

Original Paper

Research on Deepening Comprehensive Educational Reform in

Yiyang

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Abstract

Education serves as a national priority and a strategic imperative for the Party, forming the bedrock of national rejuvenation and social progress. As China navigates a pivotal phase toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the demand for high-quality education has reached unprecedented levels. Yiyang City, a key prefecture-level city in central China, faces both historic opportunities from national education reforms and persistent challenges including uneven development and resource allocation. Deepening comprehensive educational reform has become essential for Yiyang to overcome developmental bottlenecks, enhance its core competitiveness, and meet public expectations for quality education. This study systematically analyzes the current status and challenges of Yiyang's educational development, proposing strategies for comprehensive reform through multiple dimensions including educational equity, quality enhancement, system development, faculty capacity building, and modern governance. The research aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for advancing the scientific development of Yiyang's education sector.

Keywords

education, comprehensive reform, Yiyang

1. Introduction

In the new era, the principal contradiction in Chinese society has evolved into the contradiction between the people's ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development. This contradiction is particularly evident in the field of education. The public's basic demand for "having access to education" has transformed into an ardent expectation for high-quality and diversified education. (Akıncıoğlu, 2025; Xu, W., & Xu, Q., 2025; Deng, Wu, Chen et al., 2024; Gordon, Bourke,

Mills et al., 2024; Guiqing, Yanru, Yanping et al., 2022) At the national level, a series of guiding documents have been issued successively, such as "China Education Modernization 2035" and "General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era," which have outlined a grand blueprint for educational reform and development in the new era and pointed out the direction forward. For Yiyang City, deepening comprehensive educational reform holds three strategic significances:

First and foremost, education serves as the cornerstone for regional socioeconomic development. Yiyang City is currently navigating a critical phase of industrial transformation and high-quality development. From advancing manufacturing and modern agriculture to thriving cultural tourism, the city requires a substantial workforce of skilled professionals and innovative talents. The quality of education directly determines human capital standards, which in turn shapes the city's innovation capacity and sustainable growth potential. Through educational reforms and optimized talent development frameworks, Yiyang can secure robust human resources and intellectual capital to support its "Three Highs and Four New" strategic vision and mission objectives.

Secondly, it serves as a pivotal measure to advance social equity and improve people's livelihoods. Education remains the fundamental pathway to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and foster social mobility. Currently, disparities in educational quality persist between urban and rural areas, different regions, and schools within Yiyang City. By deepening educational reforms, addressing existing gaps, and promoting equitable distribution of educational resources, we can ensure every child—regardless of their background or household registration—receives fair and quality education. This constitutes the most significant livelihood project and an essential requirement for achieving common prosperity.

Finally, there exists an inherent need to achieve high-quality development within the education system itself. After progressing through stages like universal nine-year compulsory education and standardized school construction, Yiyang's education sector has made significant strides. However, it has also accumulated deep-rooted issues such as excessive exam-oriented education tendencies, excessive academic burdens on students, a monolithic educational evaluation system, and insufficient appeal of vocational education. Only through comprehensive reforms that systematically address these chronic problems can Yiyang's education transition from "scale expansion" to "quality-driven development," ultimately achieving a fundamental transformation in educational approaches.

2. The Current Situation and Challenges of Educational Development in Yiyang

To deepen reforms, we must first clearly understand the current situation and identify key issues. In recent years, Yiyang City's education sector has achieved remarkable progress: the popularization and consolidation of compulsory education have steadily improved, the gross enrollment rate in senior secondary education has increased steadily, vocational education has enhanced its capacity to serve the local economy, and the overall quality of the teaching workforce has been continuously optimized.

However, when measured against the demands of the new era and public expectations, Yiyang's educational development still faces a series of serious challenges.

2.1 Uneven Supply of Educational Resources and Significant Urban-rural Gap

High-quality educational resources, particularly outstanding principals and teachers, exhibit a pronounced "urban concentration" effect. Rural schools and under-resourced institutions still lag significantly behind urban schools in terms of infrastructure, teaching quality, curriculum resources, and management standards. This has fueled an unrelenting "school selection fever," exacerbated educational anxiety, and left some rural children at a disadvantage from the start. Although initiatives like the "Comprehensive Improvement of Under-resourced Schools" have enhanced facilities, the fundamental challenge remains the persistent gap in educational quality.

