

The Characteristics, Values, and Paths of Informal Learning for Learners in the Era of Mobile Internet

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of lifelong learning concept, informal learning, as an important supplement to traditional educational learning, has attracted wide attention and become an important form of learning for learners. The transformation of the mobile internet era has made the freedom, openness, sharing, and interactivity of online learning highly compatible with informal learning, helping learners expand their learning content, broaden their learning horizons, and transform their learning concepts and methods. Under the background of the proliferation and confusion of network information, it is necessary to lay emphasis on the introduction and construction of high-quality and convenient online learning platform, the establishment of an online learning community based on the unit, and the strengthening of supervision to provide high-quality online learning content as an important measure to upgrade the quality of informal learning.*

Keywords: *the mobile Internet era, informal learning, characteristics, value, paths*

1. Introduction

Learning has increasingly become an important way to acquire knowledge, improve mental models, avoid inertial thinking, and achieve personal development and self-transcendence. Profound and complex changes have taken place in the world today. In a manner of speaking, human beings has achieved outstanding civilization achievements in various historical periods, including politics, economy, society, technology, culture, and other aspects, while also facing many unknown challenges. In order to keep in the forefront of the times and pile up enough competitiveness, we must pay attention to learning, rely on learning, seriously acquire knowledge from all aspects to make up for the lack of cognition, and actively promote the construction of learning society and learning organization. In the era when the concept of Lifelong learning is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, learning style is no longer limited to traditional school education and book learning, and presents the characteristics of informal learning that can be learned everywhere and at all times.^[1]The evolution of the mobile Internet era speeds up the update of information and knowledge, which helps to break through the requirements of traditional learning and education on time and place. The openness, sharing, and convenience features of online learning help provide unlimited possibilities and technical support for informal learning.

2. The Characteristics of Informal Learning for Learners in the Era of Mobile Internet

Informal learning refers to the process of acquiring knowledge or skills that learners set relevant learning goals according to their own needs and spontaneously engage in at informal times and locations. In the era of mobile Internet, the public can obtain learning resources and learning opportunities through informal learning on the Internet, so as to achieve personal development. Nowadays, in the era of mobile Internet, learners' informal learning mainly presents the following three typical manifestations.

2.1. Demand-oriented targeted learning

In society, members of society belong to different occupational divisions of labor, involving a number of different professional technicians, teachers, workers, civil servants, accountants. In various industries, departments, and units, there are significant differences in the learning needs, quality potential, and objective learning conditions for professional skills, making it impossible to achieve

uniformity. On the one hand, the application of modern information technology such as Internet and artificial intelligence in education has expanded the coverage of learning resources such as courses and teachers by means of information technology, and realized the cross-regional sharing of learning resources. On the other hand, learners can apply mobile devices to acquire relevant knowledge that they truly need or urgently need to supplement in their leisure time and at any location. Based on fully considering their own work and life needs, learning habits and interests, learners can choose their own learning content, conduct targeted learning, build their own learning resource network, actively explore problems, and closely integrate learning content with practical life and work.

2.2. Interactive learning in communication and sharing

Traditional education is limited by the time and place of study. Although learners in this mode will also benefit from a small range of learning collaboration, sharing learning content and learning perception, interactivity is far from enough. Based on the development of information technology and network resource sharing technology, informal learning in the mobile Internet era not only gathers a huge learning group, but also extensively searches for and freely selects learners with similar occupations and needs through the network for communication, thus establishing contacts on an open and shared learning platform and building a learner-centered learning partner network. When receiving knowledge and learning resources, each learner is also sharing and disseminating information to the outside world, such as liking, forwarding and leaving messages on some platforms such as Wechat and Weibo, so that learning resources and learning perceptions can spread rapidly in a short period of time, with sound interactivity. Learners can also have various opportunities for Learning communication and cooperation through Learning Guide, online Q&A, online discussion and other ways, so that learners can acquire knowledge in the communication activities of online communities and carry out secondary learning, so that explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge in informal learning can be effectively combined and applied to real life.

