival of the information age, U3As have constantly strengthened the development of courses regarding computers, the Internet, photography and video recording, smart phones, and more in order to enable the elderly to keep up with the times and master skills required to enjoy the products of social technological development.

Presentation of teaching results of U3As is undergoing vigorous development, which has become part of social culture and the special new normal culture. Four national art performances were made, with the fourth art performance held in Sanmenxia, Henan in October 2015 with 3,400 elderly participants¹⁰. In the National Elderly Piano Contest held in Guangzhou in November 2015, a student from Hubei Elderly University won the championship and a top grade piano; competitions participated in by students from universities of the third age nationwide also involve

⁹ CAUA research group. National Research Report on Historical Development, Present Condition and Future Prospect of Elderly Education, 2014, 11.

¹⁰ Based on Issue 157 Communications of CAUA.

painting, calligraphy, photography, etc., which have been held many times, with the Fifth National Elderly Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition concluding in Yantai in May 2016 and the Fifth National Elderly Artistic Contest to be held in Xiangtan, Hunan. CAUA collaborating groups in six regions in China have also carried out cross-provincial and cross-regional presentations of teaching results of U3As. In 2015, the Elderly Calligraphy and Painting Contest of South Central Cooperative Group (six provinces) was held in Wuhan. Most U3As in China organize regular activities such as art performances, meridian massage clinics, and photographic exhibitions in communities, in public squares, and in nearby primary and middle schools. It is the presentation of these rich activities that allows society at large to become familiar with U3As.

4. CULTURE

More than two thousand years ago, as the first sentence of *Analects of Confucius*¹¹ goes, Confucius¹², the great Chinese educator, said that “Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?” In *Garden of Stories*¹³, a classic of the Han Dynasty, it reads “if one enjoys learning at early youth, he/she seems the rising sun; if one enjoys learning in the prime of life, he/she seems the sun at noon; if one enjoys learning in old age, he/she seems a candle in the darkness.” These remarks became well-known sayings used for encouraging learning in successive dynasties. “Enjoying learning in one’s old age” and “live and learn” have also become traditional thoughts that have been passed down in Chinese society. The organic combination between these thoughts and the concept of lifelong education has had a significant effect on the running of schools and campus culture of U3As in China. CAUA has identified the mission of U3As as “increasing knowledge, enriching life, cultivating tastes, promoting health, and serving society.” The campus culture of most U3As in China underlines positive elements such as lifelong education, learning happily, and actively involving oneself in society.

According to a survey conducted in Shanghai by CAUA in U3As in 2014, the four courses in which the elderly are the most interested are literary history, health care, cultural sports, and painting and calligraphy. In fact, among U3As in China,

¹¹ It, written by Confucius and his disciples, is one of Confucian classics.

¹² Confucius (551-479B.C.), an ancient Chinese thinker, educator and the founder of Confucian school.

¹³ It was written in 17B.C. by Liu Xiang and mainly reflects philosophical thoughts, political ideals and ethical ideas of Confucianism.

traditional culture courses with literature, history, philosophy, and Chinese classics are always the core focus of teaching.

We have been committed to allowing the elderly to play a role as a carrier for inheritance of traditional Chinese culture in the process of participating in U3A activities, and enabling China's excellent cultural essence to be spread and inherited between generations in families and even communities with U3As as the starting points. For example, Chinese operas such as the Peking opera, Cantonese opera, and various local operas inscribed on the list of World Intangible Cultural Heritage are now flourishing in U3As in some areas. Some traditional culture and customs in different areas in China are also reflected in courses of local U3As, such as Nanyin music in Fujian, the waist drum in the Northwest, festive lanterns in the Southwest, two-people rotation in the Northeast, and so forth.

