China’s Experiences in Developing Lifelong Education, 1978–2017

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Abstract

Purpose: This study systematically reviews the China’s progress in lifelong education (LLE) policies, theories, and practices in the 40 years since its reform and opening-up and provides several guidelines for developing LLE going forward.

Design/Approach/Methods: This study analyzes the characteristics of LLE in China through a review of its developmental process and prospects at the policy, theoretical, and practical levels.

Findings: While following the goals of LLE set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, China has developed and implemented LLE with distinctly Chinese characteristics. The development of LLE in China has focused on protecting citizens’ learning rights, improving civic literacy, and enhancing human resources. This study reveals four aspects of China’s experiences of LLE development. First, as the primary actor in promoting LLE, the government took responsibility for providing guidance and leadership in the development and implementation of LLE. Second, the people’s enthusiastic response to and expectation of the further enhancement of their spiritual cultivation and quality of life established LLE’s practical status. Third, the socioeconomic and political context consolidated the value foundation of LLE development. Fourth, the positive responses of the academic community and follow-up studies promoted policy-oriented processes and practice-based scientific development.

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The history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) since its reform and opening-up is not only one of entrepreneurship by which the country became prosperous and achieved economic growth but also the modernization of its education system and development of lifelong education (LLE). After four decades of promotion and implementation, LLE has carved a developmental path with unique Chinese characteristics. Achieving remarkable results that have attracted worldwide attention, China’s LLE has also served as an important practical foundation and provided valuable experiences for global LLE development.

However, despite the impressive results it has achieved, China is facing practical dilemmas and a theoretical bottleneck in further LLE development. For example, there is an ambiguous relationship between the LLE and traditional national education systems, the direction of the transformation of adult education has yet to be clarified, and institutional barriers hinder the interchange and integration of various educational resources. Moreover, some educational forms of the traditional education system are in decline, while emerging forms of off-campus education have yet to establish a clear position. Interest disputes and competition between various educational forms have also impacted new resource integration and caused difficulties in system building. It is necessary to learn from history and experiences of success and failure to overcome these obstacles and develop a clear vision of the future.

This study reviews the historical evolution and experiences of China’s LLE development since its reform and opening-up. LLE development in China over the past four decades can be divided into four periods as follows:

i. The introduction period, 1978–1987: During this period, LLE was transformed from a concept to policy. Theoretical research primarily focused on the translation and dissemination of ideas on LLE, while its implementation was manifested in the growth of various activities related to adult education.

ii. The start-up period, 1988–1997: During this period, ideas on LLE were gradually reflected in policies, and there was an initial push toward LLE legislation. Adult education and the Open University of China (OUC), formerly the Central Radio and Television University of
China, gradually grew in popularity. Community education also began emerging as a new education form.

iii. The trial-and-error period, 1998–2007: During this period, policies and legislation related to LLE were advanced and implemented. Together with greater emphasis on education for the elderly, continuing education in the form of community education and off-campus training was strengthened. Concurrently, there was a significant increase in theoretical discussions in the academic community. New popular keywords for research included “lifelong (LL) learning,” “learning society,” and “LLE systems.”

iv. The intensification of LLE development, 2008–2017: During this period, LLE was elevated from an education policy to a national development strategy. While local regulations were promulgated one after another, there was an active push for national legislation. LLE development was characterized by the establishment of open colleges and credit banks, as well as new ideas in community education propelled by experimental projects. The depth of theoretical research gradually deepened, leading to the formation of a core theoretical research team. Research on LLE legislation also became a popular topic.

Examining these periods, this study identifies key factors from relevant policy, theoretical, and practical dimensions that helped establish China’s historical experiences and provided a realistic foundation from which to gain a clear understanding of the basic direction of LLE development—especially in terms of path selection and the institutional dilemma faced in the building of an LLE system. Based on an in-depth analysis of the historical background and social realities underpinning these problems, this study proposes policies to support effective LLE development going forward, thereby facilitating China’s goal of “learning for everyone, anywhere, anytime.”

The introduction period, 1978–1987

In December 1978, the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) saw the formulation of the principles and policies for the country’s reform and opening-up. While these principles and policies facilitated political and economic stabilization, the education situation—damaged during the “Cultural Revolution”—also began recovering. In particular, the country’s opening-up promoted both intranational and international political, economic, and cultural cooperation and exchange. Meanwhile, educational research perspectives were broaden, with notions of LLE finally introduced to China—albeit some 15 years after its conception (Guo, 2013).

