



Exploring the Path of Promoting Lifelong Learning in China in the New Era

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Abstract. Lifelong learning has irreplaceable value in promoting human sustainable development. Since the new era, China has made great achievements in promoting lifelong learning. China can make such achievements in a relatively short period of time thanks to its continuous exploration of the path of lifelong learning. On the basis of the relevant documents issued by the Chinese government and the research results of relevant scholars, the topic explains the achievements made in China in recent years, and then concludes the path to promote lifelong learning in China. China has made great progress in promoting lifelong learning by building a discourse system and practice system of lifelong learning based on China's national conditions, and improving the education policy system to promote "lifelong learning". In promoting lifelong learning for all, China has explored a road with its own characteristics. Following this path, China will make greater contributions to the realization of the UN's sustainable development goal of "making learning opportunities available to all people throughout their lives".

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Human Sustainable Development, Discourse System, Practice System, New Era.

1 Introduction

For Chinese people, "lifelong learning" was originally a "foreign vocabulary". It is said that the term "lifelong learning" was first proposed by Americans in the 1940s.^[1] After the 1980s. The term "lifelong learning" has been gradually accepted by governments around the world and widely used in policy documents.^[1] Although China introduced the concept of "lifelong learning" from abroad at the beginning of the reform and opening up, it did not begin to accept this concept until the mid-1990s and gradually became widely used.^[2] However, since ancient times, China has had the idea of "lifelong learning". "It is never too old to learn" is the most simple expression of the Chinese people's thought of "lifelong learning". After the concept of "lifelong learning" has been widely accepted, the United Nations has also become an important subject to actively promote this concept. In 2016, in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations clearly put forward the sustainable development goal of "ensuring inclusive and

equitable quality education, and providing lifelong learning opportunities for all", taking "lifelong learning" as an important symbol of educational progress. [3] In March 2022, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning issued the "Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All: 2022-2029 Medium term Strategy", which "describes the development direction, framework and action strategy of the medium-term strategy for the next eight years", with the intention of "creating a lifelong learning system that runs through and integrates everyone's life and covers every learning situation from work to life" [3], Let everyone with different backgrounds and ages benefit from it. This is undoubtedly conducive to promoting more and more member countries to pay more attention to the role of "lifelong learning" in sustainable development. [4] Since the concept of "lifelong learning" was accepted, China, as the largest developing country and one of the permanent members of the United Nations, has constantly explored and made its due contributions in practicing the concept of "lifelong learning". During more than 40 years of reform and opening up, especially after entering a new era, China has made remarkable achievements in promoting the cause of "lifelong learning". The reason why China can achieve the existing achievements in promoting "lifelong learning" is due to its continuous exploration of the path of promoting "lifelong learning". This paper will make use of the relevant documents issued by the Chinese government in recent years and the research achievements of scholars to state China's achievements in promoting "lifelong learning" in the new era, and explain the path of promoting "lifelong learning" in China.

2 Building a discourse system with Chinese characteristics to lead "lifelong learning"

Any discourse system is a value system based on a certain "economic and social basis", reflecting "the expression of the national cultural heritage, ideology, major interests, strategic direction, policy initiatives and other official basic positions". [4] The discourse system of "lifelong learning" is a "systematic proposition and view based on the value orientation of lifelong learning", which is a discourse synthesis formed by the interaction of "academic discourse, policy discourse and social discourse" of "lifelong learning". [5] This discourse system reflects the thinking of the Chinese government and academia on the development goals, practical means and strategic vision of "lifelong learning", and is the target for China to promote "lifelong learning".

As one of the permanent members of the United Nations, China has always supported the United Nations initiative on human social development. China should also actively support and vigorously promote the "lifelong learning" initiative. China's social system determines that in the process of promoting "lifelong learning", we should have our own unique discourse system. After more than 40 years of exploration since the reform and opening up, China has built a discourse system of "lifelong learning" characterized by "incentive call", "goal orientation" and "highlighting people's livelihood". [5] In the new era, based on a clear understanding of the main contradictions of social development at this stage and the realistic understanding of the people's educational needs, the discourse system of "lifelong learning" in this period "mainly focuses on the new needs of sustainable development of people's livelihood

and the construction of an education system that serves the lifelong learning of the whole people." [5] This discourse system of "lifelong learning" in the new era reflects China's understanding and norms of the direction and basic goals of "lifelong learning", and points out the new development direction of "lifelong learning" in China.