Charles W. Eliot, a master in the education circle, once depicted the objectives of university education as follows: (1) to help students be able to support themselves in the future; (2) to train them to be qualified to abide by rights and obligations of citizens in a democratic state in the future; (3) to help them be able to enjoy a good life by using their full potential and talent in the future¹⁴. However, in U3As, to help students making a living is obviously no longer the main purpose; instead, we aim at enabling the elderly to continue maintaining their mentality, capacity, and skills required to abide by rights and obligations of citizens in society and to enjoy a good life. In other words, U3As aim at cultivating modern elderly that can keep pace with society, master sufficient knowledge, enjoy life, maintain social participation, and do whatever they can to serve society. This is the objective of U3As in China in a cultural dimension.

5. GREEN DEVELOPMENT

Green development is a type of economic growth and social development targeting efficiency, harmony, and sustainability and stressing ecological civilization. It is necessary to introduce elderly education into green development. China's elderly education is the third age education with the strongest governmental support in the world. State leaders have repeatedly inspected U3As in various places and made various policies supporting elderly education. China's U3A education is

¹⁴ [America] MORTIMER J. ADLER, *How to Think About the Great Ideas*, Guangzhou: Huacheng Publishing House, July 2008.

a basic public service offered by the government to the people and has been listed as a major livelihood project¹⁵.

However, China's U3A educational theory is not complete or systematic in a serious way. The intention of school-running, especially at academic level of education, is poor. Moreover, as China has a large elderly population base, the coverage of elderly education is relatively low and the gross enrollment rate is very low.

In China, which has an elderly population of more than 200 million and is still rapidly aging, how to promote green development of elderly education and satisfy increasing education demands resulting from aging is a major kind of research to be undertaken and practical task to be solved.

5.1. FURTHER INCREASING THE LEVEL OF ELDERLY EDUCATION PUBLIC SERVICE OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT

The aging of population has exerted a profound influence on the integral development of Chinese society. It does not mean that the aging of a country equals an old society. Should effective public policies be taken, an aging society can still be vital and energetic. At the current stage, under the circumstances where subsistence and health of the elderly have mostly been achieved, the problem of cultural support and mental health care of the elderly is increasingly prominent.

Allowing the elderly to continue education plays an important role in satisfying their spiritual and cultural demands. The inherent non-profit nature of elderly education determines that it will by no means follow the market-oriented development path. Therefore, we need to practically raise the level of elderly education public service offered by the government. This is not only the requirement of green development of China's elderly education, but also a demand of the times. Efforts should be made to practically improve the public service of elderly education and establish a sound public service system for elderly education.

With the progress and development of the Chinese society at large, large-scale development of elderly education is provided with increasingly mature conditions, and it's urgent to include the development of elderly education in the overall planning for national economic and social development.

The *National Elderly Education Development Plan (2016-2020)* developed and to be enacted by Ministry of Education under the opinions of leaders of the State Council will be of milestone significance to the green development of China's el-

¹⁵ Based on the speech delivered by Mr. Zhang Xiaolin, President of CAUA, in a seminar on the international issue of "Students of Universities of the Third Age: A New Generation of Students" (May 2015, Guangzhou, China).

derly education. The Plan indicates that “by 2020, China will have an intrinsically vigorous elderly education system in place,” and that elderly education is “an important social basis to achieve Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream of great rejuvenation of the nation.” In addition to comprehensive top-level design and arrangements made by the state, local governments are also required to investigate demands of the elderly for education based on local situations, incorporate the development of elderly education into local master plans of development, integrate various resources, and facilitate steady and healthy development of elderly education.

Elderly education should be maintained at non-profit and at the same time be recognized as a part of educational investment. Elderly education is non-profit, so efforts should be made to establish a feasible and effective investment mechanism, reasonably increase the proportion of expenditures on elderly education projects in fiscal expenditures, ensure sufficient schoolrunning funds, excellent and stable management and teaching teams, good teaching facilities, and higher theoretical research for the development of elderly education at all levels. Sustainable development of elderly education also needs to be promoted better. At present, many provinces and cities have allocated considerable funds to elderly education and made long-term investment mechanisms, reflecting the common aspiration of the people.

