

# Research on the Elderly Education Development and Innovation in Rural Areas in the Context of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of society and the improvement of economic levels, the elderly population is increasing, highlighting the importance of elderly education. Elderly education is the final stage of lifelong education. However, there are still many difficulties and problems in implementing elderly education in rural areas. To seize the trend of rural revitalization, it is necessary to establish an elderly education system that suits rural characteristics. Achieving the goal of innovative development in rural elderly education requires joint efforts from all parties. Exploring effective mechanisms for implementing rural elderly education and improving the level of rural elderly education development are essential.

**Keywords:** Rural revitalization; Rural education; Elderly education

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, China's attention to rural areas has continued to rise. With the increase in rural income and the continuous improvement of infrastructure, there is a growing need to enrich the spiritual lives of rural residents. This paper explores the innovative development path of rural elderly education under the rural revitalization strategy, aiming to meet the current demand for spiritual enrichment in rural areas and provide necessary support for the effective implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.

## 2. Analysis of Constraints on the Development of Rural Elderly Education

### (1) Restriction of ideological consciousness on the development of rural elderly education

In some economically underdeveloped areas, rural basic education itself is relatively weak. Rural elderly education appears to be an informal non-degree education that is difficult to emphasize. The main reason for the lack of attention is that the group of people in rural life does not have sufficient awareness and understanding of lifelong education. Firstly, young people generally think that their parents are relatively old, and few elderly people have received systematic basic education. Implementing elderly education at this stage not only takes time and energy but is also considered low in value. Young people believe that their parents only need to enjoy their later years at home and do not recognize the importance of elderly education. Secondly, the elderly lack the ideological awareness of receiving education. Many elderly people themselves think that learning is something for young people. They believe that learning is a matter for young people, and they have few literate skills. The difficulty of learning is large, and they are busy with household affairs. In addition to completing various daily tasks, they also need to take care of their children and grandchildren, and their energy is insufficient. Moreover, the elderly are worried about the eyes of the society, thinking that their learning is inconsistent with other people, which leads to the insufficient recognition of the importance

of elderly education in rural areas. These misconceptions from multiple perspectives have resulted in the slow development of rural elderly education.

## **(2) Restrictions on the learning conditions of rural elderly people**

The conditions for rural elderly individuals to engage in learning are highly constrained, primarily due to the challenging issue of covering learning expenses. In our country, retired employees of government departments and public institutions can benefit from policies reimbursing tuition fees for senior universities. However, senior universities are generally located in county towns or urban areas, making them accessible only to those with the necessary means. The awareness of senior universities among rural populations is limited, and financial concerns further hinder their ability to pursue education. Many elderly individuals in rural areas manage their living expenses through frugality or support from their children. They perceive that undertaking the financial burden of learning, in addition to their daily survival, would increase pressure on their entire family. Moreover, elderly individuals are reluctant to add to their children's economic burdens. As a result, they are unwilling to embrace senior learning <sup>[1]</sup>. Furthermore, the forms and content provided in rural elderly education are relatively monotonous. Even if some elderly individuals are willing to pay for their education, the educational activities in rural areas are mostly confined to a limited space, such as a senior activity center. This space constraint results in one-sided dissemination of information, with monotonous and uninteresting content that struggles to capture the interest of elderly learners, making it difficult to sustain their motivation for long-term learning. In essence, the inadequacies in elderly education work, including the introduction of learning venues and teaching equipment, as well as the development of teaching resources such as faculty, are evident. These shortcomings impede the organized development and implementation of elderly education efforts.

## **3. Innovative Ideas for the Development of Rural Elderly Education under the Rural Revitalization Strategy**

### **(1) Standardizing and guiding the sustainable development of rural elderly education**

To innovate the development of rural elderly education, it is necessary to reflect the guiding and supporting roles of the government. A modernized mechanism for the development of rural elderly education involving multiple sectors and participants should be established, with support from various channels and paths. Firstly, the government should introduce a series of policies tailored to the development of rural elderly education, incorporate this work into annual plans, and issue requirements to township governments and village committees. They should create conditions, provide guarantees, and coordinate various issues to promote the standardized implementation and development of rural elderly education. Secondly, the power and advantages of social education should be demonstrated, encouraging various social groups and enterprises to participate in rural elderly education. Tax incentives can be used to encourage social groups and businesses to contribute to rural elderly education, alleviating the current lack of investment. The involvement of volunteers can also be encouraged to enrich and expand the talent pool for elderly education. In rural education, including curriculum design, teaching content, and teaching methods, flexible adjustments should be made based on the actual situation of rural areas to better meet the learning needs of rural elderly people.

