



# International Journal of Education and Teaching

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

## Rural Education Modernization in China: Insights from Lu Zuofu Under Rural Revitalization

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### Article Info

Volume 5, Issue 1, June 2025

Received : 13 April 2025

Accepted : 07 June 2025

Published : 25 June 2025

doi: [10.51483/IJEDT.5.1.2025.110-120](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJEDT.5.1.2025.110-120)

### Abstract

Building an education-strong country is the foundational project for promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization. Under the background of rural revitalization, accelerating rural education modernization is conducive to promoting the process of Chinese-style modernization. Through literature research and field investigation, this study combs the background, connotation, and practice of Lu Zuofu's rural education modernization thoughts in Beibei. It profoundly analyzes Lu Zuofu's people-centered education modernization thoughts and his symbiotic education concept. This provides path selection and value orientation for China to draw on Lu Zuofu's education modernization thoughts in the context of rural revitalization, using education modernization to promote rural modernization, and ultimately achieving rural revitalization and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Lu Zuofu's educational thoughts, Modernization, Rural revitalization

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### 1. Introduction and Background of Study

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party, the Party Central Committee has always regarded education as a national and party priority, making major decisions to accelerate education modernization. The "China Education Modernization 2035" proposes that by 2035, China will generally achieve education modernization and enter the ranks of education-strong countries. In his important speech at the 2024 National Education Conference, President Xi also pointed out that building an education-strong country is a beautiful wish long-cherished by the Chinese nation since modern times, and is the pioneering task, solid foundation, and strategic support for comprehensively promoting strong country construction and national rejuvenation through Chinese-style modernization (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). To be strong, the country must strengthen its rural areas, and an education-strong country can only be complete by realizing rural education's prosperity. The report of the 20th Party Congress stated "comprehensively promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization" and emphasized that "education, science and technology, and talent are the foundational and strategic support for comprehensively building a socialist modern country, and the most arduous and complex task still lies in rural areas." Rural revitalization is a key link in education modernization, and in the great journey of promoting Chinese-style modernization, we must further accelerate the priority realization of rural education revitalization (Wu, 2023). Thus, rural education revitalization will help comprehensive

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rural revitalization, support rural education modernization, promote coordinated development of rural material and spiritual civilization, and achieve mutual promotion between rural education and rural society. We seek to promote national education modernization through rural education modernization under the background of rural revitalization, better implementing the education-strong country mission. Lu Zuofu proposed rural education modernization thoughts as early as the Republican period and conducted a series of rural education practices, summarizing the experience of combining “people-centered modernization” and comprehensive education concepts in rural education practices to achieve national modernization. Lu Zuofu’s thoughts and practices provide new approaches for China’s rural education modernization suitable for the rural revitalization context, better promoting China’s education modernization process and implementing education-strong country construction.

### ***1.1. Background of Lu Zuofu’s Rural Education Modernization Thoughts***

The Republican period of China was a relatively turbulent time in Chinese national history. However, it was precisely the complex international situation and domestic turbulent circumstances that prompted the awakening of national consciousness and the spread of new thoughts. The social realities of Beibei and the introduction of modern production relations also drove Lu Zuofu’s rural construction and his education modernization thoughts.

### ***1.2. Introduction of Modern Production Relations***

Rural modernization can only be achieved after the initial stages of industrialization and urbanization, through introducing modern production factors and production methods into traditional rural areas (Chen, 2021). With the development of modern industrialization, China’s production relations gradually transformed: traditional feudal land ownership was impacted, and emerging industrial capital and production methods began to appear. The initial stages of China’s industrialization and urbanization provided external conditions for modernization construction in rural areas. Beibei town, built on the Jialing River bank, had minimal development since its establishment. At that time, Beibei had limited cultivated land and a large population, leading to tense human-land relations, with agricultural output mainly satisfying basic subsistence needs, low commodity rates, and economic and political civilization struggling to transform. With the continuous penetration of modern production factors and production relations in China, Lu Zuofu began a series of rural modernization explorations in Beibei. In fact, during the entire Republican period, Lu Zuofu was the first to propose the rural modernization slogan in rural construction and practice. Lu Zuofu commented on his Beibei construction, saying he would use small rural experiments to achieve rural modernization. Through Lu Zuofu’s efforts, the original small rural Beibei gradually developed a modern development model, leading national education and industrial development.