The development course of China’s elderly education shows diversity in its management system. Over the past 30 years, the state has not established a unified management system for elderly education and different management systems have been used in the development of elderly education in different areas. Some elderly education systems are affiliated to relevant functional departments of the Party Committee and the government, such as the Bureau of Retired Veteran Cadres, the Bureau of Civil Affairs, and the Bureau of Culture. Some are affiliated to non-governmental organizations such as social organizations, enterprises and individuals. Diversity in management systems is reasonable and necessary for a certain historical period, but the limitations of it are increasingly apparent over time, so reformation is imperative. In order to facilitate institutional and standard development of elderly education, it is required to develop a scientific macro management system for it and allow specific functional departments of the government to lead the work in the field.

The *National Elderly Education Development Plan (2016-2020)* developed by Ministry of Education provides a plan for the system and mechanism management of elderly education, which sets forth “led by the Ministry of Education and involved by departments concerned, efforts should be made to jointly develop a development plan, supervise and inspect the implementation of the plan, make policies on elderly education, study and solve major problems in elderly education”¹⁶.

¹⁶ CAUA, Academic Communications (34 issues in total), March 2015: P5.

Education for the elderly is still part of overall education, which is a consensus gradually reached through years of practice and theoretical research and is a scientific orientation. On this basis, management of elderly education “led by Ministry of Education and involved in by departments concerned” agrees with the law and can promote green development of elderly education.

China has a very large elderly population but relatively low coverage of elderly education, to the extent that the enrollment rate of the elderly willing to be enrolled is very low and it is very difficult to be admitted to U3As. In this case, energetically developing community elderly education is the most feasible strategic move, which by relying on various existing resources in urban communities and running schools according to local conditions, can greatly satisfy the demand of the elderly to be admitted. Supporting, guiding, and helping communities to have elderly education may be regarded as a public service provided the government, or the government can achieve this by buying public services.

5.2. STRENGTHENING THEORETICAL RESEARCH AND FACILITATING THEORETICAL INNOVATION TO BE GEARED TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Green development of elderly education requires continuous use of resources, while scientific schoolrunning theories and ideas are sunshine and rainwater. The development course of U3As in China for more than 30 years has been a healthily proceeding process in which we study and solve a series of basic problems in elderly education, explore peculiar laws of elderly education, and link theories with practice. Theoretical research should be ahead of school running, so U3As at all levels can value the research. China has preliminarily established a set of theoretical research working mechanisms in the field of elderly education and has achieved some results. There have been 11 successful national elderly education workshops and 9 national elderly education theoretical research bases. The CAUA Academic Council carried out theoretical research on 7 national projects, advocates standard and modern publication, and has made major breakthroughs in theoretical innovation¹⁷.

Existing achievements are the cornerstone to promote continued deepened theoretical research. Since 2013, we have further strengthened international cooperation in U3A and brought about a new situation of theoretical research. In the course of external exchange, we have introduced new international information and ideas, including basic concepts, definitions and theories, for analysis and research. In addition, we also share results of theoretical research on elderly education in China with the rest of the world. Through a contrastive study of the actual situation of Chi-

¹⁷ Based on the data provided by Academic Committee, CAUA.

na's elderly education, practice is guided by theoretical research so as to promote academic connection of China's elderly education and elderly education abroad. International Association of the Universities for the Aged (AIUTA) holds two international conferences with novel and profound topics every year which can broaden our horizons and innovate our thinking. The International Conference held in Alicante, Spain in June 2015 was themed "U3A, Citizenship, and Social Cohesion," which underlined that to receive elderly education was a basic right of citizens and U3As are the important foundation for increasing social cohesion. The theme mainly sets forth the purpose and nature of elderly education, and has guiding significance for us to select research perspectives. The International Conference held in Lublin, Poland in September 2015 was themed "Students of the Third Age – a New Generation of Students," which was original and accurately summarized the nature of students of the third age. The theme not only concerns the field of elderly education, but also intersects with disciplines such as sociology and pedagogy. It makes an impact on the traditional concept of "elderly students" and allows new ideas to be developed. The two examples are very good proof that internationalization of theoretical research has profound potential.

