

Education and Vocational Training for Skills Development in China

Expansion of education and adult literacy have been among China's remarkable educational achievements. It began enforcing a nine-year compulsory education system in 1986, and by 2011 had achieved 100% enrollment and reduced adult illiteracy to 1.08%. Its compulsory education and illiteracy eradication (CEIE) program was implemented in four phases, 1986-1991, 1992-2000, 2000-2007, and 2008-2011.

Phase 1, 1986-1991, established compulsory education for children and adult literacy programs. Initially, the law provided for nine years of compulsory education for all children at age six. By 1988, regulations were passed providing literacy education for all illiterate citizens over the age of fifteen, except for those with learning disabilities. In 1991, 90% of the population had received primary education, and primary school enrollment of school age students reached 97%. Universal secondary

education was achieved in cities, and adult illiteracy reduced to less than 10%.

Phase 2, 1992-2000, aimed at education for all and eradication of illiteracy. It also focused on improving the quality of education. A three step process was instituted, establishing

reduced to 4.8%.

Phase 3, 2000-2007, focused on equality of access, and expanding education and literacy to poor and less developed regions. Specific attention was given to regions in Western China, rural areas, women, and minorities to improve access to education by

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targets of 40-45% education coverage by 1996, 60-65% by 1998, and 85% by 2000. By the end of 2000, more than 80% of the population had received nine years of education and the national adult illiteracy rate had been

disadvantaged groups. In 2006 all education tuition fees were abolished in regions of Western China, and in 2007 public funding was extended to cover all rural education, benefiting over 150 million students. By 2007, 99% of the population had access to nine years of education, junior middle school enrollment was 98% and adult illiteracy was reduced to 3.58%.

Phase 4, 2007-2011, aimed at achieving universal education throughout China, with special attention on hard to reach populations. From 2008, free compulsory education has been provided throughout the

FINANCING EDUCATION

- Public finance of compulsory education was introduced gradually as tax and other reforms increased the availability of funding.
- To meet funding shortfalls, local governments initially mobilized community support and financial contributions, particularly for disadvantaged students.
- Compulsory education is now publicly financed by national and provincial governments throughout China.

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country. In 2011, the 42 poor counties that had lagged behind others passed national acceptance tests for provision of nine years of education and adult literacy. 100% national enrollment was achieved and the national adult literacy was reduced to 1.08%.

The Government of China sees education as a long-term strategic priority, and has continued to improve quality and expand its focus, emphasizing science education and talent development. It has also focused on improving the quality of education through enhanced training, performance pay, and rotation of teachers in remote areas, as well as increased supervision and construction of facilities. National education policies have been implemented through region specific planning, differentiated guidance to meet local conditions, and a step-by-step approach.

The gap between regions, rural and urban areas, and gender has been closed. By 2010, the gap between primary school enrollment and completion in rural and urban areas, and between developed and under developed regions, was reduced to less than one percentage point. Primary school enrollment among minority groups is now close to the national average and over a dozen minority groups have achieved a higher level of education than the national average. Gender parity has been reached in primary school enrollment. In 2014, 80% of children of rural migrant workers were enrolled in public schools in migrant destinations, and special education provision is available for students with disabilities.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 2014

- 11,900 secondary vocational schools had 18.03 million students and accounted for 44% of total high school admissions.
- 1,327 higher vocational schools had 10.07 million students and accounted for 46% of total higher education admissions.

Vocational education is also a strategic priority. The education system gives equal emphasis to vocational and academic education. Vocational education is geared to the demands of the private sector through the participation of industry in training steering committees and

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the establishment of “school-based factories” and “factory-based schools”. Schools, teachers and curricula adhere to professional standards, and a national management system tracks all students. Innovations in both content and teaching methods are continuously adopted, and reports on quality of teaching are released on an annual basis.

Vocational training has led to employment. Over the past nine years, the employment rate of secondary vocational school graduates has been over 95%, and that of higher vocational school graduates over 90%. 3.3% of higher vocational school graduates

have started their own companies. The Government of China has also used vocational training to promote equal opportunity for education, providing training for farmers, rural migrant workers, former soldiers, the unemployed and the disabled. In 2013, the central government provided US\$3.7 billion of the total vocational education budget of US\$41.02 billion, granting scholarships, stipends and waiving fees.

Quality improvement is a key focus of education and vocational training. Throughout China, physical infrastructure for education has been upgraded, and distance education programs have increased the availability of high quality materials. National curriculums and standards have been introduced, teaching qualifications improved, and the ratio of teachers to students increased. Recognizing that educational achievement is also dependent on the ability of students to fully participate, financial assistance for students from disadvantaged families has been expanded and school nutrition programs introduced in rural areas.

China is keen to share its experience of rapidly expanding education coverage and quality with others through cooperation activities, staff exchanges, teacher and technical training, curriculum development and formulation of standards. ■