### ***1.3. Promotion by Complex International Circumstances***

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 saw the total destruction of the Beiyang Fleet, forcing the Qing government to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki. That turbulent period planted seeds of national salvation and reform in China. The Chinese people began to reflect on their shortcomings and actively seek paths of transformation. They enthusiastically engaged in various reforms and construction efforts. Zhang Jian transformed from a top scholar to an industrialist, establishing modern factories in Nantong, Jiangsu. Luo Zhenyu crossed from historical research into agriculture, becoming a pioneer of modern agricultural science. The defeat in the Sino-Japanese War ignited patriotic passion and drove China’s modernization process. Under these international influences, it also inspired Lu Zuofu’s patriotic enthusiasm and practical motivation. He began to pay attention to domestic conditions, determined to transform Beibei, and gradually pioneered a modernization path that integrated industry and education.

The May Fourth Movement promoted the spread of Marxism in China, inspiring a great awakening of the Chinese people’s pursuit of truth and progress. The New Culture Movement brought advanced thoughts and culture, promoting intellectual liberation. These movements drove social progress, fostering the rise of new intellectual trends and motivating more intellectuals to explore rural areas to address existing problems. Professor Wang Guo stated: “The May Fourth Movement introduced many new ideas to Chinese intellectuals, who were thinking about how to combine these new ideas with Chinese society.” Scholar Qian Liqun explained why many scholars went to rural areas: “China is an agricultural country, and solving Chinese problems requires going to the countryside. Thus, generations of idealistic intellectuals must build rural areas.” Lu Zuofu was one of many influenced by the May Fourth Movement, initiating a new cultural

movement in the Sichuan and Chengdu regions, deeply participating in the movement in Sichuan. Under its influence, he launched a new cultural movement in rural areas.

#### ***1.4. Influences of Domestic Turbulent Situations***

Around 1910, various ideological schools were exposed to Chinese intellectuals, providing thought paths for scholars seeking direction in national and personal destinies. After the Xinhai Revolution, China's political situation became unstable. Following Yuan Shikai's downfall, the country entered the Beiyang Warlords period, divided into three major factions: Zhili, Anhui, and Fengtian, each controlling a region. Against the backdrop of imperialist powers' competition in China, they engaged in increasingly intense military conflicts, plunging the country into prolonged division and turmoil. From 1918, Sichuan began fragmenting into defense zones of varying sizes. Lu Zuofu's rural construction experiment occurred in this turbulent environment. His popular education hall struggled to maintain stability due to Yang Sen's repeated military defeats. Lu Zuofu recognized that with ongoing warlord conflicts, prioritizing provincial education and educational reforms would be futile. Political chaos was unreliable, and cultural education through warlords was unsustainable. Military successes and failures would significantly impact educational practices, and the path of national salvation through education was impractical.

#### ***1.5. The Demands of Beibei's Social Reality***

Late Qing and early Republican Beibei embodied four major ailments: "ignorance, poverty, weakness, and selfishness." Beibei life was impoverished, with high illiteracy rates and poor medical conditions. National decline, economic depression, and widespread feudal superstitions exacerbated social instability and economic backwardness. Culturally, people generally viewed villages as problematic and farmers as burdens. To resolve these cultural contradictions, industrialization was necessary. To transform the old society, create a new one, and realize the ideal of a strong nation and prosperous people, Lu Zuofu began his path of national salvation through industry. As a defense zone director, he reorganized militia affairs, simultaneously suppressing and pacifying bandits, proposing to "transform bandits into civilians" and "embed soldiers in industry" as a fundamental solution. He initiated a rural movement in the Jialing River Three Gorges region. To develop an industrial society, education must cultivate more talent. Therefore, education was seen as a crucial means of improving people's livelihood and promoting social progress. Beibei's construction combined urbanization, industrialization, and modernization—a multi-layered transformation involving politics, economy, and education. It required adapting to realistic conditions, focusing on human modernization to transform rural Beibei.

## **2. The Connotations of Lu Zuofu's Rural Education Modernization Thought**

### ***2.1. Human-Centered Rural Modernization***

The core of Lu Zuofu's rural construction thought was achieving rural modernization, which offered the best possibility of addressing internal and external challenges by completing modern material civilization and forming a modern social organizational structure (Ling and Xiong, 2012). Modern individuals are the material foundation and backbone of rural construction. To achieve rural modernization, one must focus on rural builders and first realize human modernization. Lu Zuofu emphasized human modernization's importance, proposing a human-centered rural modernization concept. From Chinese social needs and actual population conditions, he defined "human modernization" as: having knowledge, a profession, virtues of thrift, a healthy physique, a mutually encouraging atmosphere, passionate loyalty to community and nation, determination and courage, without bad habits, diseases, poverty, or criminal behavior (Zhang and Xiang, 2016). Human modernization was realized through multiple forms including education and research (Du et al., 2023). Lu Zuofu's human-centered modernization thought and educational practices provided an ideological foundation and path. Only by achieving human modernization and cultivating builders for modern society could rural modernization be better realized. Therefore, education is a crucial means of achieving rural modernization, a core element of socio-economic development, a foundation for political stability and social harmony, and the essential path guiding people toward a moderately prosperous life (Yuan, 2018). Lu Zuofu pioneered a path of using educational modernization to promote human modernization and ultimately achieve rural modernization.

