Research on Accelerating the Construction of a Lifelong Learning Society to Resolve Educational Contradictions Under the Background of Common Prosperity: A Case Study of Zhejiang Province

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Abstract

The Party and the state attach great importance to the construction of a lifelong learning society. "Building a modern education system that serves lifelong learning for all" is placed at the forefront of the major development goals in *China's Education Modernization 2035*. The national 14th Five-Year Plan emphasizes "improving the lifelong learning system and building a learning society," and the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China also proposes "promoting the digitalization of education and building a learning society and a learning power for all."

Key words: Accelerating the construction; Lifelong learning society; Common prosperity

The theory of lifelong education proposes that education should permeate a person's entire life, emphasizing the learner's subjectivity and the continuity of education. This helps to build a learning society and meet the learning needs of different groups. Lifelong learning includes all levels and types of education received by every individual from infancy to old age at different stages of development, as well as education received from schools, families, and society in various fields. The construction of a learning society is not limited to formal school education, nor does it only serve adolescents and children. From a global perspective, building a lifelong learning society is the foundation of civilization's progress and national strength. The theory of educational equity focuses on the fair allocation of educational resources, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education. This is the cornerstone of achieving common prosperity. By allocating resources and implementing preferential policies, it aims to bridge the educational gap between urban and rural areas, regions, and groups, resolving educational conflicts. Through teacher training, curriculum reform, and other methods, it seeks to improve the quality of education to meet the needs of social development. Education needs to be more closely aligned with market demands, enhancing the employment rate and quality of graduates, and increasing the adaptability of education. Through legal and policy measures, it aims to guarantee everyone's right to education, reduce educational inequality, and promote educational equity.

1. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ZHEJIANG'S PIONEERING AND EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

Due to its higher level of affluence and better balance, Zhejiang has achieved significant results in exploring solutions to the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development, laying a solid foundation and possessing advantages for building a demonstration zone for common prosperity. The "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Supporting Zhejiang's High-Quality Development and Construction of a Demonstration Zone for Common Prosperity" entrusts Zhejiang with the important mission

of being a "pioneer in exploration." Among them, Article 14 of the "Opinions," which calls for "taking the lead in achieving equal access to basic public services," specifically proposes "exploring a Zhejiang model for a lifelong learning society." This is an important exploratory task put forward by the central government for lifelong education, and it is also an important people's livelihood practice that focuses on the higher-level, higher-quality, and higher-standard educational needs of the people, painting a picture of happiness that is visible, tangible, and experiential.

Education plays a leading, foundational, and overarching role in the construction of common prosperity. Through the high-quality development of education, it is possible to promote the high-quality sharing of public services across the entire life cycle of individuals, effectively addressing the most pressing, direct, and practical concerns of the people. Among the 56 target indicators for the construction of a common prosperity demonstration zone in Zhejiang Province, the construction of a learning society is directly related to multiple indicators. It also plays a significant role in promoting economic development, increasing residents' income, and balancing income disparities.

Table 1
Indicators for Common Prosperity Related to the Construction of a Learning Society

Categories	Indicators
Quality sharing of public services	Average expected years of schooling for children (years)
	Gross enrollment rate of higher education (%)
	Ratio of skilled personnel to employees (%)
	Comprehensive reading rate (%)
Construction of spiritual civilization	Realization rate of civilized good habits (%)
	Social integrity (%)
	Per capita consumption expenditure on culture and entertainment (%)
Social harmony and amity	People's sense of satisfaction, happiness, security (%)

2. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LEARNING SOCIETY

Since the reform and opening up, Zhejiang's education has achieved leapfrog development, making significant progress. Public service capacity has continuously strengthened, the guarantee system has gradually improved, and the governance structure has become increasingly mature. Basic modernization of education in counties has achieved full provincial coverage, the enrollment rate for pre-school to high school education has exceeded 99%, and the gross enrollment rate for higher education has reached nearly 70%. The major development indicators of education at all levels across the province have reached the average level of high-income countries. However, Zhejiang faces new challenges in deepening educational reform and promoting the construction of a lifelong learning society. Some problems are universal, while others have emerged earlier than in the rest of the country.

