

EDUCATION FOR ALL

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE National EFA Report of China (2000-2015)



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PREFACE

The year 2015 is the deadline for the global Education for All (EFA) goals, as set by the international community in 2000, and also marks a fresh start for the development of education. At this juncture, it is important to take stock of the achievements over the past 15 years at the national, regional and international levels.

Education has long been a development priority in China. Since 2000, the government has built on previous efforts by working towards achieving the six EFA goals. China has expanded early childhood care and education, improved free compulsory education for all, promoted learning and life skills for youth and adults, increased adult literacy, achieved gender parity in education and steadily improved the quality of education.

This report provides an overview of the achievements China has made in implementing the EFA goals over the past fifteen years. It summarizes the major initiatives taken in this process and the experiences in implementing the EFA strategies, and also identifies the remaining challenges.

This report is the result of a collective effort involving not only the National Centre for Education Development Research and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, but also several departments of the Ministry of Education (MOE) as well as other organizations. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of these MOE departments that, despite their heavy workloads, reviewed the report and provided valuable inputs. These were: the Department of Development and Planning, the Department of Finance, the Department of Basic Education I, the Department of Basic Education II, the Department of Vocational and Adult Education, the Office of National Education Inspectorate and the Department of Teacher Education. Our thanks also go to the International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education for providing international insights for this report. Last but not least, we wish to express our gratitude to the UNESCO Beijing Office for its financial support in translating this report into English.

We trust that this report provides valuable insights into the development of education in China over the past fifteen years, and offers guidance for future initiatives in education development in the country.

Chinese National Commission for UNESCO
National Centre for Education Development Research, Ministry of Education

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ACRONYMS

ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
CAE	Chinese Academy of Engineering
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CAST	China Association for Science and Technology
CCTF	China Children and Teenagers' Fund
CNY	Chinese yuan
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSOs	Civil society organizations
EDI	Education for All Development Index
EFA	Education For All
HEI	Higher education institution
ICT	Information and communication technology
GDP	Gross domestic product
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
GNP	Gross national product
GPI	Gender parity index
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOHRSS	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NER	Net enrolment ratio
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER I BACKGROUND

For the successful implementation of an Education for All (EFA) plan, a country needs to consider the specific conditions and factors related to its geographical, economic, social and cultural context. This chapter describes the background, development process and system used to promote EFA in China.

1.1 PROFILE

Territory and population

The People's Republic of China (PRC) covers an area of 9.6 million square kilometers. Mountains, plateaus and hills account for 67 per cent of the land area, while basins and plains account for 33 per cent. China has 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities directly under the Central Government and 2 special administrative regions (SAR)¹. The provincial administrative regions are divided into three regions: the eastern, middle and western².

China is the most populous country of the world. According to the sixth national census (2010), the population of mainland China was 1.397 billion, which was 73.9 million (5.84 per cent) higher than the figure in 2000. The average annual growth rate has remained 0.57 per cent since the 2000 census.

As a result of significant industrialization and urbanization in recent years, the urban³ population growth rate has been over 1 per cent every year. In 2010, the urban population of China accounted for 49.7 per cent of the total population; 13.5 percent higher than that of 2000. A large number of rural workers have migrated to cities where they provide a large labour force for urban development. However, this large number of migrant workers puts huge pressure on urban infrastructure, employment and public services, including children's education services, health and social security.

Ethnic groups and languages

China has 56 ethnic groups. According to the 2010 census, the Han group (1.2 billion) accounts for 91.5 per cent of the total population, while minority groups (0.1 billion) account for 8.5 per cent. The 56 ethnic groups have over 80 spoken languages and 30 written languages. Mandarin (Putonghua) is the national language. Simplified Chinese characters are the common written language in China. Adhering to the national language policy of promoting language equality, the Government of China seeks to maintain diversity and harmony among all languages, including the languages of ethnic minorities.

Socio-economic development

China has made laudable progress since the late 1970s as a result of the 'Reform and Opening-up' policy. Between 1980 and 2000, China made reforms that resulted in the achievement of its goal of doubling the nation's Gross National Product (GNP). The government also provided various socio-economic facilities to improve the quality of life of the Chinese people. On this basis, the target by the year 2020 is to achieve a 'Well-off Society' (also called 'Xiaokang Society'⁴).

¹ This report covers 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, with the exceptions of Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan Province.

² The division of the economic regions of China changed in 1986, with most changes made in the western region. Chongqing became a part of western region in 1997, while Inner Mongolia and Guangxi were added to national preferential policies for western development in 2000. The eastern, middle and western economic regions of China are currently divided as follows: the eastern region includes: Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan; the middle region includes: Shanxi, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan; and the western region includes: Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia.

³ Unless otherwise specified, "urban" areas in this report refers to cities and "rural" areas refers to towns and villages.

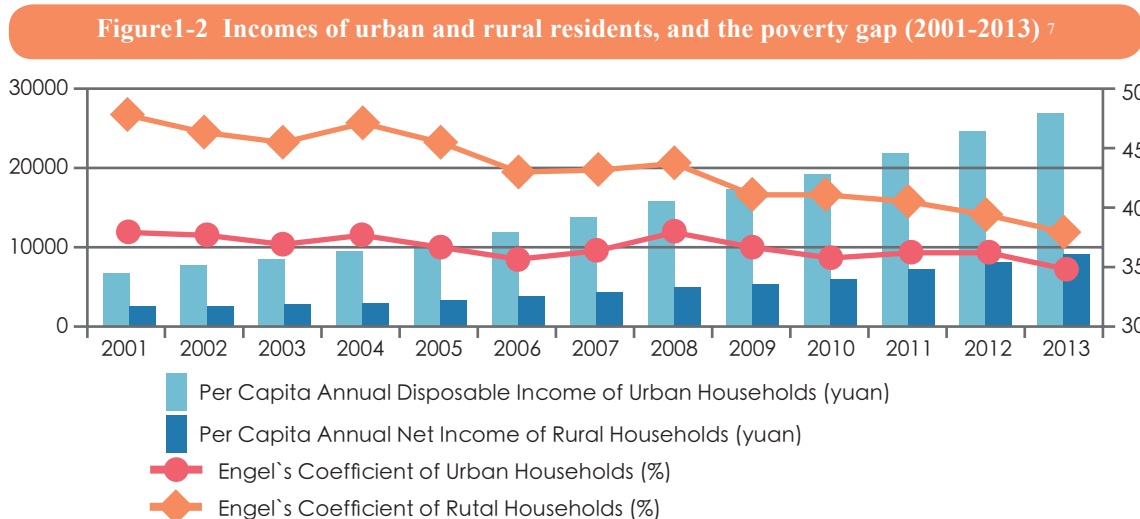
⁴ 'Xiaokang Society' refers to the development goal to reach a prosperous society for the entire population of China by 2020. This goal was set by the 16th CPC National Congress in 2002.

Between 1979 and 2011, GNP witnessed an average annual growth rate of 9.9 per cent and in 2013 the gross domestic product (GDP) of China was 56.9 trillion Chinese yuan (CNY), ranking second only to the United States (Figure 1-1).



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2001-2014).

Economic development has brought noticeable improvement in the living standards of Chinese people. GNP per capita rose to slightly over 1,000 United States dollars (USD) in 2002, then to USD 2,000 in 2006 and USD 6,700 in 2013⁵. A correlation has been observed between the increase in GNP per capita and the decrease in the poverty gap between rural and urban areas, as measured by Engel’s coefficient (Figure 1-2). The number of impoverished people declined from 32 million in 2000 to 27 million in 2013. Based on the criterion for poverty relief measures in China, this represents a significant drop in the poverty rate (from 3.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent) over this period⁶.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2001-2014).

⁵ The National Development and Reform Commission. Press briefing on the launch of preparation work for ‘The 13th Five-Year Plan’. 23 April 2014. http://www.china.com.cn/zhibo/2014-04/23/content_32167893.htm?show=t

⁶ China Sustainable Development Report 2012.

⁷ China Statistical Yearbook (2001-2014). The revenue and expenditure data of urban and rural came from the sampling survey data of urban and rural households. Since 2002, the survey targets have been changed from non-agricultural residents in urban centres, counties and towns to permanent residents living in the cities and towns.

1.2 EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Education system

The national education system is composed of:

- Pre-primary education (three years, aged 3 to 5).
- Compulsory education (9 years), including primary education (six years, aged 6 to 11) and junior secondary education (three years, aged 12 to 14). This period provides general education.
- Senior secondary education (three years, aged 15 to 17). This period provides general education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- Higher education, including bachelor's degree programmes (four years), associate degree programmes (three years, technical and vocational education) and graduate programmes (masters and doctorates).
- Continuing education, including non-formal and informal education and training.

China has set up an educational system whereby the government is the major investor and social partners are co-investors. The local government plays a principal role in education through providing finance and administration services. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for:

- Preparing strategies, policies and plans for education.
- Drafting relevant rules and regulations, and supervising their implementation.
- Taking charge of the coordination and management of education.
- Providing guidance for the supervision of education nationwide.
- Setting requirements and documents for teaching at the basic education level, and formulating curriculum catalogues and teaching guidance for vocational and higher education.
- Taking responsibility for the overall management of the funds for education.

Education development before 1990

After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the government sped up the process of providing universal basic education. When the Reform and Opening-up policy was launched in the late 1970s, education development was established as a strategic priority and the strategy of rejuvenating the nation through science and education was begun. Accordingly, the Chinese Government has vigorously promoted compulsory education and literacy. In 1980, the primary school enrolment rate reached 93 per cent, and in 1982, the average number of schooling years for people aged 15 and above reached 5.3 years, while the adult illiteracy rate had dropped to 31.9 per cent.

Subsequently, China issued the Compulsory Education Law in 1986, and began to implement the nine-year compulsory education programme. The Regulation on Elimination of Illiteracy was issued in 1988, vigorously promoting literacy. By 1990, the average number of schooling years for those aged 15 and above had increased to 6.4 years. The number of adult illiterates had dropped to 0.18 billion and the adult illiteracy rate had dropped to 15.9 per cent. This progress in primary education laid a foundation for implementation of the EFA plan in China.

1.3 EFA COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS OF CHINA

Before 2000

In 1990, China took part in the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, and signed the World Declaration on Education for All. Consequently, the government issued the Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China in 1993, which emphasized, in particular, achieving the ‘Two Basics’ education goals by 2000, namely, basically universalizing nine-year compulsory education and basically eliminating illiteracy among the youth and middle-aged (15-50 years old) population⁸. By the end of 2000 the pre-primary net enrolment ratio (NER)⁹ (for children aged 3-5) reached 35 per cent, the primary school NER reached 99.1 per cent, the junior secondary school gross enrolment ratio (GER) reached 88.6 per cent, and the adult illiteracy rate (15 years old and above) decreased to 9.1 per cent.

After 2000

Following the signing of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the government formulated the National EFA Action Plan (2001-2015). The plan proposed the vision, goals, tasks, implementation strategies, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and policy measures for the six EFA goals. In essence, the plan outlined a blueprint for the systematic and vigorous nationwide implementation of an EFA programme.

In addition to preparing the national EFA plan, the government included the development goals and policy measures relating to EFA in national development plans and strategies, including in the five-year national development plans, the plan for children’s development, the plan for women’s development and the plan for education reform and development.

The government also launched a plan for the western region, which implemented a series of new policies: improving infrastructure and increasing funding for teaching in rural schools, increasing subsidies for pupils from rural and poor families, and strengthening education and training for rural teachers.

By 2011, China had realized the goal of universal compulsory education and had eliminated illiteracy among the youth and middle-aged¹⁰ in all counties. The data collected in the fifth (2000) and sixth (2010) national censuses showed that over the period between 2000 and 2010, the number of illiterate adults decreased from 85.1 million to 54.7 million and the overall illiteracy rate dropped from 9.1 per cent to 4.9 per cent, while the illiteracy rate for youth and the middle-aged (aged 15 to 50) dropped to 1.1 per cent.

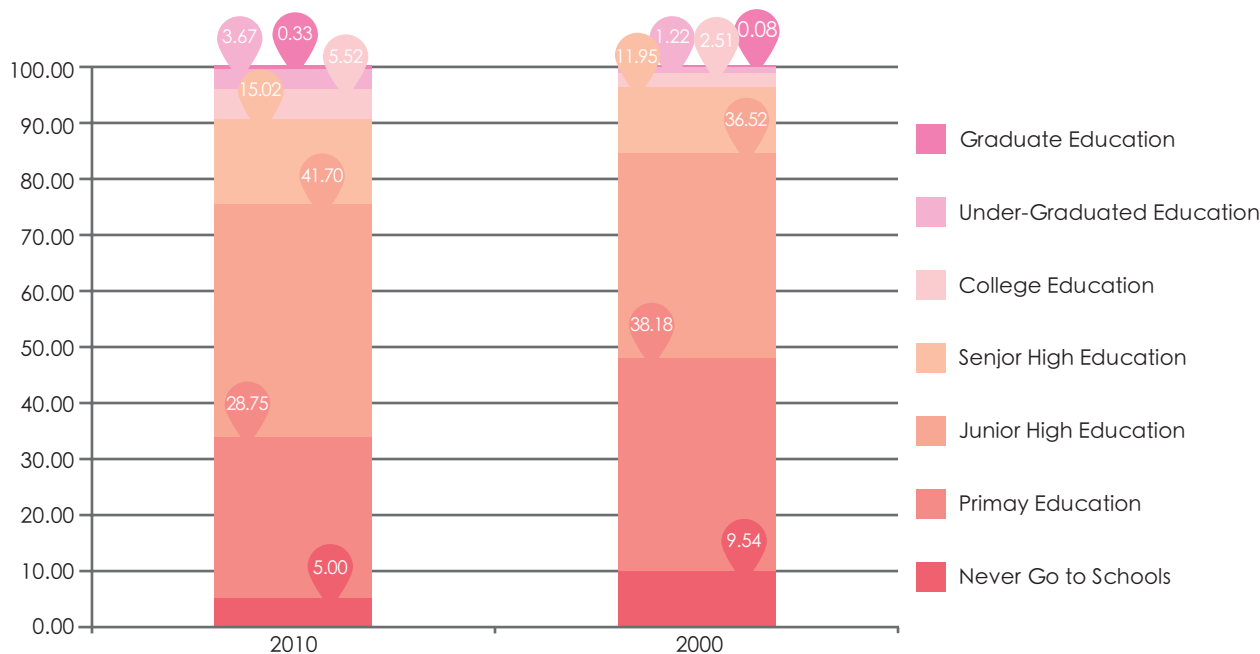
By 2013, the pre-primary GER had increased to 67.5 per cent, and hundreds of millions of youth and adults had received vocational education or skills training. Furthermore, the quality of compulsory education and the retention rate had both risen. In addition, the disparities between urban and rural areas, and the different regions, schools and groups had narrowed. Compared with 2000, there had been achievements at all levels and for all types of education in China (Figure 1-3).

⁸ ‘Basically’ universalizing nine-year compulsory education means universalizing nine years of compulsory education in those counties covering 85 per cent population of the whole country, such that the national enrolment rate of junior secondary schools reaches 85 per cent or so. ‘Basically’ eliminating illiteracy among the youth and middle-aged population means the literacy rate of youth and mid-aged population will reach 95 per cent or so.

⁹ The net enrolment rate represents enrolment in a given level of education (e.g. primary school) of children and youths belonging to the official age-group for that level of education.

¹⁰ The youth and middle-aged population refers to the population aged 15 to 50.

Figure1-3 Education achievements for the population aged 6 and above (2000, 2010, %)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (1982-2010) and (2012a).

Over the past decade, China has made efforts to increase funding for public education. In 2012, public education expenditure reached 4.28 per cent of GDP, and 15.7 per cent of the total budget. The government preferentially allocated the increased public expenditure to compulsory education, especially to remote schools in the countryside and the western region. These public funds have greatly supported efforts towards achieving the EFA goals in those areas.