### ***2.2. An Educational Concept of Human-Social Symbiosis***

At the time, rural education was detached from rural social realities and overlooked comprehensive human development. Therefore, Lu Zuofu, in response to practical issues, forged an educational path of "human and social symbiosis" - so-called "symbiotic education" - which addressed two key problems: First, forming a symbiotic and complementary

system between human growth and the benign development of its external world; second, creating cultural “symbiosis” in interactions with other ethnicities, other cultures, and in addressing one’s own culture and modernization development. One aspect is natural “symbiosis”, the other is cultural “symbiosis” (Zhang, 2009). Symbiotic education, with “symbiosis” as its core concept, pursues mutual respect and harmonious development. It seeks the symbiosis of humans with nature, society, each other, and with oneself, aiming for human sustainable survival and development (Li, 2005). Guided by the symbiotic education philosophy, Lu Zuofu placed students in different educational domains, enabling them to form an educational closed loop with the external world centered on society. It emphasizes establishing an equal, cooperative, and mutually supportive relationship between educators and students, jointly promoting both parties’ development. Its core lies in respecting diversity, advocating cooperation and sharing, and ultimately achieving harmonious symbiosis between education and society, humans and nature. He stated, “School is not about cultivating students, but teaching students how to cultivate society.” “The school’s cultivation of talent is not about cultivating individual success, but about cultivating social movements to make society successful.”

### **3. Lu Zuofu’s Practice of Rural Education Modernization Thought**

Lu Zuofu’s human-centered modernization thought and symbiotic educational concept laid the ideological foundation for his educational practice. The implementation of his educational thought requires close integration with economic, political, cultural, social, and environmental forces, cultivating individuals through various educational forms who can adapt to society and nature, possess social responsibility, and demonstrate innovative spirit.

#### ***3.1. Combining “Learning” and “Application” to Achieve Human Modernization***

To achieve the core goal of human modernization, it is necessary to rely on educational forces and strengthen the cultivation of learning abilities and practical skills. However, past education did not emphasize comprehensive human development, one-sidedly highlighting book knowledge’s role while neglecting students’ ability to combine “learning” and “application”. Lu Zuofu once said, “Past education often drowns talent, the deeper the education, the more deeply it is drowned (Ling and Xiong, 2012)”. He emphasized that “schools are truly not well-run, and those running schools make the same mistake, believing students should only read books and understand textbooks, not realizing that besides understanding books, students should also understand nature and society outside of school (Ling and Xiong, 2012)”. To implement his human-centered rural modernization thought and cultivate comprehensively developed individuals who can adapt to and build rural areas, Lu Zuofu began guiding school operations with the “learning-application integration” concept.

To implement the “learning-application integration” idea, he first established the Xia District Practical Elementary School in Beibei, aiming to change students’ status of “dead reading” and “reading mechanically”, training children’s abilities to acquire knowledge and apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Through the Xia District Practical Elementary School, he explored new teaching methods, cultivated new talents, and subsequently promoted these approaches to other schools. From its establishment, the school was guided by Lu Zuofu’s educational thoughts, learning through practice and cultivating students’ innovative spirit, driving innovation activities in other elementary schools. The Xia District Practical Elementary School was later merged into the elementary division of Jianshan Middle School.

