

A Study on the Human Resources Development of the Younger Elderly in China against the Background of Population Aging

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Abstract—At present, the level of population aging in china is increasing. Under this influence, Chinese society is facing the threat of increasing pension burden and the shortage of human resources. Rational development of human resources of the younger elderly has become an important way to promote economic development and ease the pressure of elderly care at this stage. Through the assessment of the current situation, this paper explains the necessity and feasibility of developing the human resources of the younger elderly. Then through the systematic analysis of the current situation of the human resources development of the younger elderly at the present stage, finding out the problems and restrictive factors, and proposing corresponding measures.

Index Terms—population aging, human resources, younger elderly

I. THE NECESSITY OF DEVELOPING THE HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE YOUNGER ELDERLY

A. The High Level of Population Aging

According to UN standards, when the proportion of people aged 60 and over accounts for more than 10% of the total population or the proportion of people aged 65 and over accounts for more than 7% of the total population, the country or region enters an aging society. By the end of 2018, China's population aged 60 and over was 294.49 million, accounting for 17.9% of the total population. The number of people aged 65 and over is 166.58 million, accounting for 11.9% of the total population. According to statistics from the World Bank, China's degree of population aging ranks 10th in the world.

B. The Shortage of Effective Labor Force

From 1990 to 2020, the average annual growth rate of the world's population aging is only 2.5%. However, at the same time, the growth rate of population aging in China is 3.3%, which is much higher than other aging countries in the world, and it shows a continuous upward trend. According to the statistics of the United Nations World Population Forecast for 2017, from 2015 to 2050, the proportion of the elderly population over the age of 65 in China will increase from 9.60% to 23.60%, entering

the stage of severe population aging, and at the same time. The proportion of the working-age population aged between 15-64 will fall from 71.90% to 60.70%. The enormous amount of the elderly population and the trend, that the age distribution gradually changes into the "inverted pyramid" structure, caused by the increasing speed of population aging means the end of the period of demographic dividend, and also indicates that China will encounter a large shortage of human resources in the future development.

C. The Heavy Burden of the Elderly Care

The rise in the level of population aging means an increase in the old-age dependency ratio. As shown in Fig. 1, the old-age dependency ratio in China will rise further in the next 30 years. From the development track of developed countries, we can find that most countries begin to enter the population aging stage after the material base has accumulated to a certain extent. However, at the present stage, China is facing the predicament of "getting old before getting rich". [1] The rising proportion of the elderly population caused by family planning and the increase in the average life expectancy due to the advancement of medical standards cause the increase of the proportion of the elderly population and decrease of the proportion of the working-age population, which means that the burden of the elderly care in China is increasing.

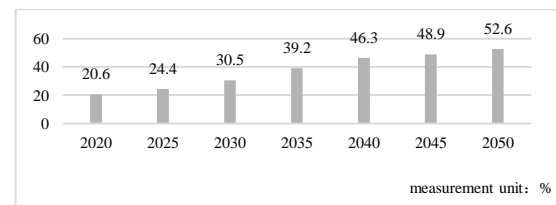


Figure 1. The forecast of the elderly population dependency ratio in China in the next 30 years.

D. The Necessity of Fulfilling the Need of the Elderly

According to Maslow's theory of demand, the elderly also needs to meet self-realization needs and exert their own social values. However, the current social culture still favors the elderly to enjoy family happiness after retirement and they should live in their later years and should not participate in social work. Most elderly people will be out of touch with society after they leave their

jobs. For the elderly, retirement means not only withdrawing from work, but also means separating from the past life patterns, living habits and social roles. This is not conducive to the health of the elderly.

II. THE FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE YOUNGER ELDERLY

A. The High Proportion of the Younger Elderly

According to the widely accepted standards in China, the younger elderly refers to the elderly aged between 60 and 69. In the age distribution of the elderly population, the proportion of the younger elderly is very large. As shown in Fig. 2, by the end of 2017, the younger elderly population accounted for more than half of the elderly population. In 2017, the elderly population aged 60 and above was approximately 240 million, accordingly, the number of younger elderly in 2017 has reached 144 million. For China's labor market, the younger elderly will be the potential human resources which cannot be ignored.