Formulation, implementation and monitoring of EFA policies

The MOE, along with local education authorities at various levels, is responsible for planning, administration, monitoring and evaluation of EFA in China. The MOE maintains close liaison and coordination with other central ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) that are directly or indirectly involved in the national EFA programme. The government has set up a number of EFA work groups for the systematic planning and implementation of EFA initiatives in China, as described below.

- **The Steering Committee on Science, Technology and Education of the State Council**

This committee was set up in 1998 to perform the following functions: to research and review the national strategies and major policies on the development of science, technology and education; to discuss and audit the important tasks and programmes of science, technology and education; and to coordinate the various ministries of the State Council and the local government on major issues concerning science, technology and education. The chief and deputy chief of the committee are, respectively, the Premier and Vice Premier of the State Council. Committee members include the Director of the National Development and Reform Commission; the Minister of Education, the Minister of Science and Technology, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture, the President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the President of the Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE).

- **The National Steering Committee on Institutional Reform of Education**

This committee was set up in 2010. Its mission is to review relevant principles and policies, to deploy and guide implementation and to coordinate the members in regard to key issues relating to education reform and development. Committee members include representatives of the Organization Department of

the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the State Commission Office of Public Sector Reform, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the MOE, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Office of Legislative Affairs of the State Council, the Research Office of the State Council, the CAS, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the CAE, the Development Research Center of the State Council, the National Science Foundation of China (NSFC), the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China, and the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST).

- **The Steering Committee Committed to the ‘Two Basics’ Goals in Western China**

This committee was established in December of 2003. The committee’s chief is the Councillor of the State Council responsible for education, science, technology and culture. The deputy chiefs include the Minister of Education and the Deputy-Secretary General of the State Council. Members include the leaders of the NDRC, MOF, MOA, MOST, the Office of Western China Development of the State Council, and the Office of Poverty Relief of the State Council.

- **The Inter-ministerial Joint Meeting Mechanism for Vocational Education**

This mechanism was established in 2004. The Minister of Education acts as the convener of the joint meetings. Representatives (attendants) include the leaders of the MOE, MOF, MOA, NDRC, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and the Office of Poverty Relief of the State Council. The function of this inter-ministerial mechanism is to coordinate the work relating to vocational education in the country and to facilitate the guidance, coordination, exchange and implementation of policies on vocational education.

- **The National Inter-ministerial Coordination Group on Literacy**

The literacy group was established in 1994. The group is responsible for nationwide planning, guidance and monitoring of the country’s literacy programmes, mobilizing support and motivating people to participate wholeheartedly in this programme. The chief and deputy chief of the group are the Minister and Vice-Minister of Education. Group members consist of the leaders of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Youth League, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the MOA, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, the National Commission on Ethnic and Religious Affairs, the General Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and the CAST.

- **The China EFA Forum**

The EFA Forum was founded in 2003, with the National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO serving as the secretariat. The forum was set up to systematically plan, administer and implement the EFA programme and to maintain close cooperation, coordination and liaison between all the EFA stakeholders.

Members, and sponsors, of the forum include: the NDRC, the MOF, the MOHRSS, the MOA, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and representatives of NGOs and CSOs such as the ACWF, the China Federation of Youth, the China Federation of Trade Unions, CAST and the China Children and Teenagers Fund (CCTF).

China has the largest population for education in the world. In the past 15 years the government has made great efforts to achieve the six EFA goals and laudable progress has been made since the Dakar Framework for Action was signed. The primary and junior-secondary enrolment rates have risen; the gender gap for enrolments at primary level has decreased; the adult literacy rate has increased and the literacy rate among youth and the middle-aged has risen significantly.

CHAPTER II CHALLENGES IN 2000 AND THE GOALS FOR 2015

By the end of 2000, over 85 per cent of the national population had access to nine years of compulsory education, and the illiteracy rate for youth and the middle-aged had fallen below 5 per cent. Despite the laudable progress made by the country, there remained many complex challenges to be tackled in the quest to realize the six EFA goals. Addressing these challenges required preparing feasible education plans. This chapter explores the challenges that China's EFA faced in 2000 and the corresponding goals, plans and tasks that were pursued.

2.1 THE EFA CHALLENGES IN 2000

Gaps in access to pre-primary education

Before 2000, the priority of the EFA programme in China was to achieve universal compulsory education and adult literacy; pre-primary education had therefore received relatively little attention. In 2000, only about 35 per cent of children had access to pre-primary education. In addition, there was significant disparity in access to pre-primary education between regions and between urban and rural areas. Pre-primary education was accessible to most in urban areas, but the vast rural areas faced a serious shortage of pre-primary education resources.

Public expenditure on pre-primary education was low, with little expenditure on pre-primary education in relation to total education expenditure: the budget for pre-primary education was less than 1.4 per cent of the total education budget. Furthermore, there was a lack of trained kindergarten teachers and their incomes were low.

Insufficient completion rates and inequality in access to compulsory education

Basic education is the foundation for mastering life and work skills so it is important to ensure that each school-aged child has access to and completes nine years of basic, compulsory education. By 2000, although the NER for primary education had reached 99.1 per cent and the GER for junior secondary was 88.6 per cent, the retention rate for nine years of compulsory education was less than 85 per cent.

In 2000, rural areas did not have universal compulsory education, and access to education was particularly difficult where there were high rates of poverty and large concentrations of ethnic minorities, and in mountainous, pastoral and remote areas.

In several rural areas, school conditions were poor and there was a shortage of qualified teachers, so the quality of education was less than optimal. Even in areas with universal compulsory education, education quality was not assured. Consequently, there was a fairly high dropout rate among junior secondary school students, at 3.2 per cent. The dropout rate among children of migrant workers in cities was higher and high dropout rates were also seen among children with learning disabilities and those who were left unattended in the countryside by parents who migrated to urban areas, because of the lack of family support these children had.

Shortage of skills training for youth and adults

The World Conference on EFA emphasised the necessity of meeting the skills training needs of the population and ensuring that everyone had work skills. Surveys conducted prior to 2000 showed that there were clear gaps between regions, urban and rural areas, and socio-economic groups. Farmers, female workers, elderly workers, migrant workers and workers with little education had few opportunities for skills training. Determining how to enhance the life and work skills of youth and adults was a serious EFA challenge and also a social-economic development challenge in China.

Literacy teaching not sufficiently targeted

In 2000, the illiterate population aged over 15 was 85 million and the adult illiteracy rate was 9.1 per cent. The illiterate population was mainly concentrated in the underdeveloped western region. People over the age of 50, along with women and minorities, accounted for the largest proportion of illiterates. People over 50 years old had lower learning motivation than younger people, while women also had low motivation and had few opportunities to participate in literacy activities due to heavy workloads in the home. For ethnic minority adults, participation in literacy activities required overcoming language barriers, and some needed bilingual teaching. Therefore, it was necessary to develop particular strategies and methods for literacy education to meet the needs of these groups.

Gender inequality

The basic principle of EFA is to promote equality in access to education and to eliminate gaps. Gender parity is a significant aspect. Although disparity between genders in access to education had been narrowed before 2000, it had not been completely eliminated. For example, in 2000 the female adult illiteracy rate was 8.6% higher than that for adult males, while the average number of years of schooling for males was still 1.3 more than that for females. Action was needed to narrow the gap between males and females.

Low quality of education

The quality of education mainly depends on the quality of teachers, along with the quality of the school conditions and quality assurance mechanisms. In 2000, although the quality of teachers, school conditions and quality assurance mechanisms had improved, efforts to raise the quality of education faced some challenges. For example, there were insufficient numbers of qualified pre-primary teachers. Only 53.4 per cent of pre-primary teachers had received in-service professional education and training, and the teacher-child ratio at pre-primary level was 1:26, which was even higher than that for primary school (1:22). In regard to school conditions and education expenditure, there were gaps between regions and between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the quality assurance system was not effective. It was necessary to establish higher standards and to implement systematic monitoring mechanisms and effective evaluation methods.

2.2 THE EFA GOALS AND TASKS

In 2003, to address the main challenges facing education in China and to meet its commitment to implementing the Dakar Framework for Action, the government promulgated the EFA Action Plan (2001-2015). This plan put forward the objectives, tasks and major measures to achieve the EFA goals in China by 2015.

Principles of EFA

The objectives of the EFA Action Plan were as follows:

- To prioritize universal compulsory education and the elimination of illiteracy among youth and the middle-aged.
- To develop plans tailored to the different regions, giving guidance for step-by-step implementation.
- To focus on equity and equality, paying more attention to the unreached.
- To deepen education reform, promoting innovation, improving the quality of education and promoting students' holistic development.
- To integrate scale, speed and effectiveness, and prioritize quality and efficiency.
- To achieve the EFA goals through multiple approaches with governmental guidance and social-sector engagement.

The six EFA goals (2001-2015)

China integrated the development goals outlined in the Dakar Framework for Action into its own education development plans. The key goals and indicators in China's EFA Action Plan are listed in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Major EFA goals and indicators

Goals	Indicator
Expand pre-primary education	Universal pre-primary education: three years in urban areas, one year in rural areas. Pre-primary enrolment rate of 80 per cent in 2010 and 90 per cent in 2020.
Achieve universal compulsory education	Universal compulsory education in all counties of China. National NER for primary education is above 99 per cent by 2015. Access to compulsory education has increased significantly among the unreached. Tuition-free compulsory education would be realized basically.
Promote learning and life skills for youth and adults	The GER for junior secondary education is above 95 per cent and the retention rate is above 97 per cent. School-leavers are provided with retraining opportunities. All literacy and technical training schools are run well, in both urban and rural areas, with an intake of over 100 million trainees per year by 2015.
Increase adult literacy	Fewer than 40 million adult illiterates by 2015. Less than 2 per cent of the population aged 15-50 is illiterate. Universal literacy among those aged 15-24. Less than 5 per cent of the population aged 15 and above is illiterate.
Improve gender equality	Zero gender disparity in enrolment rates for males and females at the elementary and junior secondary levels. Gender disparity in illiteracy among youth and the middle-aged has been reduced significantly.
Improve education quality	The quality of teachers has improved significantly. All elementary school and junior secondary school teachers under 45 have the required diploma: associate bachelor's degree and bachelor's degree respectively. The curriculum has been adapted to deliver quality-oriented education. School infrastructure and facilities reach national and provincial standards. A more feasible monitoring and evaluation system has been formed.

Mechanism and policy support for EFA

To achieve the above-mentioned goals, an EFA guarantee mechanism (plan) was put forward. This involved:

- Increasing the budget for education. Under the mechanism, the government would increase the percentage of funds dedicated to education to 3.19 per cent of GDP. These additional funds would be spent mainly on compulsory education, especially in rural schools. Also, a financing guarantee mechanism for rural education would be perfected.

- Establishing a coordinating mechanism. Under the mechanism, the MOE would organize a China EFA Forum in cooperation with other ministries and NGOs.

- Implementing a series of projects. These projects would address the main obstacles to EFA in underdeveloped areas and among unreached groups.

- Reforming pedagogy. The government would establish curriculum and quality education standards that are relevant to the twenty-first century. The government would also improve students' capacities to make a living and to be innovative, and promote students' holistic development, covering not only intellectual skills but also ethics, physical movement and aesthetics. Furthermore, the government would accelerate the application of ICT in schools.

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation. The government would build education supervision institutions, improve education inspection and establish a system for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the EFA goals.

Although China had made great progress by 2000 in increasing access to compulsory education and eliminating illiteracy among youth and middle-aged adults, many challenges remained. China's EFA Action Plan set practical goals that were in line with the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA but were also relevant to the needs and conditions in China. The plan was implemented step-by-step and the efforts resulted in key breakthroughs. All of these endeavors laid a solid foundation for China to eventually achieve the EFA goals.

CHAPTER III ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EFA GOALS

The implementation of China's EFA Plan was combined with the implementation of its action plan to promote education and its five-year plan for education development so as to realize the EFA goals. This chapter will describe the achievements in China relating to each of the six EFA goals.

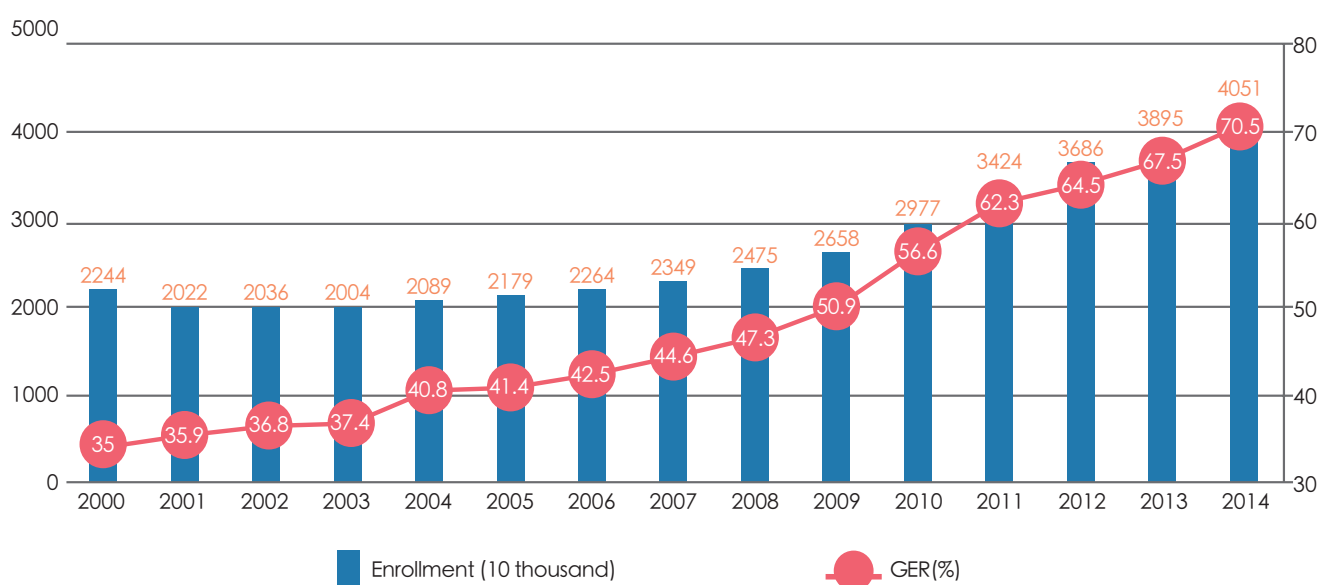
3.1 EXPAND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pre-primary education has developed rapidly in China since 2000, especially since 2010. In particular, access to pre-primary education has improved remarkably. In addition, the disparities among different regions and between urban and rural areas have reduced significantly and deployment of pre-primary teachers has increased.

Rapid rise in the pre-primary enrolment rate

The GER for children aged 3-5 rose from 35 per cent in 2000 to 70.5 per cent in 2014, and the total number of children enrolled increased from 22.4 million in 2000 to 40.5 million in 2014. The GER target of 65 per cent for the year 2015, set in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Education Development, was surpassed, with the GER (for 3 years of pre-primary education) reaching 70.5 per cent in 2014 (Figure 3-1).