Factors influencing elderly education for a long time include insufficient financial investment. Therefore, providing sufficient financial support is crucial for the development of rural elderly education. In this process, it is necessary to solicit opinions widely and raise funds for elderly education through different channels. Local government departments should allocate funds for rural elderly education. Furthermore, publicity should be intensified to encourage and support various social groups and enterprises to provide necessary support for

the implementation of elderly education activities. This will facilitate the smooth implementation of voluntary services for the elderly and ensure the orderly implementation of elderly education work. Lastly, in cases of insufficient funds, cooperative education can be organized, where multiple rural areas collaborate to support the continuous development of rural elderly education.

## **(2) Supporting rural elderly education development with integrated resources**

Firstly, it is essential to integrate rural elderly care service institutions to achieve the integrated development of care and education. In recent years, the aging population in China has become increasingly apparent, with a growing number of elderly individuals in rural areas. The elderly care service institutions established for this demographic are gradually improving, both in terms of quantity and content. The number of residents is increasing, and the scale of development is expanding. However, these institutions primarily focus on providing essential life care for the elderly, leaving their spiritual and cultural needs relatively neglected. Simultaneously, these rural elderly care institutions tend to have a concentrated elderly population with ample spare time. Besides providing various life services, there is a noticeable demand for elderly education<sup>[3]</sup>. Implementing elderly education activities not only expands the development space for elderly education but also meets the educational needs of the elderly population, enhancing their spiritual and cultural well-being. The goal is to achieve the integrated development of care and education.

Specifically, establishing fixed teaching points around elderly care homes and arranging elderly education personnel to provide door-to-door rural elderly education services can be considered. The chosen educational formats may include course teaching, thematic lectures, or outcome showcases, aiming for more convenient forms of learning and communication for the elderly. The educational content should be vivid and engaging, with a clear and explicit educational process. In terms of the target audience, efforts should be made to expand the audience structure, not restricting it solely to the elderly in care homes. Instead, local elderly individuals willing to receive elderly education should be included. Adequate publicity should be done in advance to clarify whether these activities are free. This way, rural elderly education can play a crucial role within care institutions, promoting the smooth development of integrated care and education.

Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen the integration and sharing of various basic educational resources. In recent years, China has significantly increased its investment in education, resulting in growth in educational levels and the gradual upgrading of educational models, including achievements in basic education and preschool education institutions. Throughout this process, infrastructure and educational resources have gradually improved. Particularly during statutory holidays and vacations, many educational facilities remain idle. If these idle periods can be utilized for elderly education services, it can improve the efficiency of educational facility utilization. It also expands the activity space and enriches the content of rural elderly education. For example, utilizing primary school teaching facilities during holidays for elderly education activities can attract the attention of the elderly more easily, allowing them to rejuvenate and become more vibrant.

## **(3) Urban-rural pairing assistance for elderly education**

Firstly, it is crucial to strengthen the establishment of a support system for the elderly education through targeted assistance. In the implementation of rural elderly education activities, various limitations such as site construction, fund utilization, and the presentation of teaching staff are commonly encountered, posing multiple obstacles and difficulties in establishing new elderly education institutions in rural areas<sup>[4]</sup>. To further accelerate the implementation of rural elderly education and construct a more modern mechanism, it is advisable to advance the pilot construction of targeted support for rural elderly universities. This construction scope extends beyond teaching resource development and hardware facility construction, encompassing

aspects like the transmission of teaching experience and the cultivation of teaching staff—a focus on software development. While the construction cycle for hardware facilities, such as teaching resources and equipment, is relatively short and quickly meets the demands of teaching activities, building the teaching staff and management model, along with developing teaching experience, requires a longer adaptation period. A perfect alignment between these software facilities and the elderly education system needs to be sought, ensuring mutual compatibility to fully harness the existing functions and roles of elderly education<sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, during the support process of urban elderly universities for rural elderly universities, attention should not only be directed toward the allocation of hardware facilities but also prioritize the transmission of teaching experience and the deployment of teaching staff. This approach enables rural elderly education institutions to function effectively, improve and upgrade their education models, and gradually establish their dedicated teacher and management teams, forming a teaching management model tailored to the local context for autonomous development.