With the stabilization of the social order, work in the various fields could be carried out normally. This made it possible for the study of educational theories, including the introduction of important international education concepts like lifelong learning. In 1979, the People’s
Education Press published *Formulation of and Measures for Spare-Time Education*, which included an article by R. Zhang entitled, “LLE: A Trend of Thoughts Worth Noting.” This was the context in which the first paper on LLE was disseminated. A year later, Liang (1980) published “Issue of LLE in Japan”—the first locally written paper on LLE development in another country.

This study used CiteSpace, a visualization analysis tool, to analyze data in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure, specifically papers published between 1978 and 1987 that contained the keyword “LLE.” Only 26 papers related to LLE were published in China during this period. They primarily focused on the introduction of the LLE concept and background analysis. For instance, W. Zhang’s (1984) paper, “Important Contemporary Thoughts on Education: LLE,” systematically introduced the background, development, and basic contents of LLE. In “Progress of LLE in Japan,” Sun (1981) provided a detailed introduction of the theoretical foundation upon which Japan promoted LLE as well as the status of related policy. The paper also analyzed the reform and institutional mechanism of Japan’s education system.

The keyword search of CiteSpace during the 1978–1987 period also revealed that the distribution of publications was scattered in terms of the authors, their organizational affiliations, and journals. A cohesive disciplinary research force had yet to be formed (Figure 1), while theoretical research on LLE core characteristics was in its primary stage.

Despite the attention of some scholars, when notions of LLE were initially introduced, China lacked the conditions necessary for their comprehensive implementation. With one of the goals of LLE being the provision of educational opportunities to adults without formal education, various forms of adult education were introduced and flourished. This was especially true after the State Education Commission (SEC)—the predecessor of the Ministry of Education (MOE)—held a national working conference on adult education in Yantai, Shandong province, in 1986. For the first time, adult education was listed as an important component of China’s national education system, along with basic, higher, vocational, and technical education (Wu, 2003).

Adult education went on to achieve significant success under the guidance of the LLE concept and as a specific element of LLE implementation. At this stage, adult education activities primarily centered on the large-scale development of distance education. This included the creation of the OUC and the self-study and examination system (SES) for adult higher education, the implementation of supplementary cultural and technical education for youth employees, and the establishment of correspondence and evening/night colleges supported by general colleges. In contrast to the unreceptiveness and rigidity of traditional education, adult education was welcomed by people from all walks of life as a result of its flexible and free format, as well as its focus on practical results. In addition to facilitating the accumulation of experiences for the implementation of off-campus education, the development of adult education laid the foundation for the subsequent construction of the LLE system.
With the proliferation of practical activities related to adult education, signs of LLE’s transformation from concept to policy started appearing in the 1980s. More specifically, in 1980, the MOE published a policy document in which the term “LLE” appeared. Titled *Opinions on Further Strengthening Training for Elementary and Middle School Teachers*, the document noted that Colleges of teacher education bear the responsibility of LLE for in-service elementary and middle school teachers. They are important components of China’s teacher education system and will continue to exist for a long time. Therefore, its importance must be accorded due recognition and its status must be made clear. (China Education Yearbook Editorial Department, 1984, p. 761)

Thereafter, the term “LLE” appeared in various speeches on educational work by the CPC and state leaders, as well as in the MOE’s annual working documents. While the LLE concept had yet to appear in any concrete way, the *Constitution of the PRC* had already established education as the right and obligation of all citizens and clarified the state’s responsibilities in providing education. As such, although LLE terminology had appeared in some related government documents and begun emerging as an item on the policy agenda, relevant policies had yet to be introduced. Essentially, between 1978 and 1987, LLE was still in the process of being formulated into policy.