Figure3-1 Pre-primary enrolment numbers and GER (three years of education) (2000-2014)

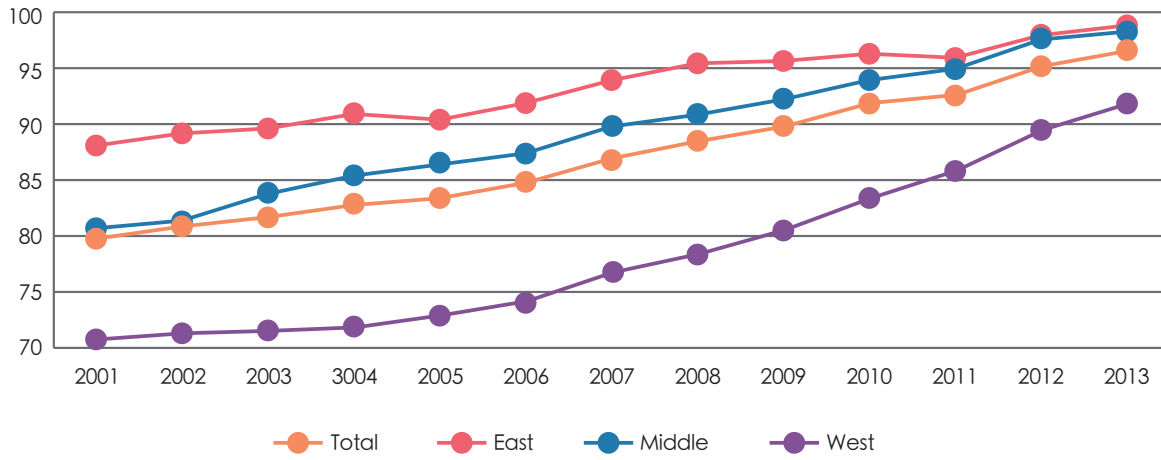


Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

Gaps narrowed between regions and between urban and rural areas

With greater access to pre-primary schools, the percentage of new primary-school entrants in China who had received pre-primary education rose rapidly, with the national rate rising from 79.9 per cent in 2001 to 96.8 per cent in 2013 (Figure 3-2).

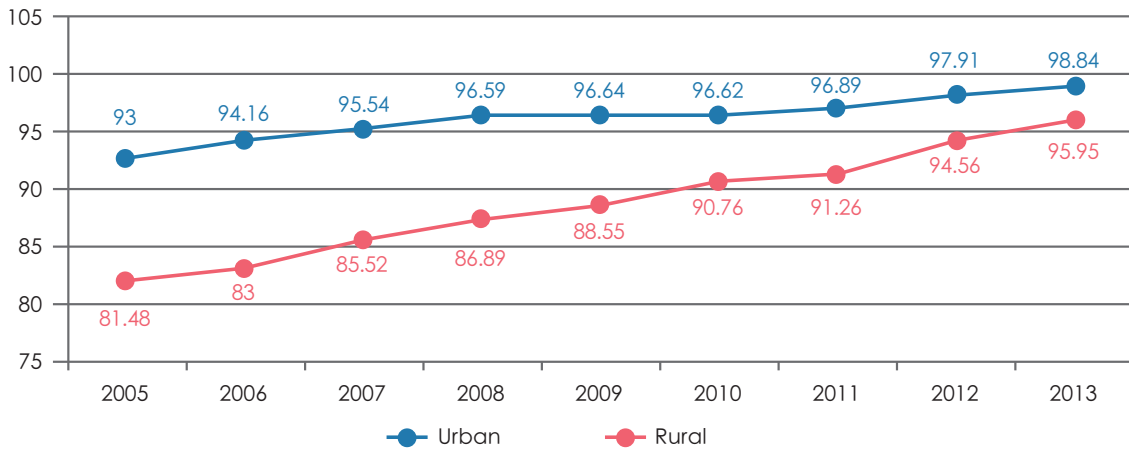
Figure3-2 New primary-school entrants with pre-primary education, by region (%) (2001-2013)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

With the rapid expansion of pre-primary education, there were greater numbers in all regions of grade-one pupils who had received pre-primary education, and the gap between rural and urban areas narrowed significantly (Figure 3-3).

Figure3-3 New primary-school entrants with pre-primary education, by location (%) (2005-2013)

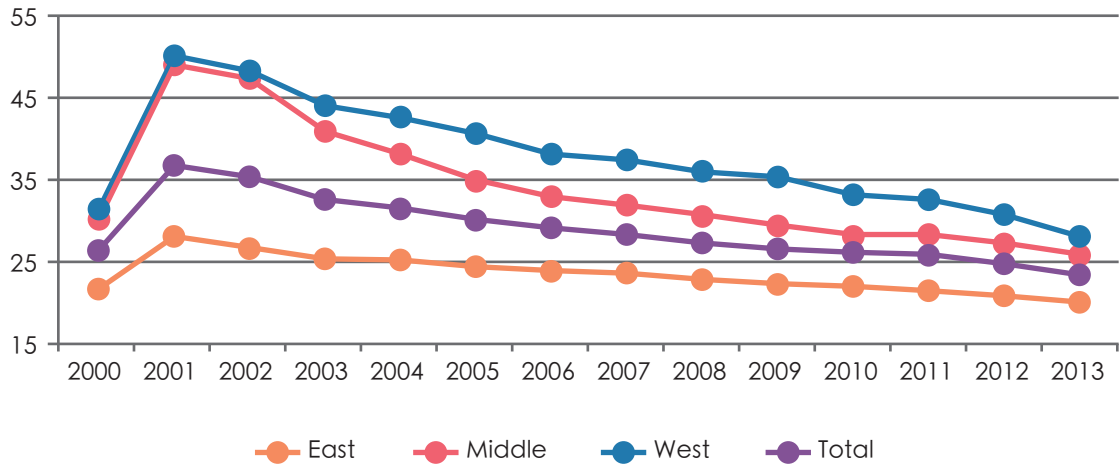


Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

Number of kindergarten teachers increased

The increase in enrolments in pre-primary education was accompanied by a rise in the number of kindergarten teachers. In 2013, the number of kindergarten teachers grew to 2.83 million (1.5 times as many as the figure in 2000), including 1.66 million full-time teachers (almost double the figure in 2000). Deployment of teachers in kindergartens improved, with the pupil-teacher ratio in kindergartens dropping significantly. The gap between the regions also decreased (Figure 3-4).

Figure 3-4 Pupil-teacher ratio for pre-primary education, by region (2000-2013)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

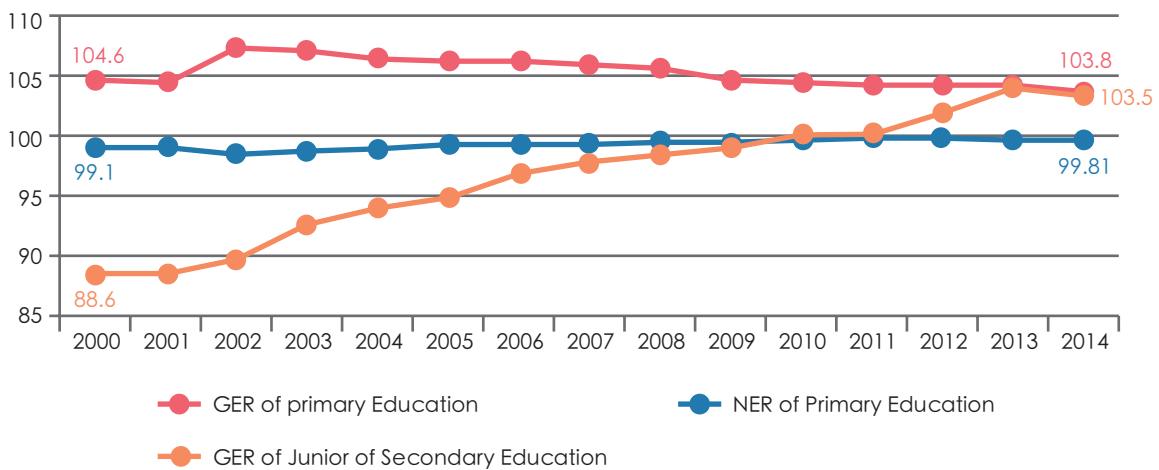
3.2 ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL COMPULSORY EDUCATION

The enrolment rate for compulsory education has increased steadily since 2000, as access has improved. At the same time, the gap between the regions and between urban and rural areas has narrowed remarkably. The gender gap has been entirely eliminated.

Steady rise in enrolment rates

In 2014, the NER for primary education reached 99.8 per cent, up from 99.1 per cent in 2000, while the GER for junior secondary school reached 103.5 per cent, up from 88.6 per cent in 2000. The difference between the GER and NER for primary education indicate that the number of children entering primary schools on time has risen since 2000 (Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-5 GERs and NER for compulsory education (2000-2014)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

Gaps between groups narrowed

By 2014, the urban-rural disparity in the primary NERs and the 5-year retention rate had both fallen to less than 1 per cent. The gap between the different regions in the NER for primary school had also narrowed since 2000. The western-eastern NER gap had decreased from 1.83 per cent to 0.62 per cent. The gender NER gap had declined from 0.07 per cent in 2000 to negative 0.03 per cent in 2014, indicating that girls had surpassed boys in terms of the NER for primary education (Table 3-1).

Table 3-1 Net enrolment rates for primary education (%)

Year	Subtotal	Male	Female	Gender disparity ¹¹
2000	99.1	99.14	99.07	0.07
2001	99.05	99.08	99.01	0.07
2002	98.58	98.62	98.53	0.09
2003	98.65	98.69	98.61	0.08
2004	98.95	98.97	98.93	0.04
2005	99.15	99.16	99.14	0.02
2006	99.27	99.25	99.29	-0.04
2007	99.49	99.46	99.52	-0.06
2008	99.54	99.5	99.58	-0.08
2009	99.4	99.36	99.44	-0.08
2010	99.7	99.68	99.73	-0.05
2011	99.79	99.78	99.8	-0.02
2012	99.85	99.84	99.86	-0.02
2013	99.71	99.70	99.72	-0.02
2014	99.81	99.80	99.83	-0.03

Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

Improvement was also seen in terms of support and access to education for children of migrant workers. Since 2000, with rapid urbanization, hundreds of millions of rural workers had moved to cities each year. Guaranteeing equal access to education for their children became an important policy issue. The government tried to eliminate all obstacles to public education for those children who moved to cities with their parents, and for those children who stayed in their rural hometowns ('stay at home' children), the government increased support for their upkeep and psychological health, to prevent them from dropping out of school. In 2014, the number of migrant children studying in cities was 12.95 million, an increase of 5.29 million since 2007. Of these children, 80 per cent were enrolled in public schools. In the same year, the number of 'stay-at-home' children (with migrant parents) who remained in rural areas and were enrolled in rural schools was 20.75 million.

The retention rate rose

In 2014, the promotion rate (graduation from primary school to junior secondary school) was 98 per cent, which was 3.1 percentage points higher than the figure for 2000. Between 2005 and 2014, the nine-year retention rate (for compulsory education) increased from 84.7 per cent to 92.6 per cent.

¹¹ "Gender disparity" refers to the difference between the boys' enrolment rate and that of the girls (boys' NER minus girls' NER).

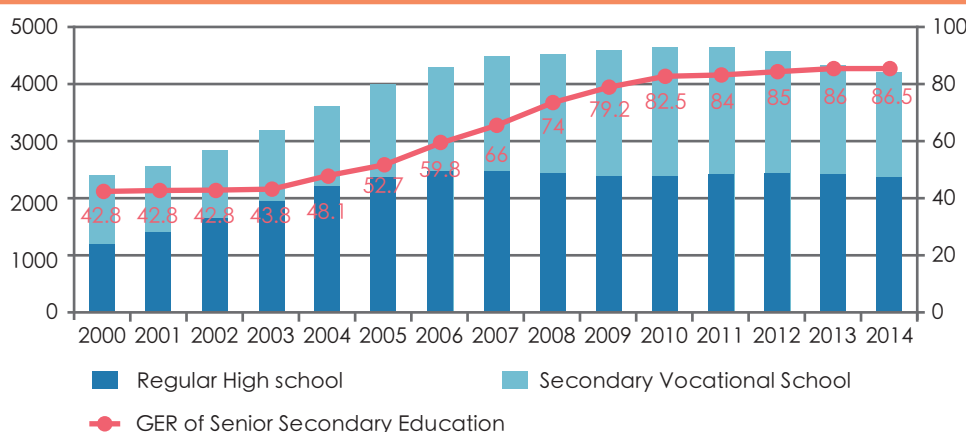
3.3 PROMOTE LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS OF YOUTH AND ADULTS

Since 2000, with China’s transition to a market economy and fierce competition in the labour market, there has been an increasing necessity to educate and train youth and adults to improve their life skills and vocational skills. In order to meet youth and adults’ increasing demand for TVET, and to promote employment and help them to find decent jobs, over the past decade the government adjusted the structure of secondary and tertiary education, greatly increased the budget for TVET and vigorously developed vocational education and skills training. It was the fastest-growing period of TVET in China. Consequently, there has been not only a considerable improvement in the skills of youth and adults, but their capacity to find employment and re-employment has also been boosted, and these skills have supported national economic development.

Enrolment in vocational education increased

Over the past decade, the government has developed senior secondary¹² and tertiary vocational education dramatically, which has provided more access to skills training, especially for newcomers in the labour force. In 2014, the GER for senior secondary school reached 86.5 per cent, with nearly 42.18 million students enrolled, 18.03 million of which were enrolled in vocational education, accounting for about 42.7 per cent of total enrolments in senior secondary school (Figure 3-6).

Figure3-6 Enrolment numbers and GERs for senior secondary education (10 thousand and %)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

In 2007, the government initiated a national assistance system to support students from poor families and enable them to access secondary vocational education. In 2011, the number of subsidized students was 9.06 million, with funding of nearly CNY 13.6 billion.

Since 2009, rural students in secondary vocational schools from poor families have had access to tuition-free education. In 2011, the number of students receiving tuition-free education reached 3.95 million, with funding of CNY 7.9 billion. Secondary vocational education has delivered professional skills to millions of graduates, which greatly increased their chances of finding decent work and enhanced the competitiveness of youth in the employment market. Between 2005 and 2011, the average employment rate of graduates from secondary vocational schools in China remained above 95 per cent, and reached 96.7 per cent in 2011¹³.

¹² Senior secondary school includes normal senior secondary schools, adult senior secondary schools and secondary vocational schools. Adult senior secondary school only has a registered number of students rather than an enrolment number.

¹³ Ministry of Education. Vocational employment rate remains above 95 per cent for over four consecutive years. <http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/9369641.html> (Accessed 29 June 2015.)

Vocational training strengthened

In order to meet adults' increasing and varied skills training requirements for the labour market, training institutions and vocational schools have provided numerous vocational skills training programmes over the past decade. Tens of millions of people have participated in vocational skills training each year. In 2014, the number of students enrolled in non-diploma secondary vocational education training provided by the Ministry of Education approached 46 million. The number of registered trainees at higher-education level was 7.37 million. In addition, other government ministries, such as the MOHRSS and the MOA, as well as industries and enterprises, have also provided skills training to employees and unemployed people. In recent years, a remarkable trend has been seen with a gradual decrease in registered enrolments in secondary vocational skills training and a gradual increase in registered enrolments in post-secondary vocational skills training (Table 3-2).

Table 3-2 Number of non-diploma enrolments in tertiary and secondary vocational education (10 thousands)

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	6441	5524	5817	5817	5808	5701	5625	5838	5365	5593	5351
Tertiary	2437	240	250	250	252.9	290	333	405	395	679	737
Secondary vocational education	6198	5284	5567	5567	5555	5411	5292	5433	4970	4915	4614

Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

The vocational skills training programmes were mainly short-term. In 2013, 60 per cent of trainees attended one-month training programmes, 18 per cent attended training programmes of between one and three months, 10 per cent attended training programmes of between three and six months and 13 per cent attended training programmes of six months or more. Similar figures were seen for enrolments in secondary skills training programmes (Table 3-4).