Secondly, during his industrial entrepreneurship, Lu Zuofu realized that industries most lacked talent, especially professionally trained personnel. This inspired him to establish a middle school. The school would provide courses preparing students for higher specialized schools while also offering vocational training courses - simultaneously preparing youth for university entrance exams and equipping them for industrial careers after graduation. Under Lu Zuofu and like-minded friends’ joint efforts, Jianshan Middle School was born. Lu Zuofu required students to pay attention to practical life, seeking actual problems in society beyond limited textbook knowledge. He believed every person needs experience and should describe this experience through literary methods and organize it scientifically (Ling and Xiong, 2012). Lu Zuofu’s “learning-application integration” concept consistently guided Jianshan Middle School’s educational direction, emphasizing learning and exercising students through practice, frequently organizing student visits to factories, companies, banks, and postal units to deepen their knowledge application. As a private middle school at the time, initial funding was entirely self-raised by Lu Zuofu, and subsequently, he established the Jianshan Industrial Limited Shareholders Company, using industrial revenues to support education and provide financial guarantees for building a modern, first-class school. This innovative school-enterprise collaborative model not only provided funding sources but also addressed student employment issues, significantly influencing and driving economic and educational development in Beibei.

Additionally, Lu Zuofu's Minsheng Company required employees to undergo "comprehensive staff training" and "holistic training" (Ling and Xiong, 2011), another important manifestation of his "learning-application integration" philosophy. "Comprehensive staff training" meant all company employees joined the "Employee Education Union" initiated by the company, receiving business training and knowledge updates. These trainings were contextually and practically adapted, occurring in classrooms, meeting rooms, and on-site. "Holistic training" encompassed business knowledge and skills courses, ideological and moral education, and even music, sports, and art classes.

### **3.2. Interactive Education, Economy, and Politics to Achieve Sustainable Education Development**

Symbiotic education emphasizes harmonious development between education and various social aspects, including economics and politics. Under this concept, education is not merely about transmitting knowledge and skills, but more about cultivating comprehensive individual development, enabling individuals to adapt to and promote healthy socio-economic and political development, thereby achieving sustainable human existence and progress.

The relationship between politics and education is close. Education is an important channel for a country to cultivate talent, and the content and direction of education are influenced by political concepts, with the educational system needing to serve the country's political goals (Xu, 2024). The chaos of warlords and the unstable social situation repeatedly interrupted Lu Zuofu's educational practices, gradually making him realize that achieving national salvation through education alone, without economic and political development, was unrealistic. Lu Zuofu commented on the relationship between politics and education, saying: "Education is the ultimate method for saving the country. The education and politics of a nation are always cause and effect. Political implementation must rely on education to advocate, and good political education must be nurtured and supported. Is this not politics? In all social endeavors, which are not rooted in education? Therefore, one must have an independent spirit that can revive education, improve politics, develop social strength, and enrich our nation (Luo *et al.*, n.d.)."

There is a strong correlation between education and economy. Education promotes economic growth by providing high-level talent resources (Wang and Zhao, 2010). Improving educational levels can enhance people's innovative capabilities, thereby increasing economic competitiveness. Economic growth also provides more resources for education, continuously expanding and improving the educational system, developing educational resources. The economic feedback affects the quality and accessibility of education, thereby promoting human development. After Lu Zuofu embarked on the path of "industrial salvation", based on Sichuan's actual situation at the time, he prioritized transportation industry development, then production, and finally education and culture. In 1926, the Minsheng Company was established and operated well under Lu Zuofu's leadership. While focusing on the shipping industry, he also invested in establishing a series of national industries, schools, and research institutions. Supported by industry, based on education, guided by research, and using rural areas as a practical base, he pursued a path of simultaneous industrial and educational development to achieve national revival. Only by strengthening economic construction and enhancing national economic strength could support and guarantee political and cultural development. Through Lu Zuofu's efforts, Beibei achieved significant economic development, providing a material foundation for education, culture, health, and urban construction. With a certain economic foundation, infrastructure like teaching buildings, libraries, and museums could be built, attracting excellent faculty and improving educational hardware and software conditions, thus promoting educational development. Economic modernization provides an economic basis for human modernization, while human modernization contributes to economic construction.

Lu Zuofu's Beibei rural construction was a blueprint comprehensively considering economy, politics, culture, and society. Under the symbiotic education concept, the relationship between education, economy, and politics is interdependent and mutually promoting. Education provides talent and intellectual support for economic development, while economic development provides a material basis for education. The political environment and policies provide direction and guarantee for education, and education supports political stability and social development by cultivating qualified citizens. This symbiotic relationship requires coordinated development, forming a virtuous cycle that collectively promotes overall social progress.