3 Building a practice system for serving the whole people and promoting "lifelong learning"

In 1999, the "Action Plan for Revitalizing Education in the 21st Century" officially released by China first used the concept of "lifelong learning system". [5] However, the construction of China's "lifelong learning" practice system should begin with the founding of New China in 1949. Since then, China has entered a new era of development and built a lifelong learning service system that includes school education, social education and family education. China's "lifelong learning" service system is shown in Fig. 1.

School education is the main force to promote "lifelong learning" at present. The school education system mainly includes various schools and institutions at all levels such as preschool education, basic education, higher education, vocational education and adult education. [6] The social education system mainly includes the government, communities, enterprises and institutions and non-governmental organizations. [6] The family education system is another important subject to promote "lifelong learning" besides the school education and social education system. At present, the "trinity" and "lifelong learning" service support system composed of schools, society and families, with its inclusive, service-oriented and inclusive features, has well promoted the "lifelong learning" of the whole people. [6]

Moreover, some provinces in China have actively explored and made considerable achievements in promoting "lifelong learning", providing experience for further improving the "lifelong learning" security system in the future. Jiangsu Province is a relatively developed province in China's economic development, and has taken the lead in building a "lifelong learning" system in a coordinated manner. In the process of promoting "lifelong learning", Jiangsu Province has made beneficial explorations in three aspects: improving the adult education system, strengthening and refining the assessment points, building a "lifelong learning" platform and support service system led by open universities, combining online and offline, and establishing and improving a social education system based on community education and education for the elderly, focusing on vocational education, and focusing on social and cultural life education. [7]

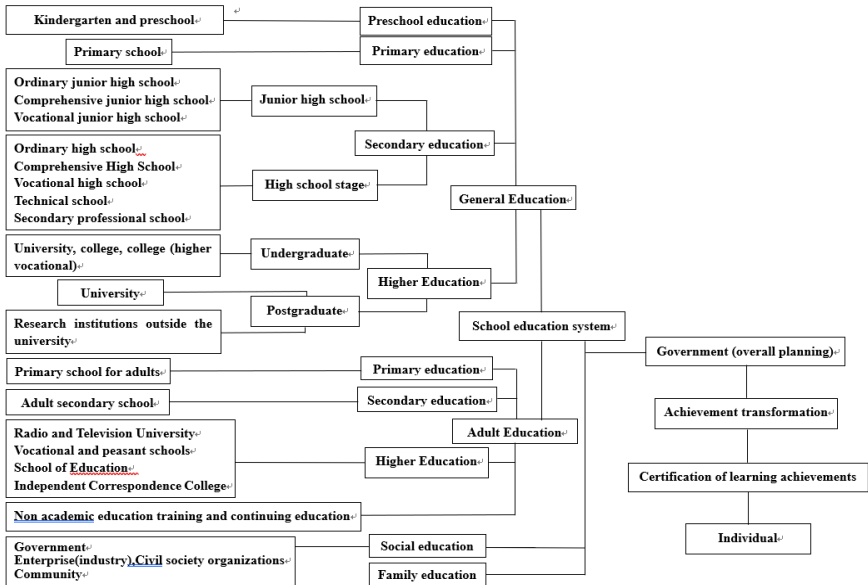


Fig. 1. China's "lifelong learning" service system.

Note: This figure is drawn according to the composition of the two papers by Sang Ningxia and Ren Zhuolin: Path Selection for the Construction of Lifelong Learning Service System in an International Perspective (China Adult Education, 2021, Issue 3, Page 10) and Research on the Integration Effect of Lifelong Learning Service System (China Adult Education, 2021, Issue 17, Page 3).

In the new era, China has built a relatively perfect "lifelong learning" system. [13] It is under the incubation of this system that China's "lifelong learning" has been successfully promoted.

4 Improve the education policy system and escort "lifelong learning"

Although there is no national legislation on "lifelong learning" in China at present, a series of existing laws and regulations, including the Education Law, and a series of documents issued by the State Council, the Ministry of Education and other departments have jointly built a relatively perfect education policy system to ensure that lifelong learning continues to move forward. Since entering the new era, the Party and the state have issued a series of documents to regulate "lifelong learning" and ensure the orderly advancement of the cause of "lifelong learning".