Table 3-3 Number of enrolments in secondary and tertiary education training in 2013 (ten thousands)

Training duration	College and university		Secondary high schools	
	Registered students	Proportion (%)	Registered students	Proportion (%)
Total	626.8	100	4914.7	100
Up to one month	375.9	60.0	829.3	57.6
Between one and three months	110.6	17.7	864.8	17.6
Between three and six months	59.8	9.5	514.9	10.5
Six months and over	80.5	12.8	705.6	14.4

Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

In recent years, the number of training programmes for obtaining occupation certificates and qualification certificates for certain jobs has increased significantly. In 2013, the number of enrolments in training to obtain vocational qualification certificates was 10.01 million, an increase of 15.8 per cent over the previous year, and the number of enrolments in training to obtain qualification certificates for certain jobs was 13.38 million, an increase of 19.5 per cent over the previous year. The number of vocational graduates was 11.04 million, an increase of 1.5 per cent over the previous year, and the number of qualification certificate graduates was 15.28 million, an increase of 5.9 per cent over the previous year. These figures indicate that more and more youth and adults are seeking to obtain vocational qualification certificates or occupation certificates for certain jobs, so as to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market.

Greater support for skills training for the unreached

Until 2000, skills training for rural labourers had not received as much support as other areas of employee training in China. Accordingly, from 2000, the government and social sectors paid more attention to providing training for these labourers. The government established literacy and skills training schools in rural areas at the county, township and village levels, and these schools have played a key role in rural training. In 2013, there were nearly 90,000 such schools, over 260,000 teaching points and classes, and the number of enrolments exceeded 34 million. Of the training schools, 2.6 per cent were located at the county level, 15.9 per cent at the township level and 76.2 per cent at the village level. Around 28.8 million trainees, accounting for 84.7 per cent of the total, had received training from township-level and village-level schools. Female trainees accounted for 42 per cent of the total.

In order to improve the skills training for rural labourers rapidly, the government implemented a series of training projects, including the ‘Training to enable rural migrant labourers to transfer to cities’, ‘Training in practical skills in rural areas’, ‘Technical training for new rural labourers’, and ‘Further education and re-employment training focused on skills for adults’. Between 2005 and 2009, over 42 million peasants attended training programmes each year and the annual training participation rate was over 9 per cent.

To improve the skills of migrants from rural areas working in cities, the government implemented a series of training programmes for these workers. The number of migrant trainees exceeded 30 million, with an annual participation rate of around 7 per cent. In recent years, evening schools for migrant workers have been set up in many cities to provide training that will enable them to obtain vocational skills and knowledge of urban life and traffic safety, as well as occupation ethics, labour laws and regulations. These courses have been widely welcomed.

Box 1 The training project to improve science knowledge and technical skills for new rural labourers

In 2006, the MOA and MOF launched the ‘Training project to improve science knowledge and technical skills for new rural labourers’, which aimed at improving labourers’ farming skills, boosting agricultural production and increasing labourers’ incomes. It was implemented with the village as the base unit, and training work was carried out in the villages.

Between 2006 and 2007, training was carried out in 600 counties and 20,000 villages in China. Five million people were encouraged to join local training sessions. Around 337,000 training classes were provided in the villages and on-site guidance was provided for 6.045 million recipients. About 1.53 million farmers were trained professionally.

The project’s training content mainly centred on the development of agriculture with efficient planting and scalable farming. The courses covered key skills ‘before

production, in production, after production’ as well as business management, relevant laws and the rural ecological environment. The training emphasized practice over theory and methods included classes, site guidance and extension services. The project utilized newsletters, radio and television to expand the training coverage.

The training expenditure was covered by government and the training institutions were selected by a tender process. The central government invested special funds in the amount of CNY 0.3 billion and the local governments invested supporting funds of CNY 0.15 billion.

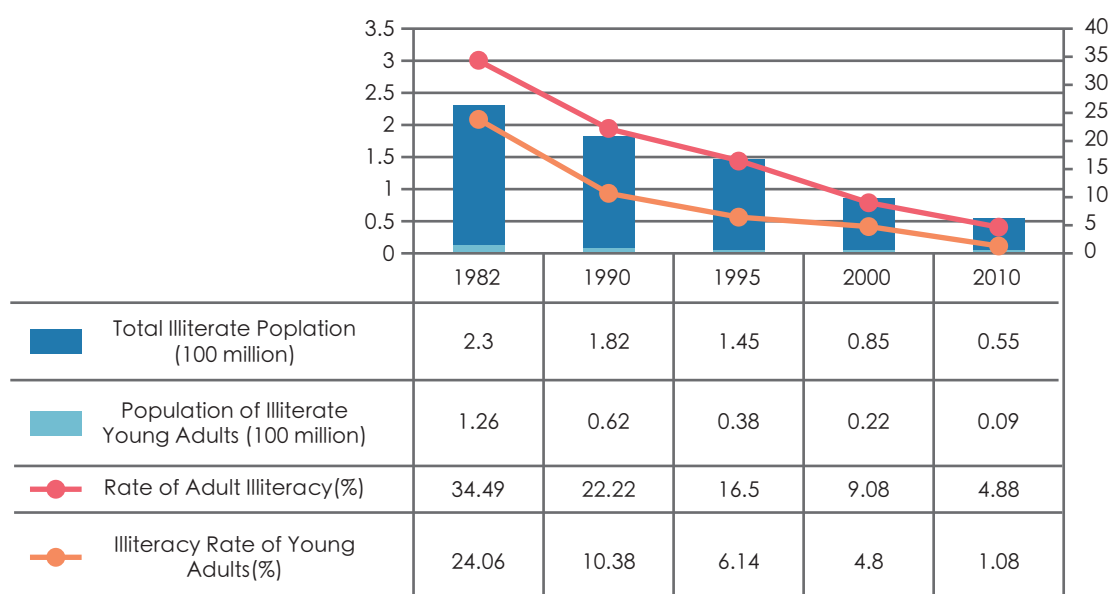
3.4 REDUCE ADULT ILLITERACY

From 2000, China’s literacy programme was modified to focus on consolidating and enhancing literacy achievements, and a priority was placed on increasing literacy in previously unreached regions, such as the western region, focusing particularly on ethnic minorities and women. Accordingly, the central government increased the funds available for literacy programmes. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of illiterate adults decreased by 30 million and the adult illiteracy rate was halved, while that of the youth and middle-aged was reduced by over 75 per cent. The literacy gaps between regions and groups narrowed, with the literacy rates for women and ethnic minority groups improving remarkably.

Adult illiteracy rate decreased steadily

According to data from the fifth (2000) and sixth (2010) national censuses, the number of illiterate adults declined from 85.07 million in 2000 to 54.66 million in 2010 and the adult illiteracy rate dropped from 9.1 per cent to 4.9 per cent. This was the first time the adult illiteracy rate had fallen below 5 per cent¹⁴. The adult illiteracy rate has remained low since then. According to a population sample survey organized by the National Bureau of Statistics, the proportion of illiterate people above 15 years old in 2014 was 4.66 per cent¹⁵. Between 2000 and 2010 the youth and middle-aged illiteracy rate dropped from 4.8 per cent to 1.1 per cent (Figure 3-7).

Figure 3-7 Number of illiterates (above 15 years old) and illiteracy rate (1982-2000)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (1982-2010) and (2012a) and (1995).

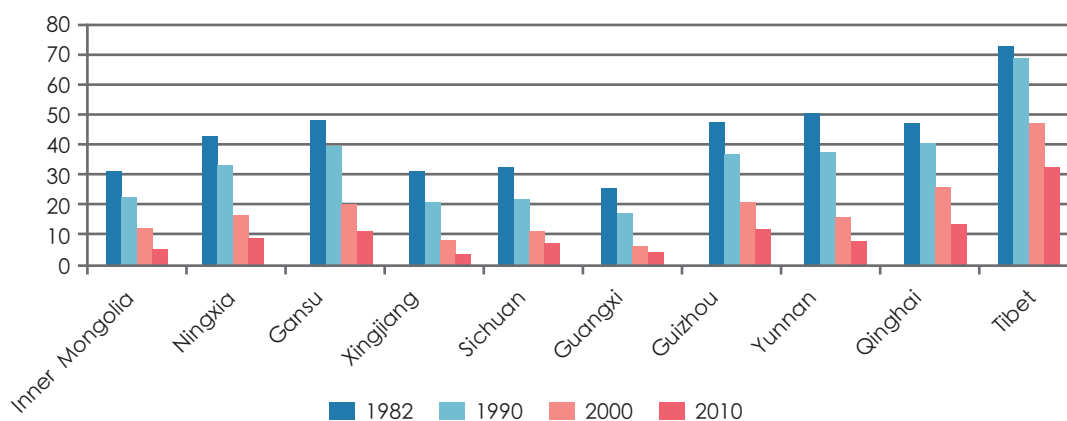
¹⁴ National Bureau of Statistics. 2012a. Chinese Population Census Data for 2010. Beijing, Chinese Statistics Press National Bureau of Statistics. 2014. China Statistical Yearbook 2014. Beijing, Chinese Statistics Press.

¹⁵ National Bureau of Statistics. 2014. China Statistical Yearbook 2014. Beijing, Chinese Statistics Press.

Literacy gaps narrowed

The literacy gaps between the various regions and ethnic groups, between urban and rural areas and between males and females have narrowed since 2000. The national census in 2010 found that the adult literacy rate had increased significantly in those regions with high proportions of ethnic minorities, such as Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Gansu, Xinjiang, Guizhou, Yunnan, Qinghai and Tibet. For example, in 2010 the adult illiteracy rates of three ethnic autonomous regions (namely, Guangxi, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia) were lower than the national average (Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-8 Illiteracy rates in ethnic minority regions (1990-2010) (%)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (1982-2010) and (2012a).

Relevance of literacy programmes improved

To make literacy programmes more responsive to adults’ learning needs, some regions made reforms in the contents and methods of these programmes. Functional literacy was enhanced by integrating teaching more closely with life and work practices, and the contents of literacy programmes were enriched through combining literacy education with courses relating to agricultural technology, family financial management, health care, family education and so on. In addition, bilingual teaching was strengthened for people from ethnic minority groups by teaching in their mother tongues and using local cultural resources. For instance, authorities in Yunnan Province compiled a series of literacy textbooks for minority groups and achieved remarkable results. This initiative was awarded the UNESCO International Literacy Award in 2006.

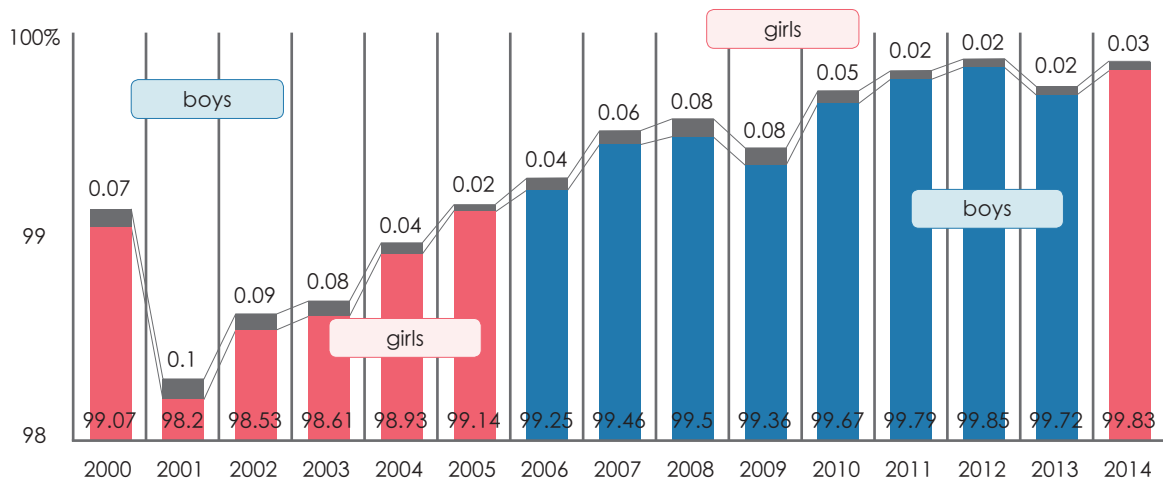
3.5 ACHIEVE GENDER PARITY

Since 2000, the participation rates for women and girls have risen in all levels of education. At present, the proportion of female students enrolled in pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education is higher than the proportion of females in their respective age groups. Thus, the participation rates for girls and women are higher than those for boys and men for all levels of compulsory education. Therefore, gender disparity in education has been effectively eliminated in China.

The proportion of female students increased at all levels

In compulsory education, the primary school NER for girls surpassed that of boys in 2006 (Figure 3-9), and in 2014 the junior secondary school GER for girls also surpassed that for boys. For post-compulsory education, the proportion of female students has also increased.

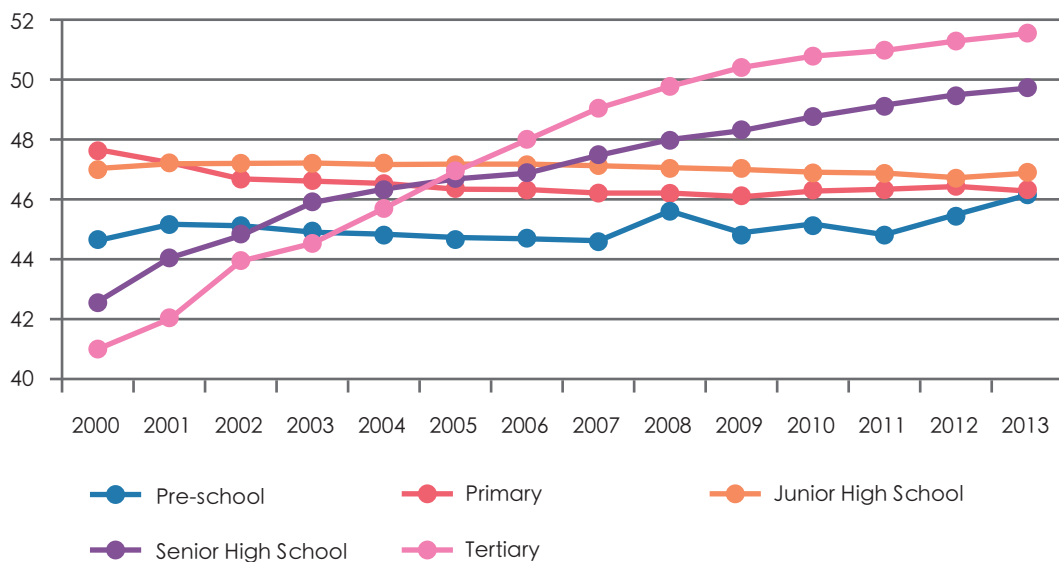
Figure 3-9 NER in primary education, by gender (2000-2014, %)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014). Source: Educational

Between 2000 and 2013, the proportion of female students enrolled in senior secondary schools rose from 42.5 per cent to 49.8 per cent, which was higher than the ratio of females in the 15-17 age group (47.6 per cent, 2010 census)¹⁶. Over the same period, the proportion of female students enrolled in regular higher education institutions rose from 41 per cent to 51.7 per cent, which was higher than the ratio of females in the 18-22 age group (50 per cent). In addition, the proportion of female students increased from 36 per cent to 51.38 per cent in masters programmes and from 24 per cent to 36.9 per cent in Ph.D. programmes (Figure 3-10).

Figure 3-10 Percentage of female students, by level of education (%) (2000-2013)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

¹⁶ National Bureau of Statistics of China. 2011b. Bulletin on Major Statistics of the 2010 National Census. Beijing, China Statistics Press.