**Figure 1.** Analysis of collaboration among LLE researchers, 1978–1987.

Note. Translation of the Chinese characters is available in the Online Appendix (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/2096531120953959/suppl_file/Zunmin_Wu_(Appendix).pdf). LLE = lifelong education.
The start-up period, 1988–1997

The field of education was restored to normal working order between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Subsequently, the call for educational reform became stronger in response to the need for social development. With the intensification of China’s reform and opening-up, as well as the development of policies directed toward a market economic system, education was assigned the dual task of cultivating the talents necessary for the modernization of socialism and improving China’s human resources, while transforming the economic growth model in anticipation of the era of the knowledge economy. Originating in the early 1990s, this education policy focused on the reform of China’s education system and structure. It was also completely aligned with the concepts advocated by LLE. This period also created excellent opportunities for the promotion of LLE policies.

During this period, the concept of LLE gradually moved toward policy implementation and legalization. In 1993, “LLE” was officially adopted by the CPC’s Central Committee and the State Council in formulating the Outline for the Reform and Development of Education in China. This was an important marker in the transition of LLE from concept to policy. The document clearly stated that “adult education is a new type of education system that facilitates the development of traditional school education toward LLE and plays an important role in continuously improving the quality of the nation’s people and promoting socioeconomic development.” In short, LLE was identified as a basic policy and strategic decision in the development of national education.

The first indicator of LLE’s entrance into legislation was its inclusion in the Education Law of the PRC in 1995, specifically Article 11, which asserted that

the state is promoting education reform and facilitating the coordinated development of different levels and types of education, and establishing and improving the LLE system, so as to adapt to the needs of the socialist market in terms of economic development and social progress (The Eighth National People’s Congress, 1995).

In addition, Article 41 noted that “the state encourages schools and other educational institutions and social organizations to undertake measures at creating conducive conditions for citizens to have LLE” (The Eighth National People’s Congress, 1995). As such, LLE was highly valued by the CPC and included in the legislative framework as a basic national policy.

Implementation advanced at a steady pace during this period. As a new type of education in the transition to LLE, adult education was consistently improved upon and standardized. In December 1988, the State Council approved the SEC’s restructuring proposal to determine the functions, institutions, and establishment of LLE. This resulted in the merger of the former Department for the Management of Adult Education, the three SEC divisions in charge of higher education, and the Office of the Steering Committee for SES in Higher Education into the Adult Education
Division (Dong, 2008). Issued by the SEC in 1993, *Opinions on the Further Reform and Development of Adult Higher Education* was China’s first government document providing comprehensive guidance on adult higher education. Consequently, the OUC and SES grew in popularity and strength, while adult education classes organized by general institutions of higher learning (IHLs) proliferated. Indeed, adult education even gained popularity in rural areas.

A noteworthy phenomenon at this stage was the emergence of community education—a new educational form—on the historical stage of China. This development was marked by the concurrent establishment of community education committees in the Xinjiang and Pengpu Streets of Shanghai’s Zhabei District in March 1988. These were the earliest local communal organizations under the label of “community education.” Led by their respective street offices, each street saw the joint participation of factories, shops, military units, administrative institutions, schools, and local police stations in educational endeavors. The following year, the Zhabei District People’s Government established a district-level community education committee.

In addition to leading to the development of grassroots communal education activities in Shanghai, the formation of local community education organization had nationwide impacts—sparking instantaneous and wide-ranging activity across the country. Community education has multiple functions, including “cultivating and enlightening the people,” maintaining social stability and unity, and promoting the building of social and interpersonal relationships. It thus received significant attention from and approval by local governments and general public across the country.

With the strengthening of policy support and further intensification of implementation activities, theoretical research on LLE in China also advanced. The publication of literature reviews progressed in terms of quantity and quality, particularly after 1995. Indeed, 34 related papers were published in 1997 alone. The growth of research interests in this field was also reflected by improvements in the quality of both the papers and the source journals. However, keyword analysis of CiteSpace reveals that a research community facilitating collaboration between authors and institutions had yet to develop. Despite substantial progress in LLE in terms of theory and implementation during this period, the research output was relatively low and lacking in in-depth analyses. No institution or expert team undertook comprehensive and specialized research on LLE during this period.

Analysis of the co-occurrence chart of LLE keywords in the 1988–1997 period (Figure 2) reveals that a portion of research content was merely the continuation of popular topics from the previous period. These were basically think pieces and theoretical commentaries on LLE, including discussions of LLE concepts and elaborations on the implementation of LLE in other countries. Other research examined the relationship between LLE and adult and continuing education, including the impact and significance of LLE ideas on adult education, as well as the relationship between LLE and adult education. Against the backdrop of the educational reform of the 1990s,
researchers were inclined toward examining the connection between LLE and adult education connection, as well as the significance of LLE for educational reform.