### **3.3. Integrating Education with Life to Achieve Harmonious Coexistence between Humans and Society**

The symbiotic education concept requires education to extensively interact with nature and society, placing learners in different educational domains to achieve harmonious coexistence between education and society, humans and nature. Furthermore, it cultivates students' ability to integrate into social life and build society. Therefore, Lu Zuofu emphasized placing education in various aspects of life and society, closely connecting education with production and living, and cultivating students' ability to build society. Moreover, education was not just about developing the previously

impoverished and bandit-ridden Beibei, but about transforming Beibei into an area that could educate people, using Beibei as a center to lead national education. Under his symbiotic education and comprehensive education perspectives, Lu Zuofu began implementing school education in Beibei while vigorously developing social education. In 1931, he established the People's Education Office in Beibei, with the purpose of "managing public education and promoting social movements", establishing ten public schools, organizing youth to work in institutions during the day and participate in public education at night. He also established the West China Science Academy, Boatworkers' School, Porters' School, Women's School, Workers' School, and job placement office to provide learning, living, and employment services. Besides various learning venues, Lu Zuofu also built hospitals, libraries, and sports grounds as leisure and entertainment spaces where people could continuously learn.

He also organized soldiers to "bring books to the countryside", creating "circulating libraries" to allow books to circulate within rural areas. To ensure the implementation and maximize the effectiveness of these measures, Lu Zuofu founded the Jialing River Daily in March 1928 as its editor-in-chief. The newspaper quickly became an information dissemination platform, distributed to department staff and regularly posted in public spaces like markets and hotels. Garrison staff would spread current affairs information to farmers during Sichuan opera performances, and share public health knowledge while screening movies during New Year celebrations, making every domain a potential learning space and constructing a true educational society where the entire urban space became an educational carrier. Thus, education became closely integrated with society and the public, covering the entire Beibei and even China through comprehensive education (Du et al., 2023).

#### **4. New Perspectives on Rural Education Modernization in Our Country**

Currently, China is in a critical period of rural revitalization, and rural areas cannot thrive without talent, while talent cultivation is inseparable from education. Rural education is a crucial source of human resource revitalization. Therefore, education must precede rural revitalization. Scholars view rural education modernization as an essential component of the rural revitalization strategy, explaining its value orientation and clarifying that rural education modernization can provide fundamental support for rural revitalization (Ma and Deng, 2022). Rural education modernization is a multi-dimensional, systematic project aimed at promoting comprehensive rural development. Only by developing rural education can we enhance rural people's quality and capabilities, thereby advancing rural integration. Thus, rural education modernization is achieved through human modernization, which is a key demonstration of the forward-looking and modern nature of Lu Zuofu's rural education thoughts. Since the 18th Party Congress, the important deployments about building socialism with Chinese characteristics and promoting comprehensive human development have positioned human modernization at a more critical strategic level, actively exploring a modernization path centered on human development (Zheng, 2013). Moreover, symbiotic education is continuously moving from theory to practice, providing new insights for contemporary educational reform. Therefore, Lu Zuofu's educational modernization ideas in rural construction offer valuable references for advancing rural education modernization under the current rural revitalization context.

##### **4.1. Innovatively Developing "Learning-Application" Integrated Vocational Education**

Lu Zuofu proposed the "learning-application integration" concept because, under the educational influence of his time, students' learned content did not match the skills society needed. The phrases "what is learned is not applicable" and "graduation means unemployment" were widely circulated. At that time, vocational education represented by Huang Yanpei focused on cultivating young technical talents. Influenced by Huang Yanpei's vocational education thoughts and Sun Yat-sen's democratic ideas, Lu Zuofu advocated combining industry with education to address the situation where people could not solve practical problems or meet social needs. He proposed the concept of "enterprise as school" and integrated the "learning-application" philosophy throughout the educational process, aiming to cultivate modern citizens who could be self-sufficient, help others, and solve problems, thus achieving human modernization. To improve public quality and train practical talents, Lu Zuofu established the Xia District Practical Primary School and Beibei Jianshan Middle School, where students received school education while simultaneously strengthening professional skills and practical abilities. This fully demonstrated his vocational education thoughts and practices, providing an excellent model for how we can currently use vocational education to better achieve rural education modernization, drive human modernization, and ultimately promote rural revitalization.

Rural revitalization requires modernized individuals who can solve practical rural problems and achieve comprehensive development. Vocational education in rural areas plays a crucial role in "cultivating modernized individuals" and is an

important breakthrough in implementing the rural revitalization strategy. Without the revitalization of rural vocational education, comprehensive rural revitalization is impossible (Lu and Huang, 2023). Regarding rural vocational education, the “Opinion on Accelerating Rural Talent Revitalization” proposes fully leveraging various entities in rural talent cultivation, including improving higher education talent training systems and accelerating the development of education oriented towards rural areas. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to construct a vocational education system that integrates general and vocational education, and vigorously cultivate master craftsmen, skilled workers, and high-skilled talents (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). The “Opinion on Promoting High-Quality Development of Modern Vocational Education” points out that we should optimize the supply structure of vocational education, support rural-oriented vocational education, and enable vocational schools to provide technical support and talent guarantees for rural industrial development through school-enterprise cooperation and training base construction (Wang, 2024). By strengthening school-locality cooperation and integrating education with training, we can accelerate the cultivation of rural revitalization talents. Therefore, contemporary vocational education should focus on this, intensify talent cultivation, and promote human modernization through rural educational modernization.