The current effective separate education laws in China mainly include 9 laws, including the Education Law, Compulsory Education Law, Higher Education Law, Private Education Promotion Law, Vocational Education Law, Teachers Law, Degree Regulations, Common Language Law, and Family Education Promotion Law. [8] In

addition, nearly 50 local laws and regulations related to specific types of education, including the regulations on semester education, continuing education^[15], elderly education, community education, and family education (promotion), have been issued in China (Some local laws and regulations since 2012 are shown in Table 1).^[9]

Table 1. Local education regulations on "lifelong learning" since 2012.

Serial No	Date of introduction	Document name	Issuing province/city
1	2012	Regulations on Preschool Education	Yunnan Province
2	2012	Regulations on Promotion of Lifelong Education	Taiyuan City
3	2012	Regulations on Preschool Education	Jiangsu Province
4	2013	Regulations on Preschool Education	Qingdao City
5	2014	Regulations on Promotion of Lifelong Education	Ningbo City
6	2014	Regulations on Promotion of Lifelong Education	Hebei Province
7	2014	Regulations on Preschool Education	Anhui Province
8	2016	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Chongqing City
9	2016	Regulations on Promotion of Community Education	Chengdu City
10	2016	Regulations on Preschool Education	Tianjin City
11	2017	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education for Minors	Guizhou Province
12	2017	Regulations on Preschool Education	Zhejiang Province
13	2018	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Jiangxi Province
14	2018	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Shanxi Province
15	2019	Regulations on Promotion of Community Education	Xi'an City
16	2019	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Jiangsu Province
17	2019	Regulations on Preschool Education	Shandong province
18	2019	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Zhejiang Province
19	2020	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Fujian Province
20	2020	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Anhui Province
21	2020	Regulations on Education for the Aged	Anhui Province
22	2021	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Hunan Province
23	2021	Regulations on Promotion of Family Education	Hubei province

Note: This table is made according to Liu Xinguo, Shen Xinyi and He Zhihong's Model Selection and Theoretical Orientation of Lifelong Learning Legislation in China (Adult Education, 2022, Issue 10, Page 8).

In February 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued China's Education Modernization 2035, making "building a modern education system serving lifelong learning for all" the main goal of China's

education development in 2035. This is an action guide for the development of China's education in the new era. ^[10] In October 2019, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC (CPC) took "building an education system that serves lifelong learning for all" as the core issue of China's education development. ^[11] The Proposal of the Central Committee of the CPC on Formulating the Fourteenth Five Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Vision of 2035, adopted at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, defines the main goal of education during the "Fourteenth Five Year Plan" period as "building a high-quality education system", emphasizes "improving the lifelong learning system and building a learning society", and puts forward higher requirements for the new development pattern of education. ^[12] The newly revised Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China in 2022 points out that "vocational education and general education are mutually integrated, and vocational education at different levels is effectively integrated, serving the modern vocational education system of lifelong learning for all". ^[12] These policy documents have become an important starting point for building and improving the lifelong learning system and realizing the goal and task of educational modernization. They have defined the goal and path of "lifelong learning", standardized all links of "lifelong learning", and effectively guaranteed the promotion of China's "lifelong learning" cause.

5 Inference

Since China's reform and opening up, the concept and practice of lifelong learning have lasted more than 40 years in China. After entering the new era, China's lifelong learning practice has made remarkable achievements. These achievements are attributed to the fact that under the leadership of the Party and the state, a life-long learning path with Chinese characteristics has been explored in combination with our own actual situation. As long as we keep moving along this right path, China's lifelong learning practice will achieve greater results.

6 Conclusion

China has achieved remarkable strides in advancing lifelong learning, a feat attributed to its persistent exploration of pathways tailored to its unique circumstances. Despite the origin of the term "lifelong learning" as a foreign concept, China has long embraced the traditional notion of continual learning throughout one's life, encapsulated in the adage "live until you are old and learn until you are old." With the United Nations incorporating lifelong learning into the Sustainable Development Goals, China, as one of the largest developing nations, has actively engaged in the exploration and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, attaining significant progress during the decades of reform and opening up. These accomplishments underscore China's commitment to refining lifelong learning models that align with its national context. In conclu-

sion, China's successful experience in lifelong learning serves as a commendable contribution toward realizing the United Nations' sustainable development objectives, particularly in the pursuit of "providing lifelong learning opportunities for all."

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