2.1 The "turning point" brought about by changes in population and the socioeconomic environment

Firstly, against the backdrop of high-quality economic growth, the three trends of aging, fewer births, and non-marriage have combined to create a general downward trend in Zhejiang's natural population growth rate since 2010. In 2022, the rate was only 0.04%, indicating an impending turning point in population growth. In some areas, the situation of insufficient basic education places has already reversed. Secondly, the college entrance examination admission rate has exceeded 90%, and the channels for higher education have become more diverse. However, the pressure of employment continues to be transmitted, making educational goals more rational. The popularity of different colleges in the entrance examination is uneven, with competition for high-level universities remaining fierce. However, some universities are already facing pressure on student sources and are approaching a turning point in enrollment. Thirdly, Zhejiang Province has proposed that per capita GDP should reach 170,000 yuan by 2027. In the next 2-3 years, it will reach the key turning point of the high-income stage of $20,000 per capita in developed countries. The types, quantity, and structure of social demand for talent are undergoing qualitative changes, with the phenomenon of "graduates struggling to find jobs" and "employers struggling to find talent" occurring simultaneously.

2.2 "Bottleneck" caused by uneven and insufficient educational development

From a hierarchical perspective, some regions still face the problem of "difficulty and high cost of entering kindergarten" in public preschool education, the structure of high school education needs to be optimized, vocational education is not yet attractive enough, and high-level university resources are scarce. From an inter-school perspective, there are over 300 small-scale schools with less than 100 students and nearly 500 large-scale schools with over 2,000 students, resulting in a phenomenon of "crowding in towns and emptiness in villages." From a regional perspective, the allocation of educational resources is not balanced enough, with significant disparities in education between urban and rural areas, between different regions, and particularly between mountainous and island counties and developed

areas. From the perspective of "post-school" education, the lifelong learning system is not yet perfect, and skills training for the entire career, as well as community education and senior education, are still insufficient. Overall, the potential for educational innovation and services has not been fully realized.

2.3 "Hotspots" emerging from digital technology

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "digital education is an important breakthrough for China to open up new tracks for educational development and shape new advantages in educational development." Digital technology is a strong support for a powerful internet and a digital China, and it is also a "hotspot" in current education reform. It is an important engine and innovative path for accelerating education to shift from large-scale expansion to high-quality development, and it is also a key variable and core indicator of educational modernization. Zhejiang is a major province in the digital economy, and digital economic innovation and upgrading is the "No. 1 Development Project." Promoting the application of digital education has good advantages and an ecosystem. In terms of comprehensively promoting the deep integration of digital technology with education management and education teaching, efficiently building new platforms, new mechanisms, and new models for education governance, and connecting all stages of education and covering all governance scenarios, Zhejiang has already carried out solid and effective practices.

3. CONSTRUCTION PATH OF A LIFELONG LEARNING SOCIETY

According to the goal of "Exploring the Zhejiang Model of lifelong learning society" proposed by the central government, Zhejiang has accumulated good experience and experience in three aspects of system construction, model exploration and achievement cultivation, which can provide reference for the whole country.

3.1 Use scientific thinking, actively respond to the "turning point", and establish a lifelong education system that the people are satisfied with.

The three trends brought by the population "turning point" will have an important impact on education, and we must use scientific thinking to establish an integrated, balanced and scientific lifelong education system to actively cope with it.

3.2 Promote the integrated development of lifelong education for all with systematic thinking

To solve the structural problems of student resources, we need to strengthen foresight and overall planning at all levels of planning, advocate education standardization, increase capacity, scientifically evaluate economic, social and demographic trends, pay attention to each group of people, pay attention to each age group, timely adjust the capacity indicators of education security, and rationally determine the spatial layout and functional positioning of all types of schools at all levels. We will promote the rational flow and cross-use of educational resources such as teachers and school buildings to avoid idle resources and redundant construction.