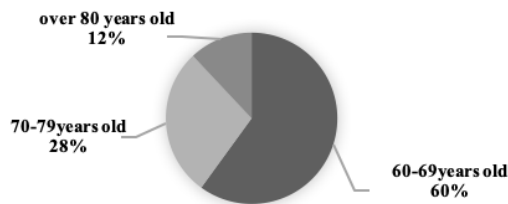


Figure 2. Age distribution of the elderly in China

B. The Relatively Good Physical Condition of the Younger Elderly

Under the current conditions that the level of science and technology is gradually increasing, China's per capita life expectancy has been extended and the physical condition of the elderly has been significantly improved. In terms of physical status, as shown in Fig. 3, from the results of China's sixth census, we can see that among the younger elderly, the proportion of healthy people is higher than other old people. Generally speaking, mentally or physically, it is easier to develop the human resources of the younger elderly.

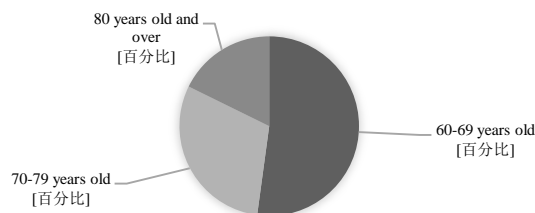


Figure 3. Age distribution of the healthy elderly population in China

C. The Relatively High Level of Knowledge and Experiences

After long-term knowledge accumulation and practical activities, the elderly is at the most abundant stage of knowledge and practical experience in life. Compared

with the young people who have just stepped into the society, they have the advantage that young people do not acquire in experience. Moreover, according to the 2010 urban and rural elderly population follow-up survey data, the proportion of younger elderly who have high-school or college education is 41.8 and 22.41 respectively, higher than other age groups of the elderly. The younger elderly is ranked first among all the elderly.

D. Advantages in Social Resources

Social resources are an increasingly important part in the current social environment. For the younger elderly, the social network formed in long-term social life and work has a certain scale. At the same time, Under the current retirement age policy, the younger elderly is in the stage that the influence of their own social resources has not completely disappeared, which has a positive effect on the work after re-employment.

E. Advantages in Employment Cost

Different from the fact that the young people need a certain amount of time to train after entering the company, after the younger elderly are re-employed, the training cost of the personnel will be greatly reduced, since they have been accumulated a lot of experience in the relevant industry. At the same time, because the younger elderly has the protection of pensions, the cost of employing will also be reduced accordingly.

III. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNGER ELDERLY

The "Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing the "13th Five-Year" National Aging Development and Endowment System Construction Plan" issued in 2017 clearly pointed out that it is necessary to strengthen the human resources development of the elderly and encourage all localities to integrate the development and utilization of the elderly into the overall planning of the talent team at all levels. Develop a special plan for the human resources development of the elderly. The human resources development of the younger elderly in China has begun to take shape. However, there are still many problems in the specific process. It is necessary to analyze the current situation of the human resources development of the younger elderly in order to find the defects and specific restrictive factors.

A. The Proportion and the Growth Rate Is High

Based on the survey data on the living conditions of urban and rural elderly in China in 2018, it can be seen that in 2018, the number of the employed elderly aged 60 and above in China was 59.57 million, and the amount of the employed elderly in the 60-64 age group were 33.48 million which accounts for more than half of the employed elderly population, about 57%. From 2010 to 2018, the number of the employed elderly in China rose from 537.26 million to 59.57 million, an increase of 10.9%. Among them, the number of those in the 60-64 age group rose from 28,244,000 to 33.48 million, an

increase of 16.2%, faster than the growth rate of the entire employed elderly. Since the ages in the statistics are divided into 60-64 years old and 65 years old and above, it can be inferred that the proportion and growth rate of the elderly aged 60-69 will be even larger.

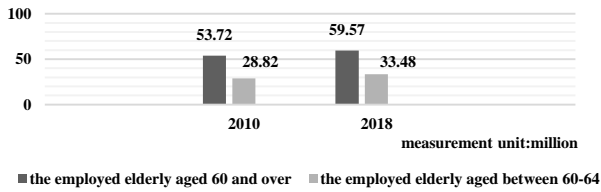


Figure 4. The changes on the amount of the employed elderly aged 60 and above and those aged between 60-64

B. The Differences among Industries Are Obvious

According to the criteria of the three types of industries, as shown in Fig. 5, it can be seen that the younger elderly who engaged in the work related to the primary industry account for the vast majority. From the perspective of the specific industry, as shown in Fig. 6, the top five industries that the younger elderly engage in are agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery; manufacturing; wholesale and retail; construction and residential services. It can be seen that most of the younger elderly engage in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery which is with high intensity and substitutability in the primary industry, and the younger elderly whose work belong to the secondary and tertiary industries are also engage in a relatively low-tech, high-intensity work, such as low-level manufacturing industry, residential service. In general, the work of the younger elderly is mainly based on manual labor and low-skilled labor. From the perspective of occupational structure, it is located at the bottom. It is the opposite of the actual demand for labor.