It is without doubt that deepening international cooperation of U3As in China plays a positive role in promoting green development of these universities. In the process of boosting exchange and reinforcing learning, we should also focus on presenting the charm of U3As in China, allow the rest of the world to see the achievements made by Chinese elderly education more clearly and increase its internationalization level through presentation and exchange. This will help us make better use of international platforms and resources to promote further development of China's elderly education. President Lin Yuanhe of Guangzhou Elderly University put forward the "1+1" workshop mode, which means a small-scale theoretical workshop centering on the topic of each AIUTA International Conference will be held domestically in advance. The mode will make a major breakthrough in our theoretical research and innovation.

5.3. BUILDING AN EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT FOR GREEN DEVELOPMENT OF ELDERLY EDUCATION

In China, elderly education is an important part of the lifelong education system, an important link of building a learning society, and an important factor of constructing a harmonious society. It's also an important move to achieve positive and healthy aging, an important part of social construction, an intention of building a powerful cultural country, and part of innovating social management.

The emergence and development of elderly education in China for retired elders was built under the support of the Party Committee and the government. Demand for education and passion for U3As by the elderly promote the boom of the elderly education cause in China. The importance and positive significance of elderly education at the present stage have been widely recognized and affirmed. Nevertheless, elderly education is inadequately cared for and noticed in society at large. In order to promote the existence and growth of green elderly education, it is crucial to build a good external environment for the development of elderly education. To achieve this, both the government and U3As should take respective responsibility while the media also has an obligation.

Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly clearly stipulates that "the state develops elderly education." To guarantee a legal environment for the green development of elderly education through specific legislations is the wish of the many. Since the reform and opening up, China has made tremendous achievements in economic construction with constant increase in financial strength of the government and subsequent increases in the investment of elderly causes. Before that, however, the government focused on material guarantees for the elderly but put less emphasis on the mental side of things. In order to facilitate comprehensive development of elderly causes in our country, we should be aware of the importance of strengthening mental security for the elderly while developing elderly education is an inevitable requirement of the lives of the elderly. Consequently, efforts should be made to advance green development of U3As and create a good external environment for such development. A variety of approaches, such as policies and public opinion guidance can be employed to actively create a social environment for the development of elderly education, help the society at large acquire a better knowledge of elderly education, care for, support, and participate in the development of elderly education.

U3As are a main carrier of elderly education, which should bring its guiding and role as a leading model into full play and strive to create a good external environment for the development of it. At a new historical starting point, managers and workers engaged in elderly education should work to promote the transformation of U3As from closed to open, integrate U3As in the development of the society, and provide access to U3As for all elders. The coverage of U3As should be increased to better satisfy the elderly's demands for education. Teaching quality of U3As should be improved to raise the overall quality, whilst meet the elderly's mental demands and help them be better adapted and integrated into the rapidly developing society. U3As will surely deepen their positive role and expand their social influence in the process of constant extension in communities and startup units and in the course

of continuous improvement, and allow the society at large to know more about importance and necessity of the existence and development of elderly education. This has a significantly positive effect on building a good external environment for development of elderly education.

5.4. GREEN DEVELOPMENT IN ELDERLY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IS GEARED TOWARDS MODERNIZATION

Green development in elderly education is achieved mainly through continuous efforts in successfully running U3As at all levels. Educators should have clear scientific development ideas and strategies for running schools. From the perspective of running a green school, the primary strategy is to vigorously promote modernized construction of U3As.

The modernization of China's elderly education is an irreversible trend, which refers to green and scientific transformation and upgrading. Comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development in Chinese society inevitably requires the relatively synchronized realization of modernized elderly education. Rapid development in the economy and society offers a better material basis; the advent of the aging era and the information age at the same time brings demand and momentum day after day, and the macro environment for the modernization of U3As has basically taken shape, with existing strong strategic support. Only through modernization can U3A education be alluring and attractive, win popularity among the aged, and lay a foundation for green development.

The "Design of Modernization Index System for China's U3A Education", completed by the CAUA research group in June 2015¹⁸, provides a blueprint for the green development of U3As. U3As at all levels should achieve green management under this modernization index system.