Figure 3-11 New entrants to primary grade 1 who have attended primary education, by gender (%) (2001-2010)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

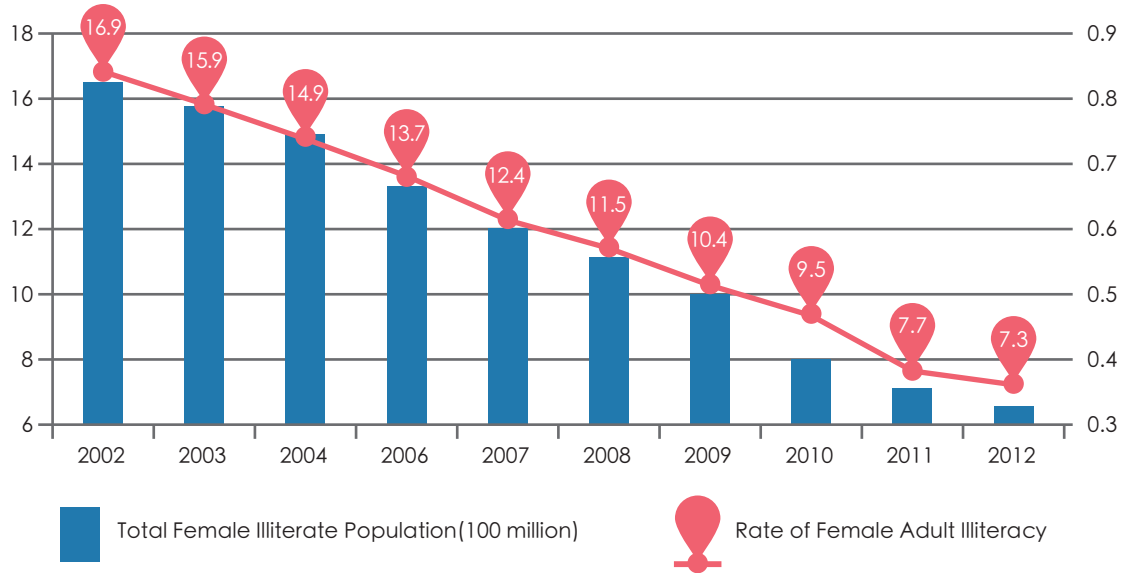
Literacy rate and skills of women improved

Since 2000, China has made greater efforts to promote literacy among women. Between 2000 and 2010, the illiteracy rate of female adults decreased from 13.6 per cent to 7.3 per cent and the illiteracy rate of young and middle-aged women dropped from 3.9 per cent to 1 per cent, while the gender parity index (GPI) for adult literacy rate increased from 0.908 to 0.951, representing a marked increase in gender parity in education.

Over the same period, the average years of schooling for females increased from 7 to 7.85, and the gender difference declined from 1.3 years to 1 year. Studies have shown that this increase in years of schooling for females not only contributes to their social participation, but also has benefits for the education of their children.

Women's participation in skills training has also improved since 2000. To enhance skills training for women, various public training projects required that the proportion of female trainees must be more than 40 per cent. Such projects included the 'Green certificate project', the 'Cross-century skills training project for young rural labourers', the 'Entrepreneurship cultivating project for new labourers' and the 'Sunshine Project'. Some social organizations, including women's federations, also provided skills training programmes for women.

Figure 3-12 Total female illiterate population (100 million) and illiteracy rates (%) for females aged 15 and above (2000-2012)

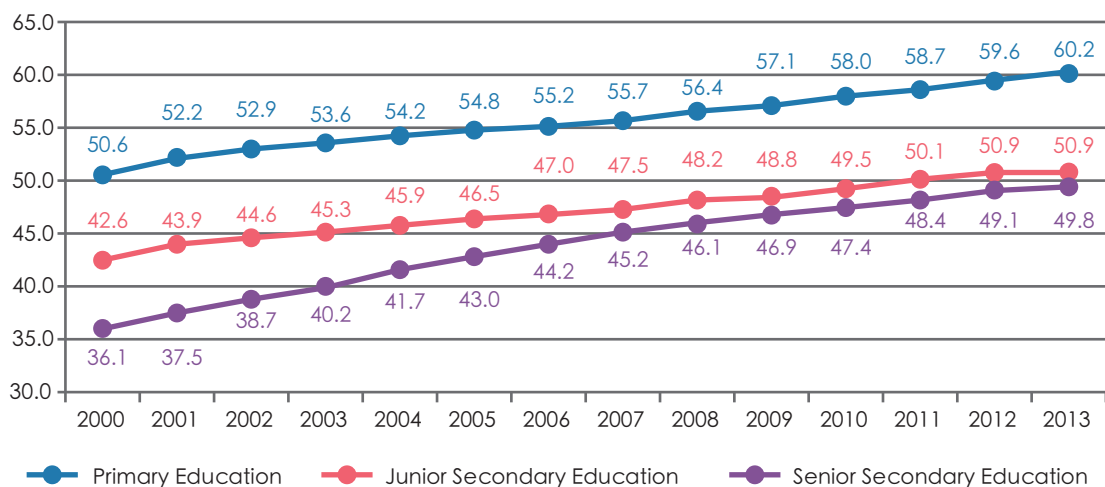


Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2011b) and (2013a).

Percentage of female teachers rose remarkably

The rise in education levels of women in China is reflected in the steady increase in the percentage of female teachers at all levels of education. Between 2000 and 2013, the proportion of female teachers at primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools increased by 9.6 per cent, 8.3 per cent and 13.7 per cent respectively (Figure 3-13), while the proportion at colleges and universities increased by nearly 5 per cent.

Figure 3-13 Percentage of female teachers in primary and secondary schools (2000-2013, %)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

3.6 IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

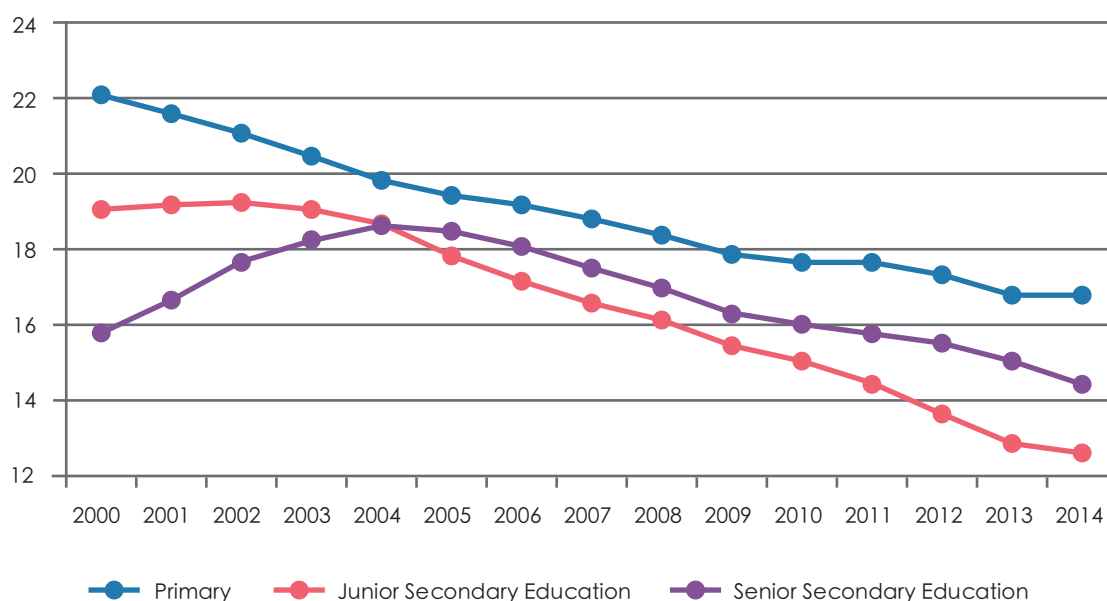
Since 2000, as part of the EFA programme, China has not only worked towards achieving universal basic education but has also sought to improve the quality of education. This has been achieved through improving the quality of teachers and enhancing school conditions. These improvements have reduced the incidence of dropouts of children with learning difficulties and have increased the retention rate for compulsory education, thus ensuring a solid foundation for students' further learning and living. In 2012, the five-year retention rate for primary education was 99 per cent, which was 4.5 percentage points higher than in 2000, and the three-year retention rate for junior secondary education was 94.4 per cent, which was 5.8 percentage points higher than in 2000.

Teacher quality improved

Teachers are the key factor determining the quality of education. To improve teacher quality, China optimized teacher deployment, strengthened teacher pre-service education and in-service training, and improved teachers' working and living conditions.

In particular, the government recruited more qualified teachers and also trained teachers with the skills required to meet the emerging needs in pre-primary and senior secondary education. Between 2000 and 2014, the government recruited 1.14 million pre-primary teachers and 910,000 senior secondary school teachers. At the same time, the government improved the system for the professional development of teachers. As a result, the ratio of teachers with diplomas¹⁷ higher than requirements rose steadily. Between 2001 and 2013, the proportion of primary teachers with associate or higher degrees increased from 27 per cent to 87 per cent, and the proportion of junior secondary teachers with bachelor's or higher degrees increased from 17 per cent to 75 per cent. The government also improved the distribution of teachers, such that between 2000 and 2014 the student to teacher ratio declined from 22:1 to 16.8:1 in primary schools and from 19:1 to 12.6:1 in junior secondary schools. The gap between urban and rural schools in terms of qualified teachers was narrowed, with rural schools receiving more qualified teachers.

Figure 3-14 Student-teacher ratio, by school level (2000-2014)



Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2000-2014).

¹⁷ The minimum qualification requirement for teachers in primary schools is a diploma from secondary school. The requirement for junior secondary school teachers is an associate degree, while senior secondary school teachers require a bachelor's degree.

Education evaluation system reformed

In 2002, China launched the ‘Evaluation and Examination System Reform for Primary and Secondary Schools’, which emphasized establishing a student-centred assessment system, including comprehensive indicators to measure students’ abilities. Subsequently, in 2007, the government established the National Centre for Assessment of Education Quality, and began building a network for monitoring the quality of basic education, while also developing assessment instruments for the subjects of Chinese, mathematics and science. The centre has conducted pilot assessments over the past eight years, covering 460,000 students and 110,000 teachers and principals in 31 provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions). Based on the findings of the pilot phase, the Education Inspection Committee of the State Council promulgated the ‘National Programme for the Assessment of the Quality of Compulsory Education’ and in 2015 it launched the programme nationwide.

In 2013 China began developing a core competencies system for students and in 2014 it initiated quality standards for each subject. Students from Shanghai participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 and 2012, and got the highest average scores in mathematics, reading and science.

School conditions improved

In the past decade the conditions in compulsory schools have improved significantly. Between 2003 to 2013, there were increases in the per-capita areas of school buildings, the volume of books and magazines, per-capita teaching instruments and equipment and computers across the country (Table 3-4).

Table 3-4 Buildings and equipment in primary and junior high schools (2003-2013)

Year	Per capita area of school buildings (square metres)		Per capita books and magazines in school libraries		Per capita value of equipment and instruments (CNY)		Computers (unit / hundred students)	
	Primary schools	Junior high schools	Primary schools	Junior high schools	Primary schools	Junior high schools	Primary schools	Junior high schools
2003	4.9	6.1	13	14	282	408	4	6
2007	5.5	7.0	14	16	312	472	4	6
2011	5.7	9.0	15	21	539	808	6	9
2012	6.1	10.0	17	25	585	1014	7	10
2013	6.6	11.3	19	28	766	1301	7.8	12

Source: Department of Development and Planning, Ministry of Education (2001-2014).

In 2003 the government launched the ‘Modern Distance Education Project for Rural Primary and Secondary Schools’, which promoted the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in rural schools, alleviated the shortage of education resources in rural schools and played an important role in improving the quality of education in rural schools.

As a result of the actions taken since 2000, China has roughly achieved the six goals stipulated in its EFA Action Plan (2003-2015). The pre-primary GER has doubled; the country achieved universal free compulsory education, enrolment rates and retention rates for compulsory education have steadily increased; vocational education and training has been developed, and skills of youth and adults have improved; the number of adult illiterates has gradually declined and adult literacy rates have steadily increased; there has been significant progress in terms of equity, and gender disparity has been eliminated; and the quality of education has improved, along with the quality assurance system, teacher quality and funds for education.

CHAPTER IV STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE EFA GOALS

In order to achieve the six EFA goals, China developed a series of strategies and action plans that laid a solid foundation for the further promotion and expansion of education. This chapter will describe the national initiatives for the achievement of the six EFA goals in China.

4.1 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Implementing the three-year action plan for pre-primary education

In accordance with the declaration to ‘universalize pre-primary education and alleviate the difficulties in accessing kindergarten’ proposed by the ‘National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020’ (hereafter referred to as the ‘National Education Plan 2020’), China carried out the ‘Three-Year Action Plan for Pre-primary Education’ between 2011 and 2013. The action plan called for provincial and county governments to propose and carry out their own three-year action plans, to clarify goals, duties and strategies for mobilizing resources and to strengthen the management of pre-primary classes. Under the action plan, the central government would implement matching projects to support the development of pre-primary education in rural areas of the middle and western regions.

The implementation of this plan strongly accelerated the development of pre-primary education in the targeted areas. By the end of 2013, all of the goals and tasks listed in the plan had been achieved, with the following outcomes: 25,000 new kindergartens; 34,000 rebuilt and expanded kindergartens; 46,000 affiliated kindergartens in primary schools; 69,000 publically-funded private kindergartens and about 10 million child beneficiaries.

Increasing investment for pre-primary education

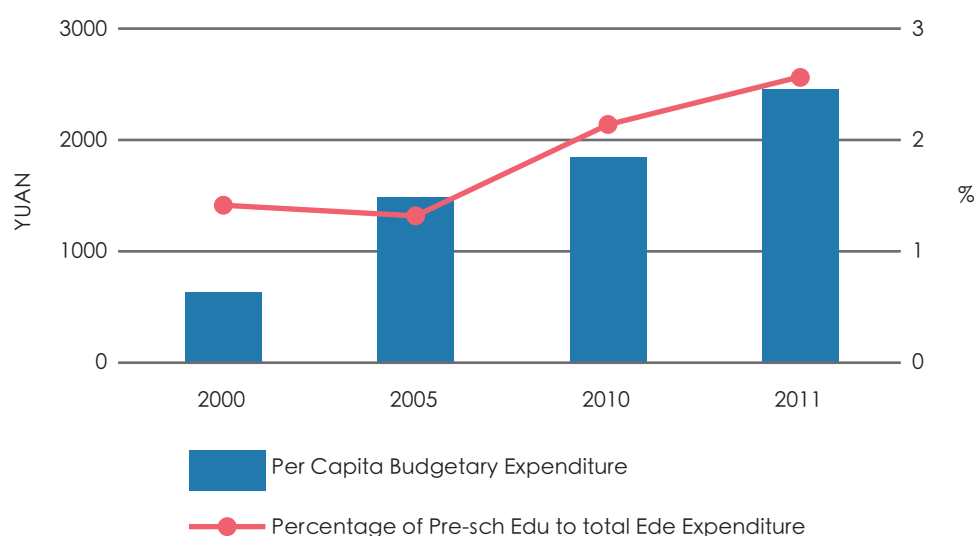
With the implementation of the National Education Plan 2020, China made great efforts to increase investment in pre-primary education. Between 2011 and 2013 the central government invested CNY 50 billion and local governments invested over CNY 160 billion. The percentage of the total education budget dedicated to pre-primary education rose from 1.7 per cent in 2010 to 3.4 per cent in 2012. In 2011, the per-child budgetary expenditure of kindergarten had increased to CNY 2,488, an increase of 3.8 times over that in 2000.

Meanwhile, local governments established a financial assistance system to help disadvantaged children. Between 2011 and 2013, governments invested CNY 1.6 billion to assist children from low-income families, as well as orphans and disabled, benefiting more than 4 million children. In some provinces, such as Shaanxi and Qinghai, the goal of one-year of free pre-primary education was realized. The central government provided incentive subsidies to reward local governments.