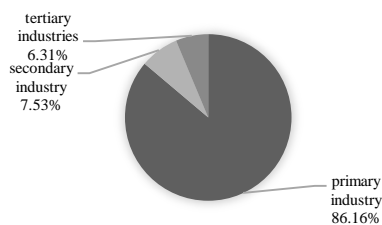


Figure 5. Proportions of different industries the re-employed younger elderly engage in

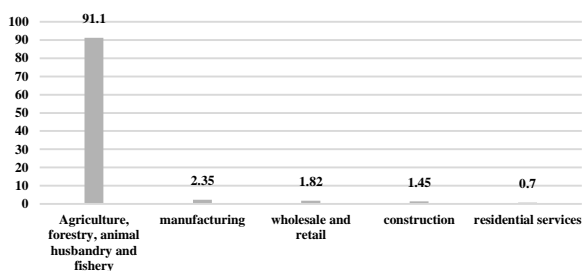


Figure 6. The proportion of the top five industry the younger elderly engaged in

C. The Differences between Urban and Rural Areas Are Obvious

According to the national 1% population sample survey data in 2015, there is a big difference between the urban and rural re-employed younger elderly. In 2015, the proportion of the re-employed younger elderly living in rural areas was about 61.61%, while the proportion of urban area was only 13.21%. Combined with the above analysis of the industries in which the younger elderly engaged. It is not difficult to see that a large part of the re-employed younger elderly are agricultural populations engaged in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery in rural areas. Compared with urban areas, the income level and social security in rural area is relatively low, and the thought of retirement in rural areas is relatively weak. Therefore, the younger elderly in rural areas will still engage in agricultural production before they are unable to work, so as to ensure the stability of their income. In the case of a large influx of rural labor force into the city, agricultural production activities are also more inclined to the younger elderly in rural areas. In urban areas, because the policies clearly stipulate the retirement age and the level of social security is higher than that in rural areas, the re-employment rate of the younger elderly in urban areas is much lower than that in rural areas. Moreover, according to the statistics of the China Comprehensive Social Survey CGSS2013, it can be seen that the re-employment willingness of the younger elderly in urban areas is not high. Among the samples of the younger elderly in 100 counties, 87.2% of the younger elderly select not to work again. There are significant differences in the attitude of re-employment among urban and rural elderly.

D. The Re-Employment Channels Are Unbalanced

According to the sample statistics of China Comprehensive Social Survey CGSS2013, nearly half of the younger elderly looked for re-employment through the introduction of relatives or friends and self-employment, it is about 43.41%, and only 8.02% of the younger elderly looked for jobs through intermediaries and job fairs. The number of organizations that help the younger elderly to re-employ is small. Most younger elderly still find jobs through their relatives or previous social networks, and the channels provided by third parties are relatively simple and scattered.

E. The Re-Employment Protection Is Insufficient

In the process of work, the younger elderly often encounters situations in which work rights cannot be fully guaranteed due to imperfect policies and regulations and unfulfilled responsibilities of enterprises. As shown in Fig. 7, more than half of the younger elderly who are re-employed in 2013 did not sign labor contracts with employers, and the younger elderly who signed fixed-term labor contracts accounted for only 14.4%. In the absence of a formal labor contract, the younger elderly cannot be effectively protected. As shown in Fig. 8, the younger elderly whose average daily working time exceeds the national law account for 47.2%. It can be seen that due to the lack of the relevant labor protection

measures, such as the related interests of the younger people have been damaged.

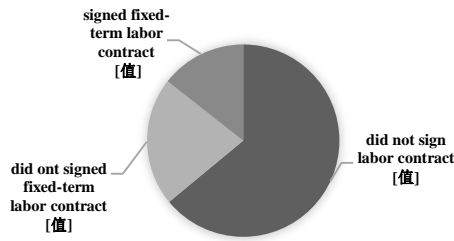


Figure 7. The situation of labor contract of the re-employed younger elderly

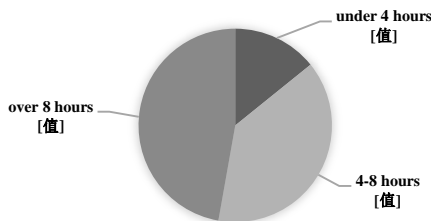


Figure 8. Average daily working time of the re-employed younger elderly

Overall, the proportion and growth rate of the younger elderly ranks first among all the elderly, and it is the most promising resource for the elderly. However, there are still some issues that need to pay attention to.