3.3 We should promote the balanced development of lifelong education for all with strategic thinking

To solve the contradiction of the shortage of high-quality resources, in addition to increasing the construction of "double first-class" colleges and universities, but also in the whole society to vigorously promote the scientific concept of education quality, development concept and performance concept, correct the distorted teaching concept, talent concept and employment concept, resolve the social anxiety that can not lose in the "starting line", reverse the "one section rate" "north rate" and other unreasonable evaluation guidance. Accelerate the reform of "teaching - examination - recruitment", break the "one exam determines life", provide multiple choices and more channels for success, create a good environment of "everyone can be successful and everyone can show their talent", so that everyone can win at the "finish line".

3.4 Promote the scientific development of lifelong education for all with precise thinking

To solve the problem of homogenization of talent training, we need not only functional departments such as education and human resources and social security, but also the whole society such as employers and families to participate in and cooperate closely, forcing colleges and universities to carry out teaching reform, optimize the structure and direction of professional training, dynamically match the direction of economic and industrial development, and adapt to the needs of enterprises and public institutions, but also attach importance to the connection between pre-service education and post-service training. The number of theoretical and academic talents and applied and skilled talents should be kept in a reasonable proportion, and the economy should be upgraded to a characteristic and misplaced competition.

3.5 Adhere to overall consideration, effectively break through the "blocking point", and form a model of serving all people's learning and lifelong learning.

To effectively open up the "blocking point" of sufficient total amount and local supply and demand, we should base on the realistic conditions and basic advantages, and explore a lifelong learning model with "more flexible methods, more abundant resources, and more convenient learning" to solve the problem.

3.5.1 Strengthen the construction of the Open University system to make admission more flexible. From the perspective of national positioning, the Open University is the main platform for building lifelong education, an important platform for online education, a platform for flexible education and a platform for external cooperation.

RTVU has made important contributions in the degree compensation stage. In the new period, it is necessary to promote the overall transformation and coordinated development of RTVU into a Open University by means of comprehensive reform, clarify the functional positioning of open universities at all levels, continue to give full play to the advantages of the school system and modern information technology, highlight the characteristics of "Internet +" school running, and improve the supply and service level of lifelong education. To realize the overall planning and opening of learning places, learning methods and learning processes.

3.5.2 Build a "flyover" of talent growth to enrich resources

It is necessary to strengthen the connection between the co-construction and sharing of college courses and the mutual recognition of credits, effectively narrow the gap between regions, urban and rural areas, and inter-school, release the agglomeration effect and amplification effect of high-quality resources, so that more people can enjoy high-quality learning resources and enjoy the dividends of education reform and innovation. Promote the construction of qualification framework, improve the credit bank of lifelong education, deepen the collaborative innovation of learning results in talent assessment, employment recommendation, and skill recognition, and build a lifelong learning "flyover" of horizontal communication and vertical connection in an all-round way. We need to make new breakthroughs in digital empowerment for lifelong learning. Build and strengthen the Zhejiang model of application-friendly lifelong learning public service platform, based on the overall design architecture of the lifelong learning public service platform "1152+N", integrate the application scenarios to deepen the construction of the lifelong learning public service platform, expand the system application in the information system functions such as Zhexue, Zhexuetong, credit bank, and constantly improve the system support ability and service ability. Social personnel education to improve the construction of digital environment and quality resource supply projects to achieve practical implementation, establish a platform unified operation and maintenance service mechanism, accelerate the construction of lifelong learning public service platform user space, promote functional personality agglomeration and data precision service, to achieve lifelong learning "one person one space, one person one file". Continue to promote credit bank expansion and quality improvement,

promote the research and construction of multiple types of learning results conversion application standard system, and give full play to the role of credit bank "flyover".