2.3. Fragmented learning in daily life

At this stage, the fast-paced lifestyle urges learners to have fairly limited learning time outside of work, which however to some extent aggravates the contradiction between engineering and learning. Informal learning has the flexibility of learning time and duration, allowing learners to freely choose when to learn and make full use of fragmented time to learn through mobile devices such as smartphones and iPads. According to statistics, the number of mobile Internet users in China in 2007 was 500.4 million. By June 2020, the number of mobile Internet users in China has reached 932.4 million. From 2007 to June 2020, the number of mobile Internet users in China has increased by nearly 18 times, and the penetration rate of mobile Internet users has increased from 24.0% in 2007 to 99.2% in June 2020.^[2] More than a simple communication tool, mobile phones have been used by more and more people to receive and share information on the Internet. There is no doubt that the widespread use of mobile phones and other mobile devices provides an important carrier for informal learning. Some personal media platforms, such as Weibo, Tiktok and the Red, have been kept within the range of learners' acceptance in terms of learning intensity, learning difficulty and learning rhythm through concise words, vivid pictures, and videos of life situations. At the same time, learners can also become bloggers based on their own strengths and professional advantages to become producers and disseminators of articles, audio and short videos, so as to enhance the effect of fragmented learning.

3. The Value Analysis of Informal Learning for Learners in the Era of Mobile Internet

3.1. Beneficial for changing learning concepts and methods

Groups with different levels of needs will show different learning motivations, and different learning conditions will also show different learning styles. In the process of traditional learning education, learners' learning content, learning style, learning time, and the arrangement and design of learning activities are often subject to teachers' subjective presupposition, which makes learning activities less free for learners. At the same time, the "templated" learning mode may not be suitable for learners with personality differences, which affects the quality and effectiveness of learning. The mode of informal learning meets learners' requirements for autonomy and personalized learning. In this process, learners can arrange their learning based on their own learning habits, interests, and abilities, provide sufficient free space for learning activities, ensure that learners find suitable learning methods,

find points of interest for problem exploration and deep learning, and better stimulate their learning potential. In the meantime, the rapid development of science and technology currently provides learners with many convenient learning tools. Some traditional information media such as TV, radio and newspaper have realized digital construction through app. Learners can study at any time through computers and mobile phones, download audio and video and various learning resources, which brings great convenience to informal learning. The trend of deep integration of big data with education and learning activities is becoming increasingly evident, making all learning processes traceable, providing the possibility of obtaining learner learning data and analyzing learner learning situations. This process can help students scientifically and efficiently plan their learning process, better reflect on the learning process, identify learning problems, formulate learning plans, and build their own learning resource network. Such arrangement has promoted the change of learning concepts and learning methods, made learning no longer a burden outside of work, effectively alleviated the contradiction between work and study, enabled learners to learn actively, consciously and at any time, and made learning a must to improve work and enrich life.

3.2. Beneficial for enriching learning content and expanding learning horizons

Compared to formal learning, informal learning models often exhibit characteristics of spontaneity, diversity, and socialization.^[3]In the era of mobile Internet, knowledge sources and channels of network learning are more diversified, and various knowledge resources are rich and complicated, providing learners with rich learning content. At the same time, learning is a spontaneous social behavior, in which learners actively acquire knowledge from external sources based on their own needs and integrate it with their existing cognition and experience, thus forming new cognition.^[4] With the development of portable communication technology, learners' own experience can not only come from life experiences and daily exchanges, but also from the large and small network communities of personal media platform. Network community is an extension of the 'circle' in daily life. In the virtual world, this "circle like" information dissemination mode enables different adult "user circles" to achieve "within circle" nesting and "outside circle" connection.^[5]This type of circle not only connects users with similar interests and interests, but learners can also be followers or followers within their respective circles, connecting learners to different "heterogeneous" circles. Undeniably, the network communication mode between circles helps realize the transmission and sharing of information, so that learners can obtain more abundant information, acquire a variety of new knowledge and new skills, expand the learning content, and expand the learning horizon.

4. The Actionable Path of Informal Learning for Learners in the Era of Mobile Internet

4.1. Introduction and construction of high-quality and convenient online learning platforms

Network learning platform is a learning and training system designed to support self-study, tutoring, teaching, testing, learning effect evaluation and other services. The rational use of network learning platform is helpful to play the personalized learning function and improve the learning quality. In view of the fact that abundant and high-quality learning resources are the key to attract informal learners, the construction of high-quality e-learning platforms requires scientific planning of the types of learning platforms and full consideration of the needs of informal learners for continuing education. It is necessary to introduce and build a learning course platform that includes basic knowledge popularization, professional skills training, and comprehensive learning resources, maintain the updating and optimization of various resources, always provide learners with a large number of high-quality and free learning and educational resources, and actively promote the digitization of high-quality learning resources. At the same time, it is time to improve the development of information technology and provide learners with one-stop learning services, especially to enhance the interactive function of online learning platforms and improve the quality of personalized learning services. According to statistics, as of December 2020, the use of mobile phones by Chinese netizens has reached 986 million, and the proportion of people using mobile phones to surf the Internet and the scale of Internet users has reached 99.7%. The ultimate goal is to actively promote the construction of mobile learning platforms and expand the user base of online learning platforms.