Firstly, a large proportion of the re-employed younger elderly are in rural areas, and the re-employment willingness of the younger elderly in urban areas is not very high. Although the development level of human resources of the younger elderly is the highest among all the elderly, its utilization rate is still at a low level. There is a need to encourage the younger elderly with working ability and skills to re-employ in many ways.

Secondly, the re-employed younger elderly mainly engaged in the primary industry with low technology requirement and high labor intensity. The younger elderly has relatively low vocational skills and the proportion of the younger elderly who engaged in the field in which the technological qualification is relatively high is small. There is a need to improve the vocational skills and levels of the younger elderly.

Thirdly, there is a lack of protection for the younger elderly. A large number of them have not signed labor contracts and their working hours exceeds the standard, even violates relevant laws. The government needs to improve the protection for younger elderly.

IV. THE REDTRICTIVE FACTORS IN THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNGER ELDERLY

A. The Backward Social Views

In the current social and cultural environment, there are many viewpoints that restrict the human resources development of the younger elderly, which can be

divided into three parts. First of all, from the perspective of the young and middle-aged workforce, some of them have a negative attitude towards the re-employment of the younger elderly. They believe that the re-employment of the younger elderly is "taking away the job from the young labor force" and in the increasingly competitive labor market, the younger elderly has occupied the limited job opportunities and resources. Secondly, from the point of view of employers, some employers believe that the younger elderly will become a burden, and there will be a series of employment risks due to factors such as the deterioration of the physical conditions of the younger elderly. It is also believed that younger elderly has limited development value, so some employers are reluctant to recruit younger people. In addition, from the perspective of younger elderly themselves, some younger elderly think that they have worked hard for a lifetime, and they should enjoy family fun after retirement. Some of them are not willing to participate in work. For example, in 2013, after the introduction of the policy of formulating gradual extension of retirement age, many oppositions from the middle-aged and elderly groups were received.

B. The Insufficient Policies and Laws

Sound policies and laws are important parts to promote the human resources development of the younger elderly. However, many shortcomings in current policies and laws have made the human resources development of the younger elderly not optimal. At present, the legislation for the re-employment of the younger elderly is far from meeting the actual needs of the current society. [2] Due to the limitation of retirement age, the younger elderly who have reached the retirement age will enjoy basic pension after retirement and are no longer protected by labor law. China's current Labor Law, Labor Contract Law and other relevant laws do not include re-employed younger elderly in their coverage, resulting in that employers and the re-employed younger elderly cannot claim rights and commitments in accordance with relevant laws. For example, when a working accident happens to a re-employed younger elderly, the current industrial injury insurance regulations only identify "employees" as the casualty in work-related accidents, while the re-employed younger elderly are not employees legally, so they cannot be identified as the object to be protected in the work injury insurance regulations. In the current Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, Chapters 68 and 69 encourage the younger elderly to engage in operating activities and production in a voluntary manner according to law, and the legal income of the younger elderly is protected by law. However, it does not clearly define the rights and responsibilities of many aspects in the process of re-employment. Not belonging to the scope of protection of the Labor Law and that the current laws is relatively sweeping further reduce the willingness of the younger elderly to be re-employed.

C. *The Imperfect Mechanism in the Re-Employment of the Younger Elderly*

First of all, the re-employment of the younger elderly involves many government departments. Although the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security has introduced relevant policies to promote the re-employment of the younger elderly, there currently does not exist an authority to systematically manage the human resources development of the younger elderly. The indistinct powers and responsibilities make it difficult for younger elderly to solve problems or get effective solutions in the process of re-employment, and the cost of solving problems is high, which reduce the enthusiasm of the younger elderly to be re-employed. Secondly, the re-employment channels are relatively narrow. [3] China has launched the "Silver Age Action" since 2004, mainly to organize the elderly intellectuals who are willing to enter the northwest and southwest regions for public welfare assistance to carry out various public welfare lectures covering industrial agriculture, education, biotechnology and so on. The Silver Age Action is a typical case of the development of the elderly's human resources. Currently, this form is widely used in China. However, such activities are mainly public welfare assistance activities led by the China National Committee on Aging. The participation of the elderly is voluntary, and there are many differences between it and the re-employment activities. There is a lack of channels for re-employment of the younger elderly in China. There is no effective communication channel between the employer and the younger elderly who are willing to work again. For employers, in the recruitment process, the main object is the young and middle-aged labor force. The elderly often has no channels to be known and employed. So, relevant government departments need to coordinate and build a bridge for mutual understanding.