**The trial-and-error period, 1998–2007**

In the early 21st century, reform and opening-up—now deeply ingrained in China’s political and economic framework—continued to improve China’s socialist market economy. Meanwhile, education reform had facilitated the relaxation of external conditions. As the fruits of economic development improved living conditions, people’s spiritual needs and educational awareness grew. The consequent advance of educational reform provided the opportunity and foundation to formulate LLE policies.

Steered by Former General Secretary Hu Jintao, on July 28, 2003, the Central Committee of the CPC proposed the timely concept of governing the country with a scientific outlook of development, producing a new direction for education reform. The government began paying more attention to various aspects of education, including its public benefits, balance, and equality. This established the foundation from which LLE ideas were transformed into policy and legislation, as well as its further theoretical and practical development.

Essentially, the CPC recognized that to realize the prioritization of education and rejuvenation of China, the prevailing education system and mechanism had to be reconstructed. This involved

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**Figure 2.** Co-occurrence chart of keywords in LLE research, 1988–1997.

Note. Translation of the Chinese characters is available in the Online Appendix (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/2096531120953959/suppl_file/Zunmin_Wu_(Appendix).pdf). LLE = lifelong education.
establishing an education system comprising both basic and adult education, capable of integrating the various educational forces by facilitating their mutual convergence and assimilation. The creation of an LLE system thus came into view. In March 2001, the 4th Session of the 9th National People’s Congress (NPC) approved the revised *Outline of the 10th Five-Year Plan for Socio-economic Development in the PRC* (The Ninth National People’s Congress, 2001). The report reiterated the need to “develop adult education and various forms of continuing education so as to gradually construct an LLE system.” This was also the first time that LLE was included in the national 5-year plan.

At the 16th CPC Party Congress held in November 2002, a report entitled *Establishing an All-Round Moderately Prosperous Society and Creating a New Phase in the Socialist Cause with Chinese Characteristics* similarly reiterated that the goals under the strategic decision for educational development should include “establishing an LLE system” and “forming a relatively complete modern national education system” (Jiang, 2002). Although the dual-system theory was controversial, this was the first time that the establishment of an LLE system appeared in any of the major documents of the CPC Party Congress.

In his report to the 17th CPC Party Congress in October 2007, Former General Secretary Hu Jintao advanced a more refined notion of dual-system education: “The modern national education system is further improved, the LLE system has basically been formed, and the people’s general education level and the level of cultivating innovative talents have improved significantly” (Hu, 2007). The resolution made at this party congress facilitated the rapid advancement of the LLE policy in the early 20th century and set important guidelines and goals for the building of an LLE system.

The implementation of LLE practices at the local level made significant progress with the support of national policies and in response to social needs. Published by the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee and Shanghai Municipal People’s Government, *Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Establishment of a Learning Society* argued that building a learning society that supported learning for all and LLE was essential to the comprehensive development of the people, implementation of the scientific outlook of development, and creation of a harmonious society. The document also proposed the goal for the initial establishment of a learning-oriented social framework by 2010 under the banner of “learning for everyone, anywhere, anytime.” Additionally, it noted the need to build a new type of college, one that was diversified, multilevel, and open, and which provided academic education, vocational training, as well as leisure and cultural education. These opinions reflect the popularization of the idea of LLE in China during this period. There was general consensus that developing LLE was integral to China’s social development, and the central and local governments focused on the construction of a learning society and LLE system. As such, in addition to clarifying the specific requirements and theoretical orientation of building a learning
society in China, the aforementioned documents provided a policy basis for the implementation and popularization of LLE activities.

Between 1998 and 2007, community colleges oversaw the rapid development of community education, vocational training, and cultural education. With the aging of society, more attention was paid to the elderly population when implementing LLE. Incorporating education for the elderly as a goal of building a learning society and practicing LLE also objectively promoted the establishment and development of colleges for elderly citizens.