2.2 The Promotion of Quality Education Is Hindered, and the Inertia of Exam-oriented Education Is Strong

The evaluation system that prioritizes scores and academic advancement continues to dominate schools, families, and society. Students bear excessive academic burdens while innovation and practical skills are neglected, compromising their physical and mental well-being. Moral education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education remain marginalized in curricula. The intense competition within the education sector has created dual resistance to the "double reduction" policy implementation, with schools and families both opposing its full implementation.

2.3 The Structure of the Education System Needs to be Optimized, and the Ability to Serve Development Is Insufficient

The three major education systems—basic education, vocational education, and lifelong learning—lack sufficient integration. Vocational education, in particular, faces challenges such as low social recognition, superficial integration of industry and education, and a "hot school, cold enterprise" dynamic in school-enterprise partnerships. The talent cultivated by vocational programs fails to adequately meet Yiyang City's industrial development needs. Meanwhile, continuing education and community education systems remain underdeveloped, failing to effectively support citizens' lifelong learning requirements.

2.4 There Are Shortcomings in the Construction of Teachers' Team, and the Vitality and Motivation Need to Be Stimulated

On one hand, rural teacher teams face challenges such as aging demographics, imbalanced subject distribution (with shortages in music, physical education, art, and IT), and the brain drain of top talent. On the other hand, support mechanisms for professional development and incentive systems remain underdeveloped. The "one-size-fits-all" approach persists, failing to fully motivate teachers' enthusiasm and creativity in education. Moreover, building professional ethics and teaching conduct requires sustained efforts.

2.5 The Modernization Level of Education Governance System Is not High, and the Social Participation Is Low

The government's oversight of schools still exhibits issues of overreach, neglect, and misalignment, with schools' autonomy in educational operations remaining inadequately implemented and safeguarded. Current educational governance remains heavily bureaucratic, lacking the capacity to effectively apply legal frameworks and digital tools. Channels for multi-stakeholder participation—including parent committees, community organizations, and industry enterprises—remain underdeveloped and inflexible, failing to establish a robust ecosystem where society as a whole actively supports and engages in educational development.

3. Core Paths and Strategies for Deepening Comprehensive Education Reform in Yiyang City

In view of the above challenges, Yiyang city must adhere to the combination of goal orientation and problem orientation to deepen the comprehensive education reform, and carry out systematic, holistic and coordinated institutional design and practical exploration with promoting fairness and improving quality as the core.

3.1 Focus on Fairness and Quality, and Build a New Pattern of Basic Education with Balanced Development

Promoting educational equity is the cornerstone of educational reform. Yiyang City should strive to narrow the gaps between urban and rural areas, regions, and schools, and make quality education accessible to every child.

First, optimize the distribution of educational resources through the "Strong Schools Supporting Weak Schools" initiative. In response to new urbanization trends and population mobility patterns, we will scientifically plan school layouts across urban and rural areas. In urban regions, we will strictly control oversized schools and overcrowded classes by leveraging school consortiums, district-based management systems, and school alliances to transfer high-quality educational philosophies, management expertise, and teaching resources to under-resourced schools. In rural areas, we will advance the "Rural Revitalization Education Initiative" to improve conditions at township boarding schools and small-scale rural schools. Innovative models like "joint teaching" will be explored to address teacher shortages in these smaller institutions.

Second, we will empower digital education to break down resource barriers. By vigorously implementing the education digitalization strategy, we will establish a city-wide "Smart Education" cloud platform. This initiative will integrate renowned teachers' resources across the city, develop shared high-quality online courses, and create specialized delivery classrooms, master teacher classrooms, and online classrooms for prestigious schools. These efforts ensure rural and under-resourced students can access urban-level quality education. Through information technology, we will facilitate cross-school and cross-regional collaboration in teaching research and teacher training.