D. *The Inadequate Old-Age Education*

Compared with foreign education in the past, the form and content of old-age education in China are relatively lagging behind. For example, the old-age education system in the United States covers a wide range. In addition to helping the elderly to live a more harmonious life in their later years, there is a considerable part of vocational skills education to help the younger elderly to establish positive ideas and provide the necessary training and assistance for the elderly who want to be re-employed. And the providers of old-age education are also composed of many parties. Compared with public old-age educational institutions, non-profit institutions and major universities play a more important role. For example, Stanford University has an advanced training course for seniors. Older students can attend a variety of professional courses. After graduation, they will be awarded a certificate of completion which they can use when they look for jobs. In China, the current old-age education is mainly provided by the old-age college managed by the National Committee on Aging, and various small classes opened by the local communities. The current supply of education for the elderly is far from

meeting the rising demand. In addition, the current teaching objectives of senior colleges and various community classes are mainly to meet the entertainment needs of the elderly. The purpose of education is mainly to make the elderly happy and comfortable. However, the vocational knowledge and skills and training for the re-employment is rarely involved, and it does not provide a good help for the improvement of the relevant skills of the younger people to be re-employed.

V. THE PRACTICAL SUGGESTION FOR THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNGER ELDERLY

A. *Changing the Social Views Regarding the Re-Employment of the Younger Elderly*

Transforming the social and cultural environment and correctly understanding the re-employment of the younger elderly are important prerequisites for fully exploiting the human resources of the younger elderly. It is necessary to increase the level of publicity and improve the social awareness of the benefit that the re-employment of the younger elderly can bring to our country. [4] It is necessary for young and middle-aged labor force to realize that the re-employment of the younger elderly will not exacerbate the current competition in the labor market, but will be complementary for the current job market dominated by young and middle-aged, and will not cause an impact on existing jobs. It is necessary for employers to realize that the re-employment of the younger elderly can make companies obtain more stable and relatively more experienced human resources. And with the continuous improvement of national policies, the cost and risk of hiring the younger elderly will be further reduced. It is necessary for younger elderly to realize that positive attitude is an important part for enjoying healthy old-age life. Re-employment can not only improve their income level, but also provide more protection for their later life. At the same time, they can continue to develop their own expertise and enhance their sense of well-being and accomplishment in their later years.

B. *Improving Relevant Policies and Laws and Re-Employment Mechanism*

Reasonable and sufficient policies and laws are the primary parts to promote the re-employment of young people. First of all, from the perspective of legislation, government should introduce relevant laws to regulate and protect the re-employment of the younger elderly, such as the Law on Equal Employment for the Elderly and the Employment Promotion Law for the Elderly, or amend the current Labor Law, such as adding provisions for the protection of the re-employment of the younger elderly, making clear provisions on the forms of re-employment, compensation, work injury insurance and welfare protection in the process of the re-employment of the younger elderly. Secondly, local governments should be encouraged to actively formulate incentive policies based on the actual conditions of each region, and provide various forms of rewards for younger elderly

who are re-employed. At the same time, it is recommended that each region combine local industrial development planning with the characteristics of the younger elderly to develop a catalogue of re-employment for the younger elderly and guide the younger elderly to give full play to their potential and advantages. The scientific management mechanism is the necessary guarantee to promote the re-employment of the younger elderly. The re-employment of younger elderly involves many government departments, such as the committee on aging, human resources and social security, education and so on. There is no comprehensive department for management and support for the re-employment of young elderly. It is necessary to integrate the resources of various departments as soon as possible, establish a department or special working group to promote the re-employment of the younger elderly, and form a linkage between various departments, to avoid the inconsistency of policies among various departments.