Theoretical research on LLE entered a period of rapid development between 1998 and 2007, and the number and quality of related papers increased sharply. Analysis using the CiteSpace visualization tool reveals the formation of a small group of core researchers and authors, namely, Nailin Chen, Zunmin Wu, Qing Wang, and Kongyi Sun. The more influential governmental agencies and cooperative groups were represented by the Jiangsu Radio and Television University, Jiangsu Institute of Educational Science, and Jiangsu Province Education Commission. The initial formation of this group of scholars and research institutions marked the emergence of a core force for theoretical research on LLE (Figure 3). This research group brought popular topics of LLE research into greater focus through in-depth studies of LLE policies and the pace of their implementation. In short, LLE, learning society, and the LLE system became popular research topics.

Others focused on the difficulties of establishing China’s LLE system and suggested countermeasures. For instance, Xu and Li (2001) revealed that establishing an LLE system was a huge social system project requiring specialized institutions to exercise the duties of centralized planning and management coordination. They also called for LLE legislation and the establishment of a corresponding safeguard mechanism (Xu & Li, 2001). Some scholars drew on the experiences of developed countries and regions such as Japan, Europe, and the United States in providing recommendations for the construction of China’s LLE system. For example, Luo and Zhang (2007) recommended that the methods used to implement community education in Europe and the United States be adopted in promoting the development of community education in China, arguing that community education would provide the foundation upon which to build an effective LLE system.

The intensification of LLE development, 2008–2017

In the second decade of the 21st century, there were signs that the process of LLE-related policymaking and legislation was accelerating in China. From 2010, the development of LLE was elevated from an educational policy to a national development strategy, frequently appearing in central documents on macro education policies and receiving substantial government support. During this period, several policies with greater practicality and more target measures were
introduced. In the prelude to LLE legislation, numerous local legislative regulations were promul-
gated one after another, while national legislation was prepared.

In 2010, the State Council promulgated the *Outline of the National Medium- to Long-Term Plans for Reforming and Developing Education (2010–2020)*. The document asserted the need for China to “build a comprehensive LLE system” (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2010) by 2020. This developmental goal essentially elevated LLE from the level of education reform to a development strategy. On December 27, 2015, the *Decision of the Standing Committee of the NPC on the Proposed Amendments to the Education Law of the PRC* was officially adopted by the 18th Session of the Standing Committee of the 12th NPC. This was the first amendment to the *Education Law of the PRC* since its promulgation in 1995. The phrase “establishing and improving an LLE system” was amended to “perfecting the modern national education system, improving the LLE system, and elevating the level of educational modernization.” “Preschool education” was also incorporated into China’s current education system under the newly introduced Article 18. These developments heralded the transformation of the modern national education system into the LLE system.

**Figure 3.** Analysis of collaboration between institutions that published papers on LLE research, 1998–2007. Note. Translation of the Chinese characters are available in the Online Appendix (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/2096531120953959/suppl_file/Zunmin_Wu_(Appendix).pdf). LLE = lifelong education.
In the revised Article 20, “adult education” of Provision 1 was replaced by “continuing education,” Provision 2 remained unchanged, and Provision 3 was extended to include “facilitating mutual recognition between and convergence of different types of learning outcomes, and promoting LL learning for all people” (The Twelfth National People’s Congress, 2015). Both legislative provisions indicate the great importance that the party and government attached to LLE development, building a learning society and improving the national education system. At the national level, legislative research on LLE and the related drafting work were commencing; at the local level, LLE legislation achieved substantial progress in Fujian, Shanghai, Hebei, Taiyuan, and Ningbo. The introduction of local LLE regulations not only guaranteed the advancement of legislation at the local level but served as the reference and source of learning for national legislation.

Several new characteristics were evident during this LLE implementation stage, namely, (i) the appearance of open colleges, which constituted a new form of LLE practice; (ii) the founding of the Shanghai Academic Credit Transfer and Accumulation Bank for LLE, which was the country’s first credit bank; and (iii) new progress in community education, as reflected by the successive emergence of various experimental and innovative projects. The need to establish open colleges was clearly mandated in Outline of the National Medium- to Long-Term Plans for Reforming and Developing Education (2010–2020). Shanghai immediately used the Shanghai TV University as the foundation for open education and gradually integrated various educational resources, including the existing colleges of continuing education and online colleges set by IHLs, as well as independently established IHLs for adult education. Officially founded on July 23, 2010, Shanghai Open University was positioned as a new type of IHL intended for any individual. Compared to earlier radio and television colleges, open colleges are characterized by being more open—that is, they did not require entrance exams or registration for enrollment—and placing more emphasis on the development of disciplines, particularly professions urgently needed by society.