Supporting non-governmental pre-primary education

In order to meet the increased demand for pre-primary education, the government encouraged and supported, via financial subsidies and purchasing services, non-governmental kindergartens to provide services. In 2013, there were over 130,000 non-governmental kindergartens, an increase of 30.5 per cent over 2010, and non-governmental kindergartens accounted for 67 per cent of all kindergartens. Between 2000 and 2013, enrolments in non-governmental kindergartens increased from 12.7 per cent to 51 per cent of all kindergarten enrolments. The rapid development of non-governmental kindergartens helped relieve the shortage of services available, while also expanding access and choice in pre-primary education.

Figure 4-1 Per-capita budgetary expenditure and proportion of pre-primary expenditure in relation to total education expenditure (CNY, %) (2000-2011)



Source: Department of Finance, Ministry of Education (2001-2011).

Strengthening teacher training and recruitment

To meet the growing demand for qualified kindergarten teachers, China implemented a series of measures to strengthen the teaching force. The first step was to increase the number of teachers and provide teachers with training. In accordance with the Standards for Kindergarten Teachers issued by the MOE, local governments confirmed the position needs of pre-primary teachers, and increased the teaching force through retraining transferred primary school teachers and through recruiting new pre-primary teachers. The total number of pre-primary teachers and staff reached 2.83 million in 2013, an increase of 0.98 million (53 per cent) since 2010.

The second step was to define the professional standards of pre-primary teachers and to reinforce pre-service training of teachers. Since 2011, 15 pre-primary teacher schools have been upgraded from secondary level to tertiary level, and the number of pre-primary teachers enrolled has increased. As a result, in 2013 the total number of colleges for pre-primary teachers had reached 610, and the number of enrolments had increased to 460,000, up from 181,000 in 2010. In 2012, the MOE issued the Professional Standards for Pre-primary Teachers (Trial), which clarified the required professional conduct, knowledge and skills for pre-primary teachers.

The third step was to strengthen in-service training. Between 2011 and 2014 the government invested CNY 1.7 billion in pre-primary teacher training under the framework of the National Teacher Training Programme, from which 584,000 pre-primary teachers in rural areas benefited. In accordance with the national and local teacher training plans, all pre-primary teachers will be retrained by 2015.

Encouraging part-time pre-primary education

As a supplementary measure to cover the shortage of full-time pre-primary education facilities in the scattered and remote rural areas, the government sought to support part-time kindergartens and mobile and seasonal classes, equipped with itinerant teachers. Accordingly, the central government initiated a supporting programme to establish over 3,500 itinerant teaching facilities in 14 provinces and autonomous regions, employing over 7,000 volunteers as itinerant teachers.

4.2 COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Implementing special projects for unreached counties

After the goals of the ‘Two Basics’ policy was achieved in 2000, there were still several hundred counties in China where the universal compulsory education and adult literacy targets had not yet been achieved. Between 2004 and 2007 the government implemented a special project in the western region to support these counties. The project covered 469 counties. The central government invested CNY 30.3 billion to implement a series of projects, including the ‘Boarding School Construction in Rural Areas’, ‘Modern Distance-Education in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools’, ‘National Compulsory Education for Poverty-stricken Areas (II)’ and ‘Reconstruction of Unsafe Buildings for Primary and Secondary Schools’ projects. Since 2007, further projects have been implemented, including the ‘Building Reconstruction Project for Rural Junior Secondary Schools in the Middle and Western Regions’, ‘Construction Project for Special Education Schools in the Middle and Western Regions’, ‘Building Safety Project for Primary and Secondary Schools Nationwide’ and ‘National Teacher Training Project for Primary and Secondary Schools’. The implementation of these projects remarkably improved school conditions, greatly enhanced the quality of the teaching force, and vigorously promoted access to compulsory education in the least-developed regions. Accordingly, all of the counties in China fully realized the targets relating to universal compulsory education and adult literacy in 2011.

Reducing gaps in compulsory education

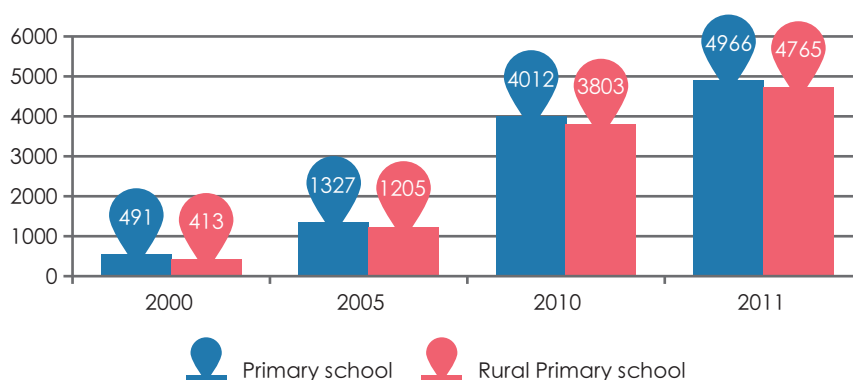
To reduce the gaps between regions, schools, urban and rural areas, the government allocated more resources to the schools in rural, remote and poverty-stricken areas. In 2005, to increase funding for rural compulsory education, the government initiated a reform of the funding system, and completely covered the cost of rural compulsory education using public funds, and established a new mechanism by which the central government and local governments would share the expenses of rural compulsory education. In 2008, the government promulgated a public expenditure benchmark per student for rural primary and secondary schools and, after several adjustments, public expenditure per student was raised to CNY 600 per year for primary schools and CNY 800 per year for junior secondary schools.

In 2010, the government launched the ‘Reconstruction of Weak Schools for Compulsory Education in Rural Areas’ project, which aimed to equip rural schools with teaching equipment, multimedia instruments and books, and to improve classrooms, dining halls, dormitories and other infrastructure.

The government later implemented the ‘Modern Distance Education in Rural Primary and Junior Secondary Schools’ project to provide rural schools with the opportunity to gain access to high-quality teaching resources. Under this project, primary schools and teaching sites in villages were equipped with devices to access digital education resources.

In 2013, China further supported the revitalization of schools in rural, remote, poverty-stricken and ethnic minority areas by providing additional desks and chairs, teaching instruments and devices, books and sports facilities; improving dormitories, toilets and showers, dining halls, heaters, drinking water equipment and safety facilities; strengthening support for small schools to improve teachers’ deployment and status, and increasing public teaching expenditure for these schools; and constructing and expanding classrooms for schools with many large classes. The government also promoted the use of ICT in rural schools by establishing a broadband network, creating digital teaching resources and e-learning spaces and universalizing the application of education management information systems (EMIS), especially the information system for student records management, enabling small village schools to benefit from high-quality teaching resources. In addition, the government enhanced the quality of the rural teaching force, improving teacher recruitment, implementing a mechanism for the rotation of headmasters and teachers in rural schools, training more teachers to be able to teach multiple subjects, and establishing preferential policies for rural teachers in training, promotion and remuneration. Between 2000 and 2011, average education expenditure per student in rural primary schools increased from 85 per cent of the national average level to 96 per cent. The above policies led to remarkable improvements in rural compulsory education.

Figure 4-2 The budget per student in primary school (2000-2011, CNY)



Source: Department of Finance, Ministry of Education (2001-2011).

Realizing free compulsory education

In 1986, China began to implement the Compulsory Education Law, which stipulated that although most education expenses, such as teachers' wages, were covered by the government, the families of students needed to pay small fees to supplement the cost of education. These fees could be deducted or exempted for students from families with financial difficulties. With the increase in fiscal revenue, and with the aim of promoting equity in education, in 2006 the government amended the law to abolish tuition and other fees, such that the cost of compulsory education would be completely covered by public funds. In accordance with this law, in 2006 China implemented the tuition-free policy in western rural areas, which benefited 48.8 million students and enabled 200,000 children who had dropped out of school due to poverty to return to school. In 2007, the scope of the tuition-free policy was expanded to all rural schools in the country and covered 150 million students. In 2008, the policy was further expanded to all urban schools across the country. Thus, the target of free compulsory education was achieved across the whole of China. The policy reduced the burden on students' families, strengthened the financial responsibility of the government for compulsory education, and laid a more sound foundation for the sustainable development of compulsory education in the country.

Supporting disadvantaged groups

Since 2000, as part of its emphasis on education equity, China has put more and more effort into supporting disadvantaged groups. In particular, the government reinforced support for increasing access to compulsory education for the children of migrant workers. This was in response to the difficulties faced by these children. In recent years, over 150 million rural labourers have migrated each year to work in cities, and their children either moved to the cities with them (migrant children) or stayed in their villages (stay-at-home children). In 2013, there were 12.77 million migrant children and 21.27 million stay-at-home children, accounting for 9.3 per cent and 15.4 per cent of total enrolments at the compulsory education stage, respectively. Some migrant children faced difficulties in transferring to urban schools, and some stay-at-home children experienced study difficulties due to lack of parental care, causing some to drop out of school. To guarantee the rights of these children to access compulsory education, the government required the public schools in cities to shoulder the main responsibility for accepting migrant children and for establishing a system that gave special consideration to stay-at-home children in rural schools, including through building boarding schools and providing psychological support. These policies and measures remarkably improved the schooling conditions for migrant and stay-at-home children, reduced the number of dropouts, and improved the quality of teaching and learning. In 2013, more than 80 per cent of migrant children entered public schools in cities and the remainder entered private schools in cities.

Another area of particular emphasis was assistance for students from low-income families. In 2003, the government began to implement the policy of exempting incidental fees and textbook fees, and provided subsidies for boarding expenses (called the ‘two exemptions and one subsidy’ policy) for students at compulsory-school level from low-income families. Accordingly, in 2011 a total of 130 million students received free textbooks from the central government, many students received free textbooks from local governments, and 15.46 million students from low-income families obtained subsidies.

In the autumn semester of 2011, the government launched the ‘Improving Nutrition for Rural Students of Compulsory Schools’ project to provide annual nutrition subsidies to 26 million students with financial difficulties, from 699 counties.

4.3 SKILLS OF YOUTH AND ADULTS

Reinforcing vocational education

To meet the skills training needs of the labour force, the government has adjusted the structure of secondary and tertiary education and made great efforts to develop TVET. In 2013, the number of students enrolled in secondary vocational schools reached 19.23 million, accounting for 44 per cent of all junior secondary education enrolments, while the percentage of entrants to higher vocational institutions reached 48.5 per cent of total undergraduate entrants to higher education institutions (HEIs).

In 2000, the government launched a series of projects for capacity building of vocational schools and colleges, including the ‘Practical Training-base Construction Project for Vocational Schools and Colleges’, ‘Construction Project for County-level Vocational Education and Training Centres’, ‘Construction Project for Model Secondary Vocational Schools’, ‘Teacher Competence Enhancement Project for Secondary Vocational Schools’ and ‘Construction Project for National Model Vocational HEIs’.

In 2005, the State Council issued the ‘Decision on Accelerating the Development of Vocational Education’, which required the central government to further increase funding for vocational education, and required local governments to contribute 20 to 30 per cent of the education supplementary tax to vocational education. The policy also required enterprises to invest funds (equal to between 1.5 and 2.5 per cent of total employee salaries) into employee training.

Between 2006 and 2011, the central government invested over CNY 24.4 billion into capacity building of the staff of vocational schools and colleges, focusing particularly on 100 national-level ‘model higher vocational colleges’, 100 national-level ‘core higher vocational colleges’, 647 national-level ‘model secondary vocational colleges’ and 4,556 ‘practical training bases’, and provided teacher-training for 150,000 enrolments. These policies supported capacity building, improved teaching conditions and enhanced the quality of vocational schools and colleges.

Table 4-1 Sources of funding for vocational schools and colleges (2010, CNY)

Source	Vocational HEIs		Vocational secondary schools	
	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
Government budget for education	49,162,573	46.76%	96,828,258	71.34%
Funds from investors in private schools	1,456,820	1.39%	1,290,231	0.95%
Donations and fundraising for running schools	293,170	0.28%	255,148	0.19%
Income from teaching, research and other auxiliary activities	49,932,641	47.49%	33,200,220	24.46%
Other education funds	4,303,709	4.09%	4,157,133	3.06%
Total	105,148,913	100%	135,730,990	100%

Source: Department of Finance, Ministry of Education (2012).

Augmenting fiscal assistance for students

To support youth to access TVET and reduce their financial burdens, the government established an assistance system including national grants, deductions and exemptions of tuition fees, internships and scholarships.

In 2007, the government initiated a programme to provide national grants to students enrolled full-time in secondary vocational schools, with the aim of assisting students in rural areas and those from urban low-income families. In 2015 the national grant was raised from CNY 1500 to CNY 2000 per student per year. Between 2007 and 2014, the total budget for the grants from the central and local governments was CNY 96 billion, which benefited more than 68 million students.

In the autumn semester of 2009, the government expanded the tuition-free policy to students enrolled in secondary vocational schools, and the scope of the policy was extended to all full-time students from the countryside and all urban students from low-income families or who were enrolled in agriculture-related programmes. In 2014, 90 per cent of all students enrolled in secondary vocational schools benefited from the policy. In the five years between 2009 and 2014, the total budget (from central and local governments) for the free tuition policy for secondary vocational schools was CNY 76 billion, and benefited 46 million students. In vocational HEIs, assistance to students not only included national scholarships and grants, but also national student loans, work-study scholarships and tuition exemption. In 2015 the government expanded the scope of the grants, covering 40 per cent of all secondary vocational students.

Strengthening teachers' capacity building

The competence of teachers, especially their practical teaching ability, is a key factor in determining the quality of TVET. Over the past ten years, the government increased recruitment and training of 'doubly-qualified' teachers: teachers who not only hold academic qualifications but also have vocational qualifications. Since 2006, the government has implemented the 'Competence Enhancement Project for Vocational School and College Teachers', in which the central government invested CNY 3.2 billion to support over 600,000 teachers to attend national or provincial training, enabling tens of thousands of teachers to obtain higher vocational qualification certificates. This government investment also went into developing teacher training standards for 100 programmes, and more than 200 textbooks for the core curriculum of teacher training. In addition, the investment supported secondary vocational schools to recruit 80,000 adjunct teachers, and enabled the formulation of an integrated approach to the professional development of teachers, including providing training in universities, delivering postgraduate professional degrees through in-service learning, and establishing internships.

The government stipulated that teachers at secondary vocational schools who teach vocational subjects and guide students' internships should spend time in internships in workplaces themselves for two months every two years. By means of school-workplace cooperation, China has founded 101 national training bases and internship bases for teachers of vocational schools and colleges, and 380 provincial training bases. Over the past decade, the number of 'doubly-qualified' teachers has increased to the extent that as of 2014 these teachers make up nearly 40 per cent of all teachers in vocational schools and colleges.

Developing vocational skills training

In China, vocational skills training involves many departments and sectors. For example, while industrial skills training and accreditation is mainly provided by the MOHRSS, agricultural skills training is primarily the responsibility of the MOA. Besides offering formal TVET programmes for registered students, vocational schools and colleges also offer various skills training programmes for the general public. Over the past ten years, the government has implemented numerous skills training projects to help youth and adults, especially those with low skill levels, to improve their skills. For example, the "Sunshine Project" aimed to provide migrant rural labourers with the skills required to transfer to second or third industrial posts. This was just one of many successful projects benefiting tens of millions of people.

Industries and enterprises also played an important role in skills training. In recent years, for example, construction companies in many different cities have set up night schools for migrant workers to enable them to gain vocational skills, knowledge of labour protection laws and social security, etc. The training methods include face-to-face teaching, multimedia teaching and live demonstrations. Millions of migrant workers have benefited. For instance, in 2007 night schools set up in Chaoyang District of Beijing trained more than 300,000 migrant workers.