In professional selection, priority should be given to developing emerging specialties related to modern agriculture, modern information technology, and accelerating the construction of talent-scarce specialties while upgrading traditional specialties (Xinhua News Agency, 2021). Vocational colleges should be market-oriented and reasonably set up specialties that meet market demands. Under the background of rural revitalization, strengthening investment in rural vocational education has a positive effect on better achieving rural education modernization and cultivating comprehensively developed talents.

According to the “2024 National High-Quality Farmers Development Report”, farmers’ vocational education is being orderly promoted. Agricultural vocational colleges are closely aligned with modern agricultural industry development, actively promoting organic connection between talent cultivation supply and industry demands. The Central Agricultural Broadcasting and Television School has conducted “training-secondary vocational-higher vocational education integrated cultivation” pilot programs in multiple provinces, recruiting a large number of integrated students and cultivating high-quality farmers and agricultural practitioners. By the end of 2023, 4,921 integrated students were recruited. Nationwide, agricultural broadcasting schools recruited 24,000 secondary vocational students, with 59,000 students currently enrolled. The High-Quality Farmers Cultivation Plan trained over 800,000 farmers in 2023. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, jointly with the Central Organization Department, held rural practical talent leader training classes, training 20,000 people annually. Implementing farmer quality enhancement training actions, over 340,000 public welfare training sessions were conducted for farmers in 2023. The quality structure of high-quality farmers continues to improve, and rural industry development levels are steadily rising (Xi, 2022).

#### ***4.2. Driving Sustainable Education Development through Human Capital***

In the report of the 20th Party Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping again emphasized deeply implementing the talent strong country strategy (Xi, 2022). The most fundamental factor in achieving rural education modernization lies in people and the powerful human capital embodied in human modernization. Lu Zuofu emphasized that a modern person refers to one who can adapt to modern life, manifested in modernization of thinking patterns, behavioral patterns, lifestyle, and human value concepts (Ren and Dou, 2024). The essence of human modernization is to improve human quality and gradually achieve comprehensive human development (Chai, 2006). Education modernization, as an important pathway to realizing human modernization, not only involves development and transformation within the education field itself but is also a systematic project of coordinated economic, political, and educational development. Lu Zuofu’s educational practice in southern Sichuan was interrupted by war, and he turned to the industrial path, pursuing rural modernization through a path of concurrent industry and education. Therefore, through benign interaction between education and economy, politics, achieving education and social symbiosis, coordinating various forces to realize comprehensive human development and harmonious coexistence with nature.

Human capital is knowledge, skills, and abilities condensed in laborers. Human capital investment plays a decisive role in human social progress. Human capital investment accounting is primarily reflected in knowledge, skills, qualifications, experience, and work proficiency. Educational investment is the core of human capital. Human capital promotes production, and its growth rate is faster than material capital growth, which is the most basic characteristic of modern economy. Human capital theory reveals the relationship between education and economy from theoretical and practical perspectives. Education promotes economic development; improving human capital can enhance workers’ knowledge and skills, which can be transformed into labor capital, improving workers’ quality and labor skills, and increasing labor productivity, thus promoting social economic development. Educators recognize the importance of

cooperation in practical life, emphasizing division of labor in production to improve efficiency. Education also optimizes human resource allocation. Systematic and targeted educational training enhances the vocational competitiveness of rural areas, delivering a large number of high-quality laborers for today's urbanization. For managers, educational investment can improve management levels and indirectly enhance economic benefits.

Lu Zuofu's promotion of education through industry demonstrates that economy is the premise and foundation of educational development. In recent years, China has strengthened educational funding, with the implementation of nine-year compulsory education, "two exemptions and one subsidy" policies, "green channels", and national "scholarship, loan, and aid" policies, which have greatly promoted education development (Yan, 2011). With the development of the times, the demand for high-quality talents has increasingly grown, and education continuously serves to cultivate modern talents of the new era. The improvement of economic development levels and transformation of economic growth methods have led to changes in educational content and methods, with educational structures continuously evolving.

