

POKFULAM ROAD  
HONG KONG  
CHINA

中國香港  
薄扶林道



THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
**Faculty of Education**  
香港大學教育學院

Tel: (852) 3917 6044 (Faculty Office)  
Tel: (852) 3917 2544 (Programme Office)  
Tel: (852) 3917 8254 (Office of Research)  
Fax: (852) 2517 0075  
Email: edfac@hku.hk

## Press Release

### **HKU Faculty of Education and Yidan Prize Foundation Co-host Distinguished Lecture Professor Zhu Yongxin Shares Insights on Transforming Education in China through the New Education Initiative**

The Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Yidan Prize Foundation jointly hosted a distinguished lecture titled “**The Road to Educational Success: Experiences from the New Education Initiative**” on December 5 (Friday). The event brought together international scholars, educators, local policymakers, students, and community members for a thought-provoking session. The speaker, **Professor Zhu Yongxin** — one of China’s most influential contemporary educators, the 2022 Yidan Prize for Education Development Laureate, and Founder of the New Education Initiative (NEI) — shared practical insights drawn from his two decades of work advancing educational equity and inclusion, and explained how the NEI has transformed education in China through action.

The event began with welcome remarks by Professor Peng Gong, Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development) of HKU, who expressed gratitude to Professor Zhu for his presence and insightful sharing. Professor Gong emphasised that teachers, as transmitters of knowledge and guides for students, play a crucial role in addressing the educational challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through their innovative capabilities, humanistic spirit, and global vision.

Professor Yang Rui, Dean of the Faculty of Education at HKU, recognised Professor Zhu’s remarkable contributions to the field of education, which have gained widespread acclaim both in China and internationally. He highlighted Professor Zhu’s philanthropic gesture of donating the entire fund of the Yidan Prize for Education Development to establish the New Teacher Foundation, which supports teacher professional development. This act of generosity, Professor Yang noted, embodies the public welfare spirit advocated by the NEI. He also extended his gratitude to the Yidan Prize Foundation for its invaluable support of the event.

#### **The New Education Initiative: Principles and Impacts**

Professor Zhu Yongxin began his lecture by explaining the origins of the NEI and its guiding principles: “One Mission, Two Visions, Four Spirits, Five Major Concepts”. At the heart of the initiative lies the commitment to prioritising students’ growth. Through ten key actions, such as creating a campus rich in reading culture and encouraging teachers and students to co-write essays, the initiative aligns with the national curriculum’s goal of cultivating well-rounded individuals with unique personalities. It ultimately seeks to achieve the goal of enabling students and teachers to live fulfilling and meaningful educational lives.

One of Professor Zhu's beliefs is: "Just as an individual's intellectual growth is shaped by their reading history, a school without reading can never achieve true education." The NEI, therefore, emphasises the cultivation of a society-wide culture of reading to improve the overall quality of education. Professor Zhu also highlighted the importance of enhancing teachers' professional competence and passionate dedication, sharing inspiring stories of teachers' growth within the initiative. Additionally, he shed light on how the NEI has leveraged public welfare efforts, and collaborated with education authorities and schools to create synergies that empower education systems.

Reflecting on two decades of fruitful progress, Professor Zhu shared that, by 2025, the NEI has reached 229 county-level divisions, engaged more than 11,000 schools, and benefited over 10 million teachers and students nationwide — a scale and impact that is truly remarkable in the history of education development in China and abroad. Looking ahead, he discussed six key directions for integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into education, underlining the importance of upholding the essence of education: "The essence of education lies in shaping souls and nurturing talent, while the value of AI is to expand the possibilities of education rather than replace its fundamental purpose." He stressed that while embracing AI and technological advancements, educators must remain guided by core values and prioritise human connection in learning. By inspiring students with both scientific rigour and a sense of humanity, educators can nurture a new generation ready for future challenges. Concluding his lecture, Professor Zhu expressed the hope that the NEI would continue its mission of being a constructive force in Chinese education, safeguarding the certainty of education in an uncertain future.