BOX 2 Transfer training of the rural labour force (the ‘Sunshine Project’)

To strengthen the skills of rural labourers who had migrated to cities, the government formulated the ‘National Migrant Workers Training Plan (2003-2010)’ (hereafter referred to as the ‘Sunshine Project’), which was organized and implemented by the MOA, MOF, MOHRSS, MOE, MOST and the Ministry of Construction. The project aimed to transfer rural labourers to non-agricultural employment so provided the labourers with the employment skills needed in cities. This transfer of rural labourers to non-agricultural industries aimed to achieve stable employment while increasing the incomes of the labourers. The project was funded by the government, and was organized and implemented in accordance with the principle of ‘government promoting, school organizing, departments supervising and rural labourers benefiting’.

In 2004 and 2005, the goals and tasks of the project were to support the major grain-producing areas, areas with high numbers of labourers, and poverty-stricken areas to implement short-term vocational skills-training pilots and explore training mechanisms, so as to lay a foundation for carrying out training on a large scale. 2.5 million rural labourers were trained each year over a two-year period, reaching a total of 5 million people.

From 2010, in accordance with the requirements of the rural economy and social development, the training of the rural labour force was expanded and the training levels were improved, so that the rural labour force gained the scientific and cultural qualities necessary for achieving the development level desired in modern China.

The “Sunshine Project” focused on vocational skills training, with a training period of between 20 and 180 days. Training courses and content followed national vocational standards and employment requirements. Labourers could benefit from training vouchers offered by the central and local governments.

Between 2004 and 2007, the central government invested CNY 2.15 billion to train 12.3 million labourers, allowing 10.63 million people to transfer to new employment (86.4 per cent of the employment rate). Every region invested over CNY 3 billion and trained over 20 million rural labourers.

The implementation of the ‘Sunshine Project’ led to an increase in the incomes of rural labourers and to improvements in people’s lives. According to a survey conducted in 2007, the labourers who received training saw an increase of CNY 131.3 over the previous year’s income and had a monthly income of CNY 983.5, which is very high compared to the monthly income of CNY277.5 received by untrained labourers.

4.4 ADULT LITERACY

Adjusting the adult literacy strategy

Since 2000, the government has adjusted the literacy strategy from a massive and extensive movement model to a learning-needs based model, with greater emphasis on relevance, quality and effectiveness, and focusing more attention on unreached areas, women and ethnic minority groups.

In 2002, the MOE and other eleven central ministries issued ‘The Guidelines on Adult Literacy during the Period of Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005)’, which set the literacy five-year targets and policies, required literacy to be strengthened in unreached areas and for women and ethnic minority groups, and required the reform of the literacy curriculum and teaching methods in accordance with learning needs. In addition, it determined the targets and strategies for the three areas of China. For example, it required the western region (Inner Mongolia, Guizhou, Yunnan, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, etc.) to raise the literacy rate for youth and the middle-aged to over 90 per cent.

In 2001, the ‘National Plan for Women’s Development in China (2001-2010)’ likewise listed raising women’s literacy as one of the key tasks. Statistics show that between 2001 and 2005 the number of adult illiterates decreased by almost ten million.

In 2007, the MOE and eleven other ministries issued the ‘Guidelines for Further Intensifying Literacy’, which required that the overall adult illiteracy rate decline to under 8 per cent by 2010, and the rate for women decline to under 12 per cent, while that for youth and the middle-aged drop to 2 per cent. It also required that the overall adult illiteracy rate decline to below 6 per cent by 2015, and the youth and middle-aged illiteracy rate fall below 1 per cent.

Improving teaching and learning content and methods

In 2002, the MOE issued the ‘Guidelines on the Reform of the Literacy Curriculum and Teaching Methods’, with the aim of improving the quality of literacy education. The guidelines advocated a new concept in literacy education, emphasizing that literacy should enhance the abilities of learners to develop sustainably, help them to improve their quality of life and lay a foundation for lifelong learning. They also specified that literacy education should be human-centred, should help learners to expand their ethical, cultural and scientific literacy, should allow them to understand new concepts relating to modern production and life, and should facilitate the learning of basic practical skills. Furthermore, the guidelines determined that literacy education should be learner-oriented, life-centred and learning-needs based, and should focus on improving problem-solving competence. Literacy education was reoriented to emphasize fundamental and practical skills and to encourage comprehensive skills, diversity and development. The guidelines also specified that literacy education should be closely connected with the local economy, culture and individual life. The guidelines required expanding the contents of the literacy curriculum beyond reading, writing and calculating skills, to involve other knowledge and skills related to family life, citizenship, entrepreneurship and so on.

In accordance with the guidelines, there were three main areas of literacy reform in China. One was the tailoring of teaching materials and methods to local conditions. In this regard, some local governments prepared locally-based literacy textbooks and other readings, including textbooks for women and for ethnic minority groups, developed in accordance with local cultures, which enhanced the relevance of the learning materials.

To improve the quality of literacy textbooks, the MOE and some provinces and autonomous regions jointly organized training programmes for the editing of literacy textbooks and materials, and published a ‘Reading Series for Literacy and Post-literacy Programmes’ in 11 volumes, and about 150,000 books, sponsored by UNESCO. Since 2000, more than 100 types of literacy textbooks and over 1,000 literacy readings have been prepared across the country.

Another key area of reform was to link literacy education more closely to skills training. Local governments, in cooperation with the various sectors (education, culture, agriculture, science and technology), integrated literacy into skills training and learning activities, including agricultural skills training, migrant worker training, social education and cultural activities in rural areas, and learning related to citizenship, the legal system, environmental protection, hygiene and health, family planning and housekeeping. Some rural communities also linked literacy to local social and cultural activities such as establishing and enriching village libraries, the activities of women's associations and youth leagues, science dissemination activities and traditional cultural events.

The third main area of reform in literacy education was to reinforce the application of ICT in literacy teaching and learning. The traditional teacher-centred classroom-based teaching model was gradually replaced by group learning, individual learning and distance learning, using ICT. The application of ICT, such as satellite television, the internet and mobile telephones, overcame the time and space limitations of classroom-based teaching and paved the way for advances in literacy teaching and learning. In some areas of China, learners used television, compact-disc technology and online videos to gain access to literacy programmes. Such technology was effective in enabling the sharing of good-quality learning resources, stimulating learners' interest and improving learning outcomes.

Increasing funds for literacy education

In accordance with the 'Regulation for Literacy', funding for literacy education came from the following channels: the self-raised funds of local governments and communities, government funds, funds raised by employers, an education supplementary tax, donations from social organizations and from individuals, and fees paid by individual learners. The central government also offered an incentive fund. The main source of funds was local governments.

To promote adult literacy and deepen reform, the central government increased the special fund for literacy to CNY 50 million per year in 2007, which mainly supported the literacy programme for ethnic minorities and for the female youth and middle-aged group in the middle and western regions.

Augmenting post-literacy learning programmes

In recent years, with the increase of the adult literacy rate, the focus of literacy education in many areas has gradually shifted to post-literacy learning programmes. Some local governments have implemented action plans or special projects for post-literacy continuing education programmes. Such programmes include vocational skills training for migrant workers, agricultural technology and skills training and 'green certificate' training, which help learners to master basic life and work skills and use these skills to increase productivity and income. Another type of programme covers learning activities related to daily life and culture, which help learners to lead civilized and healthy lifestyles, learn to read books and newspapers, write letters and notes and use electronic communication devices. A further type of post-literacy training programme covers learning activities related to social participation. These programmes help learners to gain knowledge about laws, civic virtues, environmental protection, residential autonomy and public security. Such programmes have been implemented at various levels, including the county level. For example, between 2005 and 2007 the government of Min County of Gansu Province carried out the 'Literacy Innovation' project, which involved providing 423 training classes on agricultural skills, benefiting 18,000 trainees and providing continuing education post-literacy classes for over 2,000 learners.

4.5 GENDER PARITY AND EQUALITY

Highlighting gender parity and equality in public policies

China has always regarded gender parity and equality as an important public policy and social development goal. The country's constitution and laws on the protection of women's rights and interests and related laws stipulate women's rights in politics, the economy, culture and family and emphasize the importance of women's right to education. Building on these laws, in 2009 the State Council issued the 'National Human Rights Action Plan (2009-2010)', which promised to guarantee women's rights and interests, and further promote the realization of women's equal right to participate in administration, management, education and employment, and to benefit from economic resources, health services, etc.

To support women's development, the government issues a plan for women's development every ten years, specifying the targets, tasks and measures to be undertaken to guarantee women's development, including tasks and measures relating to women's equal right to access education. The government also issues a plan for children's development, which emphasizes the right of girls to access education and the need to eliminate gender disparity in children's education.

Setting clear and operational goals, indicators and measures

In its 10-year plans for women's development, China stipulates operational goals, indicators and measures. For example, the 'Plan for Women's Development (2010-2020)' specifies the following targets for women's development to be achieved by 2020: equal access to pre-primary education and compulsory education for girls; zero dropouts of girls; equal access to senior secondary and higher education for women; greater participation of women in vocational education and training; 11.2 years of schooling per capita for women of working-age; an illiteracy rate for young and middle-aged women of less than 2 per cent; and incorporation of the principles of gender parity and equality into all curriculum standards and the teaching process.

To boost the training of women, many of the training projects organized by local governments require that females account for at least 40 per cent of trainees. Such projects include the 'Green Certificate' project, the 'Entrepreneurship Cultivation for Labourers' project, the 'Sunshine Project' and the 'Special Action to Spark Science and Technology Training'.

Activities meeting learning needs of girls and women

In the process of working towards achieving the EFA goals, government bodies and non-governmental organizations have cooperated closely to implement a series of programmes and assistance projects to ensure the right of girls and women to study. Since 1989, the ACWF has implemented the 'Women's Literacy Action' and the 'Learning and Competition' campaign, to promote women's literacy and skills training. Under these initiatives, 200,000 women's schools have been built in the countryside over the past decade, and the programmes have helped over 20 million women to become literate, have guided 200 million women to take part in 'new technologies for agriculture' training, and have helped 1.5 million women to obtain agricultural technician qualifications and 'green certificates'.

In 2008, the ACWF issued the 'National Plan for the Construction of an Education and Training System for Women (2008-2010)', which aimed to improve the women's training system, to increase opportunities for women to receive training, and to enhance the education of women. Other education assistance projects for the promotion of girls' and women's education include: the 'Hope Project' implemented by the Chinese Youth Development Foundation, the 'Spring Buds Programme' implemented by the Chinese Children's Foundation to facilitate girls' participation in education, and the 'Candlelight Project' implemented by the Chinese Charity Federation to help teachers in poor areas.

Between 1989 and 2007, the 'Spring Buds Programme' helped more than 1.7 million girls and provided practical skills training for over 400,000 girls. The programme covered all of the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in the country.

BOX 3 The Learning and Competition Campaign

In 1989, the ACWF, MOA, MOST and 10 other government ministries jointly carried out a campaign titled ‘Learning and Competition’, which encouraged women to learn to read and write and use technology, and to compete with regard to achievement and contributions. Over the past two decades, the campaign has resulted in remarkable achievements: it established over 200,000 women’s schools in rural areas, helped over 20 million rural women to eliminate illiteracy, guided nearly 20 million women to take part in training in new agricultural technologies and specialties, helped 1.5 million women to obtain agricultural technician qualifications and ‘green certificates’, supported over 200,000 women’s production bases with good financial benefits, strengthened competitiveness and the scope of demonstration, and guided women to lead and create 53,000 professional cooperation organizations. The campaign had the ‘double benefit’ of also enhancing the status of women and promoting economic and social development.

Source: China Women’s Network

BOX 4 Spring Buds Programme

In 1989, the ACWF and CCTF launched and sponsored a public welfare initiative titled the ‘Spring Buds Programme’ to help girls living in poverty-stricken areas. By the end of 2013, the programme had built over 1,200 schools, funded 2.4 million children’s sundry and living expenses and delivered practical technology training to over 400,000 girls.

The implementation of the programme promoted the transformation of the traditional concept of the superiority of men over women, assisted the government to increase access to the nine-year compulsory education system, and promoted the improvement of rural women’s quality of life. In 2005, the Ministry of Civil Affairs awarded the programme the ‘China Charity Award’. The programme has become a successful example of efforts by public welfare organizations to promote girls’ education.

In June 2009, in accordance with changing social development needs, the CCTF expanded and enriched the programme, launching four actions to assist impoverished students, to help children to become useful adults, and to assist learners to gain the skills required for employment. Today, the programme continues to play an important role in the resolution of practical difficulties concerning the life and the studies of girls and left-behind (stay-at-home) children in poverty-stricken areas.

Source: China Children and Teenagers Fund

4.6 QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Establishing new quality concept and standards

In the twenty-first century the provision of high quality education is a strategic priority in China. The emphasis on quality aims to solve the problems faced in the traditional education system, which puts emphasis on examinations and scores.

The new approach reorients teaching to be student-centred and to fully stimulate students' study interests and motivation, providing tailored education for students based on their individual needs. It emphasizes that teaching should serve all students, not just the outstanding ones, and that it should pursue student's holistic development in terms of ethics, physical activity and aesthetic appreciation, instead of developing only a single aspect (intellectual skills). It also places emphasis on cultivating student competences, especially problem-solving skills, creativity, cooperative ability and sense of social responsibility.

In accordance with the new vision of education quality, the government revised the national curriculum framework for basic education, modified national curriculum standards and reviewed ways to establish academic achievement standards and a relevant system of measuring core competencies. The government also promulgated professional standards for teachers, with the aim of enhancing teachers' professional development. In addition, the government improved school infrastructure and facilities in line with standards for school construction and reinforced the application of ICT in basic education. These measures provided a clear, operable and measurable basis for quality assurance in education.

Strengthening capacity building of teachers

Teachers are fundamental to the quality of basic education. Recognizing this, the government has, since 2000, reinforced the capacity building of teachers, especially among teachers in rural schools.

The government began by ameliorating the teacher education mechanism and deployment to rural schools. To relieve the shortage of qualified teachers in remote and poverty-stricken areas, in 2006 the government launched the 'Special Posts for Compulsory Schools in Rural Areas' project, which recruits qualified teachers for rural schools in the middle and western regions, thanks to funding from the central and provincial governments. So far, 430,000 teachers have been recruited in more than 30,000 rural schools.

In 2007, to strengthen the training of rural teachers, the government launched the 'Tuition-free Teacher Education' programme, which has been implemented in six national universities, aiming to attract excellent students to receive pre-service teacher training and to work in rural schools after graduation. As of 2014, 80,000 students had been recruited, of which 44,000 had graduated and were working in rural schools. Following the success of the national programme, 24 provinces and autonomous regions also launched local pilot programmes of this kind, enrolling 35,000 students. In 2004, the government began the 'Master's Degree for Rural Teachers' programme, which will enable teachers to gain in-service training towards a master's degree, with the aim of attracting excellent graduates to teach in rural schools. Another initiative launched by local governments in recent years to improve the teaching capacity of rural teachers, has been a programme to encourage institutionalized teacher exchange between rural and urban schools.

Aside from improving pre-service training, the government has enhanced in-service training of teachers. The central government initiated a new system in 2013 as a pilot programme in selected areas to merge teacher qualification examinations and to require teachers to renew their certificates every five years. Accordingly, all teachers must update their teaching qualifications every five years with no less than 360 hours of continuing education and in-service learning.

In 2010, the government launched the ‘National Teacher Training’ programme which aims to develop high-quality training resources and establish teacher training bases to promote professional development of teachers, mainly those from rural compulsory schools and kindergartens in the middle and western regions. The government initiated the ‘National Project on ICT Capacity Building for Primary and Secondary School Teachers’ in 2013, which trained 2.49 million teachers in 2014 and aims to train a total of 10 million teachers by 2017. Between 2010 and 2014, the central government provided special funds of CNY 64.2 billion and provided training for 7.33 million teachers, of which 7.07 million were from rural schools and kindergartens.