C. Promote Gradual Extension of Retirement Age and Flexitime

At present, the retirement age in China is in accordance with the Interim Measures of the State Council on the Resettlement of Old, Weak and Sick and Retired Cadres promulgated in 1978 and the Interim Measures of the State Council on Retirement and Resignation of Workers. The retirement age of male employees is 60 years old. The age is 55 years old for female. However, due to the rapid development of social economy and technology, China's per capita life expectancy has reached 76.34 years old. The current statutory retirement age can no longer meet China's social and economic development needs, and the gradual extension of retirement age is the general trend. And, in addition to extending the retirement age, it is necessary to carry out differentiated retirement age extension plan according to different nature and content of the work, and implement a flexible retirement system, for example, senior technicians and university teachers, which have higher requirements for knowledge reserve and technical level can take a lead in extending the retirement age. At the same time, the younger elderly who continue to work should be rewarded through pension and re-employment subsidies, which will increase their willingness to be re-employed. [5] In addition, although the younger elderly has advantages in the accumulation of knowledge and experience, it is certain that due to the inevitable degradation of bodily functions, it is impossible for younger elderly to work in the same length and intensity as the young and middle-aged labor force do. And with the development of social economy, more and more forms of flexible employment have emerged, and it is imperative to implement flexitime. Enterprises can make reasonable adjustments to the work form according to the specific work content and job requirements of the young people, such as setting upper and lower limits of the weekly work time. The time within the scope can be negotiated by the younger elderly and the employer according to the needs of both parties.

D. Broadening Employment Channels of the Younger Elderly

Multi-level re-employment channels are an important way to promote the younger elderly to be re-employed. From a macro perspective, it is necessary to promote the overall analyzing of the human resources of the younger elderly in the local areas, establish a database of the younger elderly talents, integrate relevant information, promote the effective docking between employers and the younger elderly. Establish a two-way selection channel between employers and the younger elderly, and change the situation that only young people need to find jobs, the employers can also recruit the younger elderly who meet the requirements through those channels. From a micro perspective, it is necessary to organize various re-employment activities for the younger elderly. First of all, it is necessary for the relevant departments such as human resources to regularly organize various types of recruitment camps for the younger elderly, and to institutionalize and regularize them. Secondly, [6] the communities have a close relationship with the younger elderly since communities are the main area in which the younger elderly engage in various activities, so, it is necessary to give play to the role of the community, do a good job of matching the relevant enterprises in the district with human resources of the younger elderly, and hire professionals and employers to go deep into the grassroots to publicize relevant information and train the younger elderly. improving the human resources development of the younger elderly in multi-level and from multi-angle.

E. Perfecting the Old-Age Education System

A sound old-age education system is an important support for fully developing human resources of the younger elderly. It is necessary to build a multi-level old-age education system from many aspects. First of all, it is necessary to reform the current senior colleges, improve the content, and improve the quality. Adding training with respect to relevant vocational knowledge and skills based on social needs and the conditions of the younger elderly. And the senior colleges should play a central role, cooperate with the surrounding communities, establish regular re-employment training courses for the younger elderly, and enhance their willingness and ability to be re-employed. Secondly, it is necessary to promote various institutions, especially vocational colleges, to actively support training activities for the younger elderly. The courses related to vocational knowledge and skills can be opened to them and provide necessary support for them. In addition, the above mentioned that the community is an important place for the younger elderly. It is necessary to give full play to the advantages of the community, tap the various types of senior talents in the community, establish a community lecturer group, provide teaching and training activities for the younger elderly in the community who are willing to be re-employed, and promote mutual support services and self-education for the younger elderly in the community. It can also carry out joint educational activities with neighboring senior

colleges, and combine the specific abilities and needs of the younger elderly in the community to customize personalized training content to accurately improve the re-employment ability of the younger elderly.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the current stage of population aging, the burden of the elderly care, and the possibility of labor shortage, the development of the human resources of the younger elderly has become the trend of the times. The younger elderly become the most feasible targets for the further human resources development due to their advantages in terms of quantity, physical condition, knowledge and experience. Through the analysis of the current status, it can be seen that although the human resources development of the younger elderly has a certain scale, the majority of the re-employed younger elderly still live in rural areas, their knowledge and skills are relatively low, basically, most of them engage in low-tech and high-intensity jobs, and they do not have much protection. The factors that lead to these problems mainly include the lag of social views, related policies and regulations, the imperfect re-employment support mechanism and the inadequate content of old-age education. To fully develop the human resources of the younger elderly, comprehensive measures should be taken to solve the above problems. It is necessary to change the current social ideas of re-employment of the younger elderly, and introduce relevant policies and regulations as soon as possible, establish an independent management department or special working group, broaden the re-employment channels, improve the current old-age education system, and carry out multi-level re-employment training.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is a collaborative outcome, and each author undertook different part of this paper. Yun Zhou put forward the basic idea and conducted the research. Xiangyu Yu and Jun Wang gathered and analyzed the data, Yun Zhou and Xiangyu Yu wrote the paper, all authors had approved the final version.

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