Rural education development requires economic support, including rational allocation of educational resources and fiscal investment. This involves strengthening compensatory resource allocation for rural education, optimizing overall educational resource allocation, and maximizing the coverage of rural education through resource investment efficiency. It also requires various government levels to legally fulfill educational expenditure responsibilities, improve multi-channel educational funding mechanisms, and ensure sustained and stable growth of fiscal educational investment. The "China Education Modernization 2035" issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council proposes ensuring national fiscal education expenditure is generally not less than 4% of GDP. Additionally, through shared urban-rural educational resources and establishing an urban-rural integrated basic public education service system, it aims to promote balanced urban-rural education development and ensure rural and urban education progress simultaneously.

#### **4.3. Cultural Nourishment of Teachers' Overall Qualities**

Lu Zuofu's realization of human modernization requires education to cultivate comprehensively developed individuals, which needs improving teacher teams and talent introduction policies. Teachers are the main body of school education, and high-quality teacher teams are the fundamental guarantee for completing high-quality educational tasks (Liu and Peng, 2010). Lu Zuofu once proposed that "the best teachers need to help students solve practical problems themselves". This teaching approach embodies the spirit of cultural nourishment, where teachers are not just knowledge transmitters but guides promoting student self-exploration and discovery.

The formation of cultural nourishment phenomena has both objective reasons of social change and development and subjective reasons of different generations (Chen, 2005). Implementing rural revitalization strategy is actually seeking a combined development model between cultural inheritance and economic development, achieving a cultural nourishment path combining characteristic rural areas and agricultural development (Wang, 2022). Rural education exists distant from rural culture, having "rural" in name but not in essence, becoming an "other" and "stranger" to rural culture, with its overall structure nearly disconnected from rural social development (Zhao and Li, 2023). Rural education modernization is a process of returning to excellent traditional rural culture, constructing modern rural cultural structures, enriching rural cultural life, and cultural revitalization through education. In rural education, cultural nourishment can be achieved by excavating cultural resources reflecting rural regional landscapes, ethnic customs, and local traditions, subtly influencing urban culture. Deeply exploring Chinese rural elements and permeating them throughout rural education's goals, values, content, and methods to establish the cultural foundation of Chinese-style rural education modernization. Young people's cultural nourishment can both promote rural revitalization and drive cultural inheritance and innovative development. Each generation has inherited local unique rural culture and transformed it, achieving cultural development adapted to society and urban-rural contexts. On the other hand, the new generation "nourishes" farmers through new cultural technologies, thereby enhancing their media literacy and enabling better acceptance of new knowledge and concepts. Educational nourishment gradually enables backward villagers to acquire modern concepts, beneficial to reconstructing rural traditional culture, promoting traditional culture inheritance and modern cultural innovation, thereby developing a unique cultural industry to help rural modernization construction.

Rural teachers are not only providers of education but also important promoters of rural cultural construction. Through educating rural populations, spreading excellent cultural traditions, and influencing rural social culture, rural teachers have become the backbone of rural intellectual elites (<http://edu.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0909/c1006-28705199.html>). In recent years, China has introduced a series of policies to strengthen rural teacher teams, including the "Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015-2020)" (Wei, 2023) and the "Opinion of the Ministry of Education and Six Other Departments on Strengthening Rural Teacher Teams in the New Era" (Ministry of Education, 2020). These policies aim

to improve rural education quality by raising rural teachers' salaries, increasing their career development opportunities, and enhancing the overall number of teachers. The cultural feedback of rural education has also significantly strengthened teacher team building and improved rural education quality.

Cultural feedback has a dual impact on rural teacher team building. On one hand, it helps update college ideological and political education concepts, transform methods, and promote changes in teacher and student roles; on the other hand, it may lead to the awakening of college students' subject consciousness and diversification of value choices, questioning traditional educational approaches and challenging teacher authority and status (Xiao, 2020). In rural teacher team building, the focus should be on cultivating localized rural education talents who are born in, grow up in, and give back to rural areas while possessing modern literacy, instilling a sense of mission and responsibility in rural education subjects. Fully integrating local cultural characteristics, developing cross-disciplinary school-based educational resources, guiding teachers to root themselves in rural lands, and becoming promoters and practitioners of rural revitalization and rural education modernization (Ministry of Education and other six departments, 2020). Innovate rural teacher establishment allocation, explore and adjust rural school staffing, standardize personnel management in rural schools, deploy teachers through various methods, strengthen targeted public-funded training, and leverage the supporting role of 5G, artificial intelligence, and other new technologies.