### **Dialogue with Educators and Students**

The lecture was followed by a lively dialogue session, moderated by Professor Cheng Kai Ming, Emeritus Professor at the HKU Faculty of Education and Emeritus Member of the Advisor Committee of Yidan Prize. Professor Zhu joined the discussion with Professor Yang Lili, Assistant Professor from the HKU Faculty of Education, as well as Ms Ding Jie Jane, a student from the Doctor of Education programme and Miss Kathleen Miranda, a student from the BA&BEEd (Language Education) programme. During the session, Professor Zhu explored how the NEI's people-centred and life-focused philosophy could be spread globally. He also discussed strategies for fostering students' genuine passion for learning and personal growth, even within standardised examination systems. At the end of the session, Professor Zhu reiterated that while leveraging technology to enhance learning efficiency, cultivating a habit of reading and a passion for pursuing knowledge is of the utmost importance.

This lecture provided a valuable platform for exchange, enabling participants to draw inspiration from the successful experiences of the NEI. At the same time, it showcased the deep integration of educational theory and practice, contributing to the advancement of future educational innovation.

### **About Professor Zhu Yongxin**

Professor Zhu Yongxin is currently the President of Chinese Society for Taoxingzhi Studies, and a Professor and Doctoral Supervisor at the New Education Institute, Soochow University. Professor Zhu has led numerous research projects commissioned by UNESCO as well as projects funded by National Natural Science Foundation of China and the National Social Science Fund of China, receiving multiple awards for his contributions. He has published over 600 education papers in China, the United States, the United

Kingdom, Japan and other countries. His collected works, including the 20-volume *Works by Zhu Yongxin on Education*, along with other publications, have been translated into 28 languages including English, French, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Mongolian, and Arabic. Professor Zhu has also served as the chief editor of more than 30 book series, such as *The Contemporary Japanese Education Series*, *New Century Education Library*, and *New Education Library*. He is recognised as the first contemporary Chinese educator whose educational theories have been published internationally.

Professor Zhu founded the New Education Initiative (NEI) in 2000. By 2025, NEI has attracted over 11,000 schools and more than 10 million teachers and student across China, profoundly transforming education in China through action. In 2020, Professor Zhu received the inaugural IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award from the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). In 2022, he was awarded the Yidan Prize for Education Development for his pioneering NEI programmes and generously donated the entire prize fund to establish the New Teacher Foundation at Soochow University, supporting teachers' professional development through building a supportive community, fostering leadership skills and helping teachers find fulfilment within their careers.

### **About HKU Faculty of Education**

The Faculty of Education at HKU was established in 1984, with a rich history of fostering teacher development dating back to 1917. Committed to serving the community and promoting educational development, the Faculty drives pioneering, high-impact research through its members and prepares graduates to excel in a globalised, knowledge-based world. The Faculty aspires to lead the study and practice of education, to influence public policy and improve community life through education, and to nurture graduates who are passionately committed to their professions.

### **About the Yidan Prize Foundation**

The Yidan Prize Foundation is a global philanthropic foundation, with a mission of creating a better world through education. Through its prize and network of innovators, the Yidan Prize Foundation supports ideas and practices in education — specifically, ones with the power to positively change lives and society. The Yidan Prize is the world's highest education accolade that recognises individuals or teams who have contributed significantly to the theory and practice of education. It consists of two prizes, working in harmony: the Yidan Prize for Education Research and the Yidan Prize for Education Development. They're designed for impact: laureates of each prize receive an unrestricted project fund of HK\$15 million over three years, helping them scale up their work, as well as a gold medal and a cash prize of HK\$15 million. The project fund and cash prize are shared equally for teams.

For media enquiries, please contact Ms Kelly Shum, Executive Officer (Communications), Faculty of Education, HKU (Tel: 3917 8239 / Email: [kellyks@hku.hk](mailto:kellyks@hku.hk)).

December 11, 2025