3.5.3 Create multi-dimensional learning field to make learning more convenient

At the provincial level, platform coordination should be strengthened, functional departments should strengthen business coordination, cities and counties should strengthen application innovation, build a lifelong learning backbone network that combines offline and online, is accessible, green, intelligent, fair and inclusive, and realizes the rapid transformation of multi-dimensional fields and multiple learning entrances of home, school and community. Provide professional, personalized, accurate and intelligent learning and support services for all learners, and then build a new education ecology, a new teaching mode, and a new learning pattern, so that the lifelong "learning circle" of the whole people is getting closer and smaller. Shanghai Open University has created an immersive learning space using new generation information technologies such as artificial intelligence, extended reality (XR), big data and 5G. Supported by technology, this learning space provides learners with an immersive learning environment that integrates the virtual world with the real world. This environment supports deep interaction and intelligent services that enable learners to engage in inquiry-based and deep learning around specific tasks. Under the background of digital intelligence era, Hubei University of Automotive Technology has built a global wireless network environment and set up a flexible and changeable learning space. Through the construction of the smart campus, the school has promoted the smart classroom that integrates online and offline Spaces. The classroom is equipped with mobile desks and chairs, which is convenient for teachers and students to discuss and interact according to the teaching scene. In addition, the school has integrated a variety of functions, such as classroom intelligent control, classroom interactive teaching, etc., to provide a full range of learning support. Through innovative learning environment and teaching methods, multi-dimensional learning field is created to make learning more convenient and efficient.

4. ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT, FULLY TRACK "HOT SPOTS", AND ACCELERATE THE FORMATION OF A LIFELONG LEARNING SOCIETY

The breadth and depth of digital transformation of education directly affect the efficiency and quality of modern education development, and is of great significance for promoting lifelong learning for all,

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building a learning society and a learning power. It is necessary to fully track the "hot spots" of digital technology, empower lifelong learning by digital, and accelerate the formation of a lifelong learning society in which "everyone can learn, everywhere can learn, and always can learn".

4.1 Build a "future community" for everyone

For everyone, Building "Future Communities" is a forward-looking concept that aims to create an inclusive, sustainable and intelligent community environment through innovative design and planning. Community is an important space for people to live and study after work. In promoting the construction of future community, we should attach importance to the construction of community learning scenes, form a national learning digital business with strong promotion, and construct interactive, immersive and information-based urban and rural community learning scenes, technical service scenes and application scenes of results, so as to gather a strong learning motivation. Let learning better accompany everyone, everyone's life, and realize that everyone is good at learning and everyone is happy to learn. To achieve sustainable development of the future community, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, ecological sustainability.

4.2 Meet everywhere, read education "Shan Hai Jing"

Balanced distribution of educational resources. We will increase investment in education in rural and remote areas, improve the quality of education in these areas, and narrow the gap between urban and rural education. Promote the balanced distribution of educational resources among regions and ensure that every region has access to quality educational resources. All localities should incorporate the construction of education information facilities into the "new infrastructure", synchronize planning and construction with campuses and school buildings, break through the time and space restrictions between regions, urban and rural areas, and schools, and build a digital learning community. We will deepen the reform of cross-level and cross-regional elite schools into groups, and promote the formation of cross-regional education communities between high-quality schools and surrounding new cities and weak areas. We will strengthen group-style education matching assistance actions, organize outstanding teachers to serve and send teachers to their homes, and further promote the development of education in the direction of inclusive, inclusive, balanced and high-quality.

4.3 Build an "educational brain" when serving

Using modern information technology, especially big data, artificial intelligence and other means, to build an intelligent, efficient and comprehensive education service system. Strengthen the connectivity and sharing of big data in education, deepen the cross-industry, cross-department and cross-regional collaboration between lifelong learning and other fields of the digital society, strengthen the application of trend prediction, correlation analysis, scientific decision-making, etc., better insight into learners' real learning feelings and individual cognitive differences, and continuously improve the level of diversity, personalization and humanism in education. Achieve accurate service, fine governance and accurate decision-making for lifelong learning throughout the life cycle.

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