The modernization of elderly education is a typical system: the precondition to modernization is a modernized school management philosophy; the foundation is modernized teaching facilities and methods; the core is course design and innovation; the key lies in faculty and teaching quality; and the guarantee is modern scientific management. All these make up an integral whole that is the unique U3A education modernization system. From the perspective of connotative development mode, the pursuit of modernization is the essence of green elderly education.

¹⁸ The research was led by Guangzhou Elderly University and Wuhan University for The Aged and participated by 19 universities of the third age, of which findings were published by Guangdong Education Publishing House.

At present, there are 36 various U3As and about 73,000 students in Guangzhou, China¹⁹. The new campus of Guangzhou University for the Aged, where the author is based, is planned to be formally put into use at the beginning of 2016 and is expected to be built into a comprehensively modernized U3A in 2018. It will be open to the society at large and plans to reach a size of 30,000 students in 2020. These efforts show that Guangzhou University for the Aged is developing toward the modernization and equalization of elderly education.

In the layout for promoting the modernization of U3A education, it should be noted from the perspective of green development that:

The green development of U3A education should be safe. Campus safety is the top priority of U3A management. As the Minister of Education, Yuan Guiren, put it: "Without life, education cannot be. This should be an education norm that we abide by together." People-oriented principle lies at the core of a scientific outlook on development and an essential requirement for modern management. U3As provide elderly students with a good comfortable learning environment and a harmonious, elegant, green, and safe campus. Here, guaranteeing learning safety is the minimum requirement and a bottom line that cannot be loosened. U3A work is without a doubt complicated and some might be really very important, but regardless the time or place, safety must be the first priority in U3As. Thus, efforts should be made to develop and strengthen "full personnel safety awareness", and perfect and implement a scientific safety system. It is necessary to manage personnel, materials, and operations in the context of an established full personnel safety awareness, and to take personnel, material, and technical precautions to build a safe campus in all respects.

Green development of U3A education must cover talent development. "Talent is the most important resource". Another key to green development of U3A education is talent. At present, most U3As in China are not run by education departments, but by bureaus of retired veteran cadres of party committees at all levels, specifically combined teams of full-time staff for veteran cadres work and retired comrades, which have greater superiority in enthusiasm for work and competent services, but inherent weakness in promoting the sustainable, green, and high-level development of U3A education is as they are not professional educators. Green elderly education is artistic, comprehensive and prospective, featuring modernity and a sense of responsibility, and is scientific and efficient. Thus, green development is in urgent need of large batch of professionals trained and cultivated in modern elderly education, which is a major and pressing task. The training work should be carried out mainly in universities or jointly conducted in the same region and even

¹⁹ Based on the statistics provided by offices of associations of universities for the aged in Guangzhou.

across regions. Training should be organized by level and category according to different objects, for example, school leaders, mid-level leaders, various managers, professionals, teachers and teachers in charge of classes, among others, should all be included in the training system.

6. CONCLUSION

More than one thousand years ago, Emperor Taizong of Tang²⁰ warned his officials that “by taking history as a mirror, one can see how things rise and fall.” To review and study the history of elderly education is a reflection on the present, and planning and anticipation for the future. The great Chinese educator, Confucius, made the statement that “a man should be independent by 30”, and China’s elderly education has also come to the age of thirty. The characteristics of the times for green development in Chinese society call for green elderly education.

The basic guarantee for the green development of elderly education is that the government continues to provide strong support and improve the supporting mechanism; in order to achieve the green development of elderly education, it is required to increase the coverage, and substantially raise school enrollment of the aged, so the focus must be lowered to communities; the inexhaustible impetus for green development of elderly education is its theoretical innovation and internationalization; green development of elderly education is starved of good external conditions; green development of elderly education can be achieved basically through the promotion of the comprehensive modernization of U3As.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. The Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020).
Yu FEI, Strategic Choice of Silver China, „Wuhan Research on Elderly Education”, (2), 2008.
CAUA research group. Research on Modernization of Education in Universities of the Third Age in China, Guangdong Education Publishing House, 2010, 6.
CAUA research group. Design of Modernization Index System for U3A Education in China, Guangdong Education Publishing House, 2015, 3.
CAUA research group. Rural Elderly Education and New Rural Construction in China, Guangdong Education Publishing House, 2010, 10.

