

Congratulatory Message

60th Anniversary of Shanghai Open University



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Video message by
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Warm congratulations to President Yuan Wen and all colleagues on the 60th Anniversary of Shanghai Open University from all of us at the Commonwealth of Learning. As you know, COL is an intergovernmental organisation that works in the 54 Commonwealth countries. COL has developed a unique relationship with Shanghai Open University (SOU) over the years resulting in visits, exchange of ideas and sharing of resources. In addition, SOU and I share a special bond—we both received the ICDE award of excellence in 2009 at their conference held in Maastricht.

Shanghai Open University is considered a leading open university not just in Asia but in the world. It has invested in quality teaching for a very diverse and distributed constituency of learners, including workers, senior citizens and persons with disabilities in the best tradition of the social mission of open universities. This makes SOU a model institution that many new open universities could emulate to their own benefit and advantage.

This year the world community was caught unawares with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The education of over 90% students all over the world was disrupted. Both ministries and institutions had to pivot to online and remote learning almost overnight. The pandemic continues and we are forced to face the future of education, which requires alternative and innovative approaches to ensure quality education and lifelong learning for all. Shanghai Open University has demonstrated how quality distance learning and the use of appropriate technologies can scale up lifelong learning. When I visited SOU in 2016, I found the university was way ahead of many open universities in adopting state of the art technologies.

The focus on technology is rightly combined with a commitment to equity and inclusion so that no one is left behind. The impressive report on ‘Online and Open Education in Shanghai: Emergency Response and Innovative Practice during COVID-19 Pandemic’ developed in partnership with UNESCO-IITE and East China Normal University is an excellent example of how different technologies like radio, TV, online learning and social media, can be harnessed to reach teachers and learners in all contexts. This aligns perfectly with the motto of your university—‘education for all, learning with aspiration’.

Let me wish President YUAN Wen and all colleagues a very successful celebration and many more spectacular achievements as SOU enters its seventh decade.