Third, deepen the reform of enrollment and examination systems to alleviate school selection anxiety. We will uphold and improve the policy of exempting compulsory education from entrance exams while ensuring admission based on proximity, and promote synchronized enrollment between public and private schools. For high school admissions, we will advance reforms by exploring a model that combines junior high school academic performance with comprehensive quality evaluations. This approach breaks the "one exam determines your entire future" mentality, guiding students toward well-rounded development.

3.2 Adhere to the Principle of Cultivating People with Moral Integrity and Build a New System for Cultivating Well-rounded Talents

Improving quality is the core of education reform. Yiyang must resolutely reverse the tendency of exam-oriented education and build an education system that comprehensively cultivates moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education.

First, establish a curriculum and evaluation system that integrates moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. Enhance the effectiveness of moral education by embedding socialist core values throughout the teaching process. Ensure full implementation of physical education and arts courses, guarantee daily campus sports activities, and create regular art performance mechanisms. Prioritize labor education by establishing both on-campus and off-campus practice bases to cultivate students' work habits and practical skills. Reform student evaluations by improving comprehensive assessment records, using them as key references for graduation and college admissions. This institutional approach will guide schools, students, and parents to emphasize holistic development.

Secondly, fully implement the "Double Reduction" policy to reshape the educational ecosystem. On one hand, strengthen schools' role as the primary educational platform by improving classroom teaching efficiency and after-school service quality. Schools are encouraged to provide diverse extracurricular activities including science popularization, cultural and sports programs, arts, labor education, and reading clubs to meet students' personalized development needs. On the other hand, deepen the regulation of off-campus training institutions to standardize their operations and effectively reduce students' excessive burden of after-school tutoring. Strengthen collaboration among families, schools, and communities by guiding parents to adopt scientific parenting concepts and alleviate educational anxiety.

Finally, drive pedagogical innovation to cultivate creative literacy. Promote heuristic, inquiry-based, and participatory teaching methods that nurture students' curiosity and imagination. Strengthen experimental instruction and interdisciplinary learning through STEAM education to enhance problem-solving skills. Establish innovation labs and makerspaces as platforms to foster students' creative thinking and hands-on capabilities.

3.3 Meet the Needs of the Service Industry and Build a Modern Vocational Education System that Is Integrated and Open

Vocational education is an important engine for the economic and social development of Yiyang. We

must vigorously enhance the status and attractiveness of vocational education.

Strengthen industry-education integration and school-enterprise collaboration. Establish an industry-education alliance led by the government with participation from industry organizations, enterprises, and vocational colleges. Dynamically adjust academic programs and jointly build shared production-oriented training bases, focusing on Yiyang City's key industries including equipment manufacturing, electronics, new materials, food processing, and cultural tourism. Implement a "dual-system school-enterprise model" that integrates work and study, promote modern apprenticeship systems and enterprise-based apprenticeship models, achieving "recruitment as employment, enrollment as entry into enterprises".

Establish a "multi-level bridge" for talent development. Streamline pathways for vocational education advancement by refining the "secondary vocational school-higher vocational college-applied undergraduate" integrated training system. Encourage vocational institutions to provide vocational skills training and academic continuing education programs for working professionals, veterans, migrant workers, and other groups, supporting lifelong learning. Promote mutual course selection and credit recognition between vocational and general education systems to foster seamless integration between these two educational models.

Build distinctive brands to enhance social recognition. Focus resources on developing high-level vocational colleges and specialized program clusters. Regularly organize vocational skills competitions to promote craftsmanship. Strengthen vocational education promotion by sharing inspiring stories of skill development and serving the nation, thereby dispelling societal prejudices.

3.4 Strengthen the First Resource and Build a High-quality, Professional and Innovative Teaching Team

Good teachers make for good education. We must make the building of a strong teaching force a priority.

Innovate teacher recruitment and mobility mechanisms. Improve the open recruitment system for teachers by strictly controlling entry standards. Continue implementing programs such as the "Special Post Program" and "Public-funded Teacher Training Program," with a focus on rural schools. Deepen the "County-managed School-hired" management reform to break down institutional barriers for teacher rotation, encouraging outstanding principals and teachers to move to under-resourced schools.