Secondly, it is imperative to establish a system of sending teachers to rural areas specifically for elderly education to stabilize the teaching staff of rural elderly education. The construction of such a system not only contributes to the sustainable development of rural elderly education but also facilitates the overall improvement of the teaching staff's comprehensive qualities and capabilities. Recognizing this system as an opportunity for urban elderly university teachers to hone their skills, increase their competence, and enrich their own experiences is essential. During their time in rural areas, these teachers will encounter changes in the teaching environment and new teaching subjects, rendering the old teaching processes and systems used in previous elderly education universities obsolete. The teaching model needs updating to choose more suitable content aligned with the demands of teaching, allowing students' educational qualities to be exercised and enhanced<sup>[6]</sup>. Additionally, for participants in elderly education from rural areas, their learning habits, foundational knowledge, and expectations for learning content differ. Forming learning habits itself presents challenges, requiring teachers joining the rural elderly education workforce to possess correct ideological awareness, address these issues appropriately, and make suitable adjustments. Lastly, adopting a mentorship approach in the practical process is an effective method for building the rural elderly education workforce. Utilizing bidirectional communication and exchange between urban and rural elderly university teams to share experiences, raise questions, find solutions, and develop the capacity for teachers to learn and impart teaching experiences is crucial for truly realizing the functional and operational aspects of rural elderly education.

#### **(4) Integration of educational resources to serve rural elderly education**

Firstly, it is essential to integrate educational resources from urban libraries and vocational colleges. Urban libraries serve as cultural centers and focal points, possessing rich experience in various cultural promotional activities. To expedite the development of rural elderly education, leveraging the functions of these urban library institutions is crucial. Implementing periodic cultural outreach activities, they can curate and deliver relevant resources aligned with rural production and life to rural villagers, allowing them to enjoy more enriched cultural and educational services. Simultaneously, urban educational institutions with outstanding faculty and abundant teaching resources can participate in rural elderly education. They can contribute by applying the strength of their students to elderly education activities. For example, various majors in schools have practical demands, including community nursing and rehabilitation majors. These can consider rural elderly education service institutions as their practice bases, involving students in rural elderly service work while addressing the practical issues of vocational college students and solving problems related to rural elderly education services.

Secondly, it is necessary to integrate excellent online educational resources. The current societal

development has propelled innovation in information technology, simplifying people's production and life. The integration of information technology into education has made educational activities more convenient and efficient. In the digital age, digitized teaching has become the norm, and applying digital education to rural elderly education can help overcome current deficiencies in rural elderly education venues and scarce teaching resources. For instance, traditional rural elderly education courses can undergo digitized transformation, allowing them to be presented in a digital format. Elderly individuals only need a computer or a smartphone to engage in learning through an app. However, this requires seniors to actively adapt to and learn the learning mode in a network environment, or alternatively, digital TVs with elderly education functions can be utilized for more convenient access to quality educational resources. Additionally, leveraging the current systemic digital network can enhance the coverage of rural elderly education. Setting up teaching points in rural areas to regularly conduct on-site guidance and explanations can provide educational services to the elderly, helping them better grasp knowledge and improve their capabilities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In summary, providing education for rural elderly individuals helps enhance their cognitive abilities, broaden their perspectives, and contribute to the realization of the goals of the rural revitalization strategy. However, there are current practical challenges and obstacles in implementing rural elderly education. To address these issues and effectively implement the task of rural elderly education, it is essential to coordinate efforts from various parties, collaboratively create a conducive environment for elderly education activities, and promote the orderly implementation of elderly education work.

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