²⁰ Emperor Taizong of Tang Li Shimin (598-649A.D.) was the second emperor in the Tang dynasty of China.

- PANG XUEQUAN, Continuing Education Oriented to the 21st Century, Zhejiang University Press, Edition 1, September 2008.
- HU RUIWEN, Education Modernization from the Perspective of Core Indices, „China Education Daily”, 2009, 2, 4.
- China Center for Modernization Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences. China Modernization Report 2006: Social Modernization, Peking University Press, 2006, 1.
- HE CHUANQI, Education: “The Winning Hand” of China’s Modernization, „China Education Daily”, 2009, 2, 4.
- ZHOU JIANHUI, On Strategic Theme of Elderly Education, „Guangzhou Research on Elderly Education”, 2010, 2.
- Proceedings of High-end Forum on Aging of Population and Contemporary Social Development. Guangdong, „Qiuguang Magazine”, 2009, 6.
- LU JIANJIE and ZHANG LIHUA, New Forces on China’s Educational Front, Unity Press, 2016, 4.
- LU JIANJIE and ZHONG XUQIU, Bright Stars of Regional Elderly Education, Unity Press, 2016, 4.
- Proceedings of China’s 11th Theoretical Symposium on Elderly Education, Wuhan Hubei, China, 2014, 11.
- Guangzhou Elderly University, „Guangzhou Research on Elderly Education”, (16), 2015, 11.
- Guangzhou Elderly University, „Guangzhou Research on Elderly Education”, (17), 2016, 6.
- CAUA research group. National Research Report on Historical Development, Present Condition and Future Prospect of Elderly Education, 2014, 11.
- CAUA research group. Research Report on Transformation Development of Elderly Education in China, 2014, 10.
- CAUA. Proceedings of China Summit Forum on Elderly Education, Wuzhen Zhejiang, China, 2014, 5.
- WANG YOUNONG, On Green Development of Elderly Education in China, Beijing: International Forum for Elderly Education, 2015, 10.

HISTORIA I ROZWÓJ UNIwersytetów TRZECIEGO WIEKU W CHINACH

Streszczenie

Powstanie i rozwój uniwersytetów trzeciego wieku (U3A) w Chinach wynika z gruntownych względów historycznych i społecznych. Uniwersytety trzeciego wieku rozwinęły się na dużą skalę i cieszą się ogromnym sukcesem. Mają one odrębne cechy charakterystyczne w zakresie działalności związanej z ich prowadzeniem oraz bogate zasoby kulturowe, ale konotacyjny poziom akademicki należy w przyszłości podnieść. Aby osiągnąć zrównoważony rozwój uniwersytetów trzeciego wieku, konieczne jest dalsze wzmocnienie wsparcia rządowego, zwiększenie zasięgu edukacji, podniesienie poziomu badań teoretycznych i umiędzynarodowienia, stworzenie zewnętrznego środowiska, które będzie poważnie traktowane przez społeczeństwo, oraz zwiększenie modernizacji budowy uniwersytetów trzeciego wieku na wszystkich poziomach.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny; historia uniwersytetów trzeciego wieku; cechy charakterystyczne; strategia rozwojowa.

ON HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT
OF UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE IN CHINA

S u m m a r y

Universities of the third age (U3As) in China have emerged and developed due to profound historical and social reasons and have achieved a large scale and good achievements. U3As in China possess distinct school-running characteristics and rich cultural deposits, but the connotative academic level is yet to be raised. In order to achieve sustainable development of U3As, it is required to further strengthen governmental support, increase education coverage, raise the level of theoretical research and internationalization, create an external environment that is looked upon seriously by society, and enhance modernization construction of U3As at all levels.

Key words: China; history of U3As; characteristics; development strategy.