



Illustration by Hellorf

**Lu Feiran**

After a day at work, some young people go home to their families. Some go out for a couple of drinks with friends. And then there are those who spend their evenings going back to school.

In a new trend online, the keyword search term “night school” are starting to appear more frequently in China, especially on lifestyle platforms.

Take the popular site called Xiaohongshu (Red), for example. The tag “Night school” recorded nearly 9 million views

in the past two months, while on Dianping, the term soared 980 percent in the same period.

But these aren’t night schools in the traditional sense of education. Rather, they are opportunities to pursue unfulfilled interests, add some spice to the dull routine of life or simply have fun and meet new people.

“It was as if I were back in my childhood, when I went to extracurricular activities after school,” said office worker Zhang Youling, who signed up for a dance class at night school. “When

I was little, my mother forced me to learn piano, but now I can pursue my own interests.”

Night classes were very popular during the 1980s and 90s, giving people who missed out on high school or college education the opportunity to make up lost ground. At the time, the curricula at night schools mirrored the courses of mainstream secondary and higher education.

The current offerings at night schools, however, are not necessarily academic, but rather focus on leisure

endeavors like playing musical instruments, calligraphy, foreign languages, coffee making, baking and yoga.

The Shanghai Citizen Night School, organized by the Shanghai Mass Arts Center, is the most popular destination for the new generation of students.

In the past autumn session, more than 650,000 people applied for about 10,000 class slots; the most popular 600 classes were fully booked in just one minute. Tuition is modest: 500 yuan (US\$70) for 12 classes that last for three months.