Enhance the teacher development system. Establish a three-tiered training framework at municipal, county, and school levels, implementing tiered and categorized training programs. Create master teacher and principal studios to leverage their exemplary leadership. Encourage teachers to conduct teaching research and reforms, with their achievements serving as key criteria for professional title evaluations and excellence awards.

Strengthen the incentive and safeguard mechanisms for teachers. Improve the performance-based salary policy for primary and secondary school teachers, ensuring that the average income level of compulsory education teachers is no lower than that of local civil servants. Establish a "dual-qualified"

teacher certification and benefits guarantee mechanism tailored to vocational education characteristics. Increase living allowances and policy support for rural teachers to help them stay and teach effectively. Meanwhile, enhance teacher ethics and professional conduct by improving the evaluation and supervision mechanisms for teacher ethics.

3.5 Promote the Modernization of Governance and Build a New Ecology of Education Development with Multiple Governance

Improving the ability of education governance is the guarantee of realizing education modernization.

Transform government functions to empower schools' autonomy. The government should transition from micromanagement to macro governance, utilizing legal frameworks, planning, standards, funding, and information services. By legally safeguarding schools' autonomy in education, personnel management, and financial operations, we can stimulate their operational vitality.

Strengthen internal governance structures and establish modern school systems. Promote the adoption of charter-based institutional frameworks in primary and secondary schools, while improving the principal accountability system under Party organization leadership in K-12 education and the Party committee-led principal accountability system in higher education. Enhance mechanisms such as faculty congresses and parent committees to advance democratic management and oversight.

Encourage social participation to build collaborative educational efforts. Facilitate access to social resources for education, empowering enterprises, social organizations, and citizens to support and engage in educational initiatives through diverse channels. Establish a coordinated home-school-community education mechanism with clearly defined responsibilities, fostering collective educational synergy. Actively involve third-party professional institutions in educational evaluations and school assessments to enhance the scientific rigor and credibility of educational governance.

4. Safeguard Measures for Deepening Comprehensive Education Reform

To ensure that the blueprint for reform becomes a reality, a strong safeguard system must be established.

Strengthen organizational leadership and build consensus for educational reform. Uphold the Party's comprehensive leadership in education by establishing a Comprehensive Education Reform Leading Group headed by municipal Party committee and government leaders, which will coordinate and advance reform initiatives. Enhance public communication efforts to explain reform policies, seek understanding and support from teachers, students, parents, and society at large, and foster a favorable environment for reform implementation.

Strengthen financial support and optimize investment allocation. We will consistently adhere to the education-first development strategy, ensuring sustained and stable growth in government education funding. The expenditure structure will be optimized to prioritize rural areas, underdeveloped regions, and key sectors such as teacher workforce development, educational technology integration, and

curriculum innovation. A performance evaluation system for educational funding will be established to enhance resource efficiency.

Enhance supervision and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of educational reforms. Improve the education supervision system by strengthening oversight of local governments' fulfillment of educational responsibilities. Integrate key tasks of comprehensive education reform into evaluation frameworks, establishing a scientific mechanism for monitoring and assessing reform outcomes. Leverage supervision results as critical criteria for performance evaluations, rewards, and personnel appointments, creating reform-driven pressure that compels accountability implementation.

Maintain safety and stability, and lay a solid foundation for reform. Firmly establish the principle of safety first, strengthen the primary responsibility for campus safety, improve the human, physical, and technical defense systems, and continue to carry out comprehensive management of campus and surrounding environments. Prevent and resolve various risks and hidden dangers to create a harmonious and stable environment for education reform and development.

5. Conclusion

The comprehensive education reform in Yiyang City is a long-term and complex systemic project that cannot be achieved overnight. It requires visionary strategic planning and persistent practical perseverance. We must adhere to a people-centered development philosophy, follow educational principles, focus on core issues, and courageously tackle challenges. By establishing balanced basic education, cultivating well-rounded talents, developing integrated vocational education, building dynamic teaching teams, and supporting these efforts with modern educational governance systems, Yiyang City will surely forge a high-quality educational development path with local characteristics that meets contemporary demands. This will lay a solid talent foundation for the transformative changes in mountainous rural areas and accelerate the construction of a modernized Yiyang, contributing tremendous educational strength to this new era.

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