4.2. Construction of an online learning community based on units

As a member of the society, each individual will show the group nature of people through the

activities between people.^[6]The rapid development of the Internet provides a powerful tool for intensive interactive, collaborative, socialized informal learning. In order to improve the effectiveness of informal learning on the Internet, it is necessary to actively build an online learning community based on the work unit. Learners in the same workplace tend to have similar learning goals and professional needs, making it easier to achieve learning collaboration. They can jointly explore learning resources, share learning experiences and methods, conduct in-depth exchanges and discussions around learning themes of common concern, and deepen learning outcomes. Compared to the original learning group and learning group, the difference is that the learning community is a learning organization with a strong sense of learning mission and responsibility. A clearer learning motivation and requirements are beneficial for learners to participate in learning with a more proactive and serious attitude. The construction of online learning community puts forward higher requirements for the organizers of E-learning community. It is necessary to deepen the management of the E-learning community, create a positive learning situation, and strengthen the learning collaboration and emotional exchange among members, so as to enhance organizational cohesion, enhance the sense of belonging of members, and enable them to actively participate in the learning interaction in the E-learning community.

4.3. Strengthening regulation to provide high-quality online learning content

Nowadays, the rapid development of Internet technology has provided opportunities and channels for Internet users of different regions, different ages and different classes to acquire and disseminate information. The expansion of online and offline social circles helps realize the extensive coverage and rapid dissemination of information, which undoubtedly enables learners to live in an ocean of information. The lower threshold for information access results in uneven quality of network information resources. In order to attract attention and market, many personal media users often use vulgar, fake and entertainment content to attract attention, which makes learners often in a mixed learning environment for online informal learning. In order to achieve the goal of improving the quality of learners' informal learning on the Internet, we must attach importance to the supervision of online information content, establish a strict control mechanism, and crack down on the behavior of making and sharing false and vulgar content. Moreover, it is time to optimize network resources, shield bad information, and commit to providing learners with a safe, pure, civilized and high-quality online learning environment. At the same time, a scientific information resource scoring mechanism ought to be designed to ensure real name authentication between information publishers and users participating in quality evaluation. Efforts should be made to promote and promote excellent learning resource publishers, and publishers with lower evaluations should be actively urged to adjust and improve the contents.

5. Conclusion

The mobile Internet era provides practical technical support for learners' informal learning, so that learners' learning arrangements are no longer limited by time and place, and it is convenient for them to learn from time to time and learn everywhere with the help of computers, TV and mobile phones. An open, shared, and highly interactive online world not only helps to achieve widespread coverage of learning resources, but also achieves cross regional sharing of high-quality resources. On the one hand, learners can learn from rich learning content. On the other hand, they can also learn according to their own needs, which caters to their urgent needs for continuing education. It is worth mentioning that the Internet also provides a freer and broader discourse platform for learners to express and communicate, so that learners can learn deeply in communication and interaction. With the widespread popularity of mobile terminals such as mobile phones and computers, learners can fully utilize fragmented time. Learning anytime and anywhere is no longer an unattainable dream, which greatly alleviates the contradiction between engineering and learning, expands the learning content, and broadens the perspective of learning. In the meantime, the deep integration of big data and learning education makes the learning process more transparent. With data analysis and scientific planning of learning activities as the carrier, learners can deeply promote the transformation of learning methods and learning concepts. However, mobile internet technology, while promoting the development of informal learning, is also constrained by some prominent problems and difficulties. Faced with all kinds of complicated information, it is difficult for people to screen out effective and true information in a short time. The "Groupthink" effect can easily influence individual values. Therefore, the improvement of the quality of informal online learning not only calls for the construction and introduction of high-quality online learning platforms and the construction of a positive online learning community, but also requires

strengthening the correct guidance of media platforms and the evaluation and management of online information content.

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