Issued by the MOE in January 2016, Opinions on the Proper Management and Operation of Open Colleges advanced the need to “explore an operating model for open colleges that reflect the characteristics of both China and the current times, so as to meet the learning and LLE needs of all the people and to build a learning society.” In addition to providing an important practical platform for the building of an LLE system and learning society, the establishment of open colleges contributed to meeting the multicultural needs of the general public.

With the continuous advancement of LLE policies and practical activities, theoretical research on LLE in China entered a relatively stable period of intensification between 2008 and 2017. This was primarily reflected in the number of LLE-related studies published as well as the increasing consistency of their quality. CiteSpace analysis reveals that a professional and authoritative group of core authors—represented by Zunmin Wu and Nailin Chen—had formed in the field of LLE (Figure 4).
Figure 4. Core group of authors engaged in LLE research, 2008–2017.

Note. Translation of the Chinese characters is available in the Online Appendix (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/2096531120953959/suppl_file/Zunmin_Wu_(Appendix).pdf). LLE = lifelong education.

Figure 5. Co-occurrence chart of keywords in LLE research, 2008–2017.

Note. Translation of the Chinese characters is available in the Online Appendix (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/2096531120953959/suppl_file/Zunmin_Wu_(Appendix).pdf). LLE = lifelong education.
The core institutions of LLE research included the East China Normal University and several radio and television colleges. The co-occurrence chart of keywords illustrates that research on the LLE system and learning society remained popular topics. However, a new topic of “research on LLE legislation” emerged. Related studies contained in-depth reviews of LLE legislation in China, comparisons of similar legislation promulgated in other countries, as well as commentaries on and the identification of learning points from the experiences of these countries (Figure 5).

Conclusion
Summarizing the developmental process of LLE in China over the past 40 years, implementation moved from adult education to LLE and then lifelong learning. Under the guidance of and direction set by China’s reform and opening-up, LLE was able to catch up to Europe, the United States, Japan, and Korea—taking just 30 years to establish what other countries took nearly half a century to achieve. In terms of building a learning society, China implemented the value orientation and target foundation of LLE and LL learning set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which included protecting the learning rights of citizens, improving civic literacy, and developing human resources. These achievements resulted from four conditions and factors that facilitated the localization of the international LLE trend in China.

China’s LLE development had specific characteristics. First, the government played a prominent role in LLE development, providing guidance and leadership, as well as the vigorous promotion of LLE. Second, the Chinese people are enthusiastic about LLE development and bear strong expectations. As a result of economic development, the Chinese people began thinking about the connotations of being moderately prosperous. In the process of enhancing their spiritual cultivation and refining their quality of life, they established the practical status of LLE. Third, the socio-economic and political context of China’s reform and opening-up consolidated the value and foundation of LLE development. While advancing China’s economy and prosperity, the fundamental purpose of promoting LLE was nonutilitarian: It was intended to improve the personality and humanity of individuals to ensure the cultivation of qualified, proactive, and responsible citizens. In China, LLE became linked to improving human nature and cultivating qualified citizens. Fourth, the academic community responds positively to LLE development and follows up the progress with more active research. Indeed, regardless of the initial introduction of LLE after reform and opening-up or its subsequent development through policy promotion, academia was always at the forefront of implementation. Researchers actively studied and interpreted policies and conveyed the voices of the people in a timely manner, thereby ensuring that LLE development progressed in a way that consistently connected and united China’s leaders and its people.
In the four decades since its reform and opening-up, China has made significant progress in LLE development, fostering a system of lifelong learning unique to the country. Looking forward, policy support and legislative guarantees are still necessary for the implementation of LLE. This includes elucidating the relationship between LLE and the national education system as well as removing the institutional barriers hindering the merging of educational resources through top-level design, thereby facilitating LLE interchange. It is also necessary to speed up the process of national LLE legislation to boost the healthy development of LLE in China and meet the growing need for high-quality education.

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Supplemental material
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Note
1. The dates on which various provinces/cities passed their respective Regulations on the Promotion of LLE were as follows: Fujian Province, 2005; Shanghai City, 2011; Taiyuan City, September 2012; Hebei Province, May 2014; and Ningbo City, October 2014.

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