#### **4.4. Comprehensive Education Promoting Rural Social Governance**

Comprehensive education emphasizes the comprehensiveness and continuity of education, aiming to achieve comprehensive and personalized education development through various educational resources and methods. Its ultimate goal is to promote comprehensive and multi-dimensional coordinated human development. Lu Zuofu believed that education should be combined with environments, whether school or social, emphasizing the impact of the broader social environment on the school environment and how society's positive capabilities provide positive influences for school educational practices (Yang and Liu, 2014). Lu Zuofu's educational practice emphasized the relationship between society and schools under the symbiotic education concept. In the comprehensive education model, education is not limited to schools but extends to families, communities, and even the entire society. In the comprehensive education era, educational boundaries are being dissolved and reconstructed, requiring school education to lead and achieve coordination, integration, and fusion of school, family, social, and online education. It breaks traditional educational boundaries, integrating educational resources from different domains to adapt to changing times. Comprehensive education provides space for implementing the symbiotic education concept, and they jointly promote high-quality educational development.

In rural areas, family education is a significant social issue. The government should optimize rural industrial structures, guide rural labor return, improve policies for rural compulsory education stages, enhance family education systems for left-behind and migrant children, strengthen family education awareness, and focus on the two-way demonstration effect of family education—cultural transmission and cultural feedback (Meng, 2020); schools should strengthen home-school collaboration, utilize platforms like "Parent Schools" to guide parents in improving family education levels and using parental intrinsic motivation to support children's healthy growth. Additionally, an educational supervision system centered on rural schools should be established, creating "family-like relationships" in school education to compensate for family education deficiencies; fully utilize "community co-education" and "paired assistance" and other forms to serve families and children in rural areas.

Community education refers to educational activities adapted to local characteristics and needs, aimed at improving rural residents' comprehensive qualities and cultural levels, enhancing their technological innovation and employability, and promoting rural economic and social development and rural revitalization. With the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, community education's participation and development will positively impact rural revitalization. Community education is viewed as a crucial component of the rural revitalization strategy, promoting agricultural modernization and rural tourism industries by improving rural residents' qualities and skills. Community education establishes the talent foundation for rural revitalization, exploring new paths and models to drive rural talent revitalization, changing the current status of "part-time, aging, and low-education" rural talents, and providing talent guarantees and intellectual support for agricultural and rural structural adjustments, rural industry integration, and overall farmer quality improvement. Community education also activates the cultural genes of rural revitalization. The "Opinion of the Ministry of Education and Nine Other Departments on Further Promoting Community Education Development" clearly states the goal of improving national ideological, moral, scientific, cultural, health, and vocational skills, establishing community education systems, coordinating urban and rural community education development, strengthening foundational capabilities, and integrating educational resources. Modern rural areas are not only carriers of modern agricultural

industries but also livable spaces rich in culture and comfortable living. Developing rural community education is a crucial support for rural revitalization, bearing the responsibilities of promoting socialist core values, inheriting and enhancing agricultural culture, popularizing internet application technologies, forming scientific and civilized lifestyles, and playing unique educational roles in cultivating rural talents, achieving industrial prosperity, advancing rural governance, promoting rural cultural civilization, and creating beautiful environments.

## 5. Conclusion

China is currently at a crucial stage of moving towards the “Education Modernization 2035” goal and building an educational powerhouse. In the context of rural revitalization, China seeks to start from rural education, using rural education revitalization to support rural revitalization, and using rural education modernization to advance national educational modernization, continuously promoting the implementation of educational powerhouse construction. By combing through the background, ideological connotations, and educational practices of Lu Zuofu’s rural construction educational modernization thoughts, we have explored new perspectives suitable for current educational modernization implementation. Using human capital theory, we concluded the coordinated and mutually promoting relationship between education and economy; from the cultural feedback perspective, we proposed approaches to rural teacher team building; from a comprehensive education viewpoint, we analyzed education’s need for broad connections with families and society; from vocational education, we proposed the importance of combining learning and application to cultivate comprehensively developed individuals. Under the guidance of Lu Zuofu’s educational thoughts, new approaches to rural education modernization will better ground and implement educational modernization and educational powerhouse construction.

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**Cite this article as:** Jing Han (2025). Rural Education Modernization in China: Insights from Lu Zuofu Under Rural Revitalization. *International Journal of Education and Teaching*, 5(1), 110-120. doi: 10.51483/IJEDT.5.1.2025.110-120.