The government has also improved teachers’ incomes and social status, especially in rural schools. This has been achieved through gradually reinforcing a new compensation system for school teachers and fully covering rural school teachers’ salaries with the government budget. A performance-based compensation system was put in place in 2009, which has increased the income of over 10 million compulsory school teachers, with a higher rate of increase in rural schools than in urban schools. Since 2013, the central government has allocated a total of CNY 915 million as living subsidies for rural teachers in poverty-stricken areas, which has benefited 320,000 teachers in 219 counties. To better the living conditions of rural teachers, the government has also implemented a project titled ‘Construction of Turnover Dormitories for Rural Teachers’. In the last two years, the central government has invested CNY 5.6 billion and constructed 105,000 dormitories for teachers. To attract and retain excellent teachers for rural schools, the government has also given preferential consideration to the professional development of rural teachers over their urban counterparts.

Deepening the reform of curriculum and instruction in basic education

The reform of curriculum and instruction in basic education aims to advance the shift towards quality-oriented education, improve the quality of education, and promote student development in a holistic way. In 2001, the government developed national curriculum standards for compulsory education and amended them in 2011. The standards focus on cultivating students’ basic competencies, especially their sense of social responsibility, innovation and practical skills. The new curriculum emphasizes the comprehensiveness, selectivity and suitability of courses, and it adds practical experience in areas such as information technology, labour and technology education, and community service and social practice.

The reform of teaching is being achieved primarily through reforming teaching methods and strengthening students’ self-directed learning, problem-solving and social skills. The teaching reforms emphasize applying varying teaching tactics for the various student groups and individuals. For example, bilingual teaching is offered to ethnic minority students in areas populated mainly by ethnic minority groups. In 2013 there were over 85,000 bilingual classes for ethnic minority students, of which over 60,000 were for compulsory education. Studies indicate that bilingual teaching has effectively improved the quality of both teaching and learning. In addition to reforming teaching approaches, the volume and difficulty level of the curriculum are being adjusted to reduce students’ workloads.

Increasing education input and improving school infrastructure

To improve the infrastructure in compulsory schools, especially those in rural areas, and to narrow the gap between regions and between urban and rural schools, the government has implemented a series of plans, projects and programmes, including the ‘Two Basics’ (2004-2007) policy, the ‘Boarding School Construction in Rural Areas’ project, the ‘Modern Distance Education in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Rural Areas’ project, Phase II of the ‘Compulsory Education in National Poverty-stricken Areas’ project, and the ‘Reconstruction of Old and Dilapidated Buildings in Primary and Secondary Schools’ project.

Between 2009 and 2011, aiming to accelerate the improvement of the infrastructure of rural schools in earthquake-prone and densely-populated areas in middle and western China, the central government provided special funds of CNY 28 billion to implement the ‘Safety of Compulsory Education Schools in Rural Areas’ project. Another project aiming to enhance learning conditions in rural schools was

the ‘Improving Weak Compulsory Schools in Rural Areas’ project, launched in 2010, to which the central government allocated CNY 16.9 billion. In 2011, the government began the second phase of the ‘Reconstruction of School Dormitories in Rural Areas in the Mid-West Regions’ project. Funding for this project was also increased. In 2010 and 2011, the government increased per student expenditure for rural compulsory education. Then in 2015 the central government made appropriations of over CNY 130 billion to subsidize compulsory education in both rural and urban areas. The implementation of these plans and projects has improved school infrastructure in rural areas remarkably and has played a key role in improving the quality of education.

To enable rural schools to gain access to high-quality teaching resources via multimedia technology, in 2003 the government launched the ‘Modern Distance Education in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Rural Areas’ project. This project also sought to ease the shortage of education resources and the lack of teachers in rural primary and middle schools, and to enhance the quality of rural education. With funding of more than CNY 10 billion, this project installed about 110,000 compact disc players in rural primary schools, set up 380,000 satellite receiving-sites in rural primary schools, and built 40,000 computer rooms in rural junior schools. It has so far covered more than 80 per cent of the primary and junior secondary schools in the rural areas of middle and western China and benefited over 100 million students in primary and junior secondary schools.

Since 2000, focusing on the two strategic themes of promoting equality and enhancing quality, the government has encouraged local and provincial governments to take a leading role and endeavour to increase funding for EFA. At the same time, the government has implemented preferential policies for regions that are achieving the EFA goals and has sought to narrow the education gaps between regions, between rural and urban areas, and between groups (women, ethnic groups, etc).

The government has supported and advanced the improvement of the quality of basic education through a series of policy initiatives, including emphasizing the capacity building of teachers, especially rural teachers, deepening of curriculum and teaching reforms in basic education, establishing and improving education quality standards and monitoring systems, improving the infrastructure of weak schools in a holistic way, and accelerating the use of ICT in schools.

CHAPTER V REMAINING CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Since 2000 China has made great progress towards achieving the EFA goals, thereby laying sound foundations for the future development of education in the country. However, China still faces many challenges in its quest to reform and develop the nation's education system. The chapter will summarize the main challenges and provide an overview of the strategies and policies that will be implemented to address those challenges.

5.1 CHALLENGES

Pre-primary education: Need more resources to build strong foundations

In 2013, China had over 137,000 kindergartens, with 25.77 million children enrolled. While the number of children enrolled in kindergarten accounts for 66 per cent of all enrolments, the average education expenditure on rural kindergartens is only about 55 per cent of the national average. Average education expenditure in the eastern region is about 2.5 times that of the middle region and 1.5 times that of the western region.

While the pre-primary GER has increased significantly since 2000, it is necessary to increase it further, which will require more resources and investment, as well as more schools and qualified teachers. Furthermore, given that the adjustment of the one-child policy is expected to lead to an increase in the number of children aged 3 to 5, resources are also needed to meet the expected increased demand for pre-primary education services. In addition, with increasing urbanization, demand for pre-primary education in urban areas is steadily rising. Millions of children of pre-school age move to cities with their parents each year, but due to insufficient urban public services and unaffordable private facilities, many children are enrolled in sub-standard child-care facilities.

Recognizing the need to increase the pre-school GER, in 2010 the government launched the 'Three-Year Action Plan for Pre-primary Education'. Since then, the number of children enrolled in kindergartens has increased dramatically, but this was accompanied only by a moderate increase in the number of pre-school teachers. The problem is that the training of pre-school teachers takes time, so it is difficult to provide sufficient numbers of qualified teachers quickly. In 2013, only 63.9 per cent of kindergarten teachers had received professional training (graduated from colleges with pre-primary education majors), 9 percentage points lower than the figure for 2005. The quality of pre-primary education has been affected by the lack of sufficient numbers of professional teachers.

The government recognizes that the content and methods of pre-primary education need improvement and that many kindergartens try to instill knowledge that will be taught in primary schools, ignoring the young children's characteristics and negatively influencing children's mental and physical health. The main cause of this phenomenon is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural areas. Around 10 per cent of rural kindergarten teachers are temporary substitute teachers without any professional training.

Particular difficulties are faced in providing access to pre-primary education in rural areas, especially in underdeveloped areas where the population is scattered. Many of the existing kindergartens in rural areas provide low-quality education services, due to poor conditions and a shortage of qualified teachers. These issues can only be addressed by allocating more resources for pre-primary education in rural areas of the middle and western regions.

Compulsory education: transform policy focus from inputs to outputs

Chinese compulsory education faces many challenges. One is that it must keep up with demographic changes and allocate education resources accordingly. As urbanization sees more and more students

flowing to cities, it is necessary to continually adjust the plans for schools, facilities, equipment and the teaching force. The large number of rural students transferring to urban schools has resulted in oversized classes, which negatively impacts education quality.

A related challenge is that children of rural migrant workers are not always able to access compulsory education. In 2013, the number of children of migrant workers attending compulsory schools reached 34.04 million, accounting for 25 per cent of the national total. Of these, the number of children who followed their parents to towns and cities was 12.77 million, while the number of children of migrant workers remaining in the countryside was 21.27 million. Many of the children of migrant workers have not been able to enrol in urban public schools or have had difficulty adjusting to their new schools. At the same time, the children who are separated from their parents (left behind) may suffer from psychological problems and learning difficulties due to lack of affection and long periods of separation from their parents and tend to drop out of school.

Another challenge has been how to manage the effects of the declining number of enrolments on small rural schools. Between 2000 and 2013, the number of primary schools decreased by 61 per cent and the number of teaching sites decreased by 54 per cent. The closing of small rural schools due to insufficient student numbers has had negative effects for the remaining students. The remaining children face difficulties in accessing schools and their families must spend more for travel costs or pay for boarding fees, and students must travel further, which leads to new dropouts.

An additional challenge in providing compulsory education to all is the need to narrow the gaps between regions, schools and urban and rural areas. In terms of school facilities, the average value of equipment per student in rural primary schools was only 47 per cent of that in cities in 2013. For example, the average values of equipment in the middle and western regions were only 38 per cent and 48.6 per cent, respectively, of that in the eastern region.

In rural junior secondary schools, the average value of equipment was only 58 per cent of that in cities. For example, the average values of equipment in junior secondary schools in the middle and western regions were only 47.8 per cent and 51.3 per cent, respectively, of that in the eastern region. Likewise, the number of computers per 100 students in the middle and western regions was less than half of that in the eastern region. The difference in equipment expenditure reflects the growing gap between the eastern and western regions in terms of funding (CNY 725 vs CNY 4,218). The gap in terms of absolute values between the central and eastern regions increased from CNY 781 to CNY 5,923 over the past decade.

Skills of youth and adults: Gaps need to be narrowed

A key issue faced in extending compulsory education to all is how to reduce dropouts, and ensure all students complete the required years of schooling, so that they develop the basic skills required in modern life. Research has found that students are more inclined to drop out in junior secondary school when they face learning difficulties. To increase the retention rate it is very important to improve the quality of teaching, especially to provide effective assistance for students with learning difficulties.

Another challenge China faces is the mismatch between the skills possessed by the workforce (youth and adults) and the skills required by Chinese industry for the advancement of science and technology, and industrial innovation. Enhancing vocational education and training is not only necessary for social transformation but also for improving employment prospects. People with low skills have lower incomes and lower social participation¹⁸. The gaps are significantly greater for certain groups, for example the education, training and skills levels of rural residents are lower than those of urban residents, while participation in vocational training is lower for migrant workers than for urban residents. Challenges faced in providing skills training for migrant workers include lack of an overall plan, inefficient use of funds, poor training quality and imperfect monitoring mechanisms¹⁹.

¹⁸ National Center for Education Development Research. 2014. Analysis of the status quo and influential factors of urban and rural residents' learning: Survey Report. Beijing, National Center for Education Development Research.

¹⁹ Opinions of the State Council on solving the problem of migrant workers. 2010.

Adult literacy: Functional illiteracy needs to be addressed

Following over 20 years of campaigns, literacy has increased and literacy education has seen a transformation, but challenges remain. One key issue is functional illiteracy. Although the number of adults who are ‘literate’, as currently measured, has increased, many adults remain functionally illiterate. The literacy standards promulgated in 1988 define ‘literacy’ among urban residents as being able to read and write 2,000 characters, while among rural residents it is defined as being able to read and write 1,500. With changes and the development of Chinese society, the literacy standards need to be adjusted to meet modern requirements. In particular, attention should be paid to developing the skills required for lifelong learning and enabling learners to make use of their reading, writing and calculating skills to solve practical problems. To achieve improvements in functional literacy, the content and methods of literacy education need to be improved, and assessment must be reformed from a simple literacy test to a comprehensive basic skills evaluation.

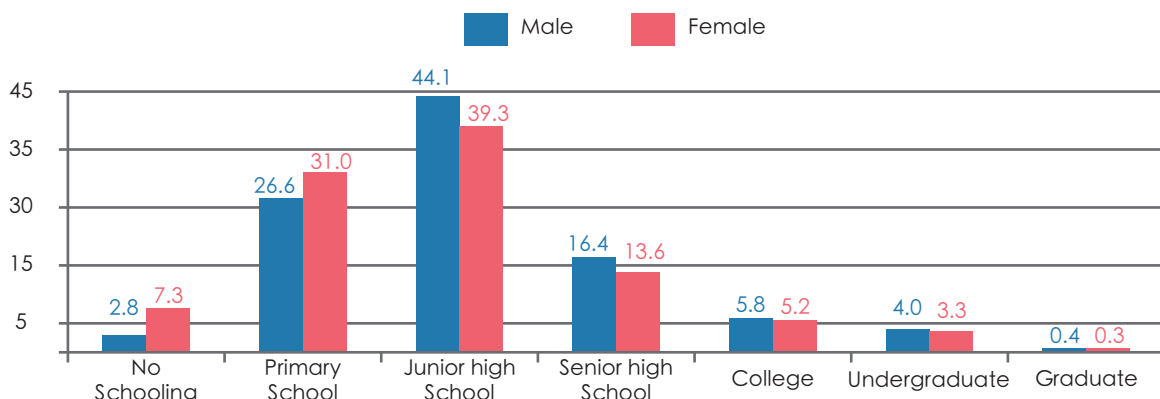
A related issue is that while the number of illiterates has decreased, the difficulty of reaching illiterate people through literacy programme has increased. In 2010, the rates of adult illiteracy in cities, towns and rural areas were 1.9 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 7.3 per cent, respectively. This indicates that literacy rates are particularly low in remote areas with insufficient transport links and a shortage of information. Eliminating illiteracy in such areas is difficult and expensive due to the shortage of cultural and education resources.

Another issue affecting literacy is that literacy education is often not sufficiently relevant to learners or effective. The traditional methods of increasing literacy are becoming more and more ineffective and need to be reformed to be more targeted, individualized and personalized, focusing on the particular needs of the remaining illiterate adults, who are mainly women, minorities and the elderly. The literacy programme for ethnic minority groups, for instance, needs to be via bilingual teaching. Recognizing the shortage of bilingual teachers and the scarcity of appropriate teaching and learning materials for bilingual teaching and learning, more efforts should be made to coordinate links between the native ethnic languages, characters and the national language to improve the effectiveness of literacy education.

Gender parity and equality: Greater efforts are needed to eliminate illiteracy among women and girls

A comparison of enrolments and scores of males and females at all levels of school and all ages shows that the enrolment rate for female students is higher than that for male students at the primary school level, and female students often score higher than male students. Clearly progress has been made. Likewise, between 2000 and 2010, the difference in number of years of schooling between female and male (for students aged 6 or above) declined from 7.1 (years) versus 8.1, to 8.4 versus 9.2. Thus, the gap is narrowing. A gap still remains, however (Figure 5-1). This gap is more prominent in rural areas. Effective measures to reduce gender disparity are still needed.

Figure 5-1 Educational attainments by gender (%)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2012)

Given that improvements are expected in future at the secondary school level as a result of current female dominance at the primary level, the current gender disparity in the Chinese education system is mainly reflected in the differences in literacy rates between males and females. In 2010, national census data indicated that the majority of illiterate people were women (73.8 per cent). This is probably partly because women have a longer life expectancy than men and the population of elderly women is higher than that of elderly men. Another reason for this high rate of illiteracy among women is that many illiterate women are homemakers, so their participation rate in economic life is relatively low compared to men and these women do not use literacy skills in the workplace. Given that the gender gap in literacy continues to persist, it is necessary to strengthen efforts to increase women's literacy. In particular, it is necessary to adopt more effective teaching methods, which target women.

Quality of education: Teacher training and a stronger assurance system

Enhancing the quality of education remains a major challenge in China. While teachers are the key to improving education quality, overall the quality of Chinese teachers does not currently satisfy the requirements for high quality education.

A key issue is that there are not enough teachers in rural schools, kindergartens and special schools. To meet the demand represented by the continuing expansion of pre-primary education, China needs to train more pre-primary teachers. At the compulsory education level, small, remote rural schools need more general teachers who teach all subjects, and rural schools also need to recruit more English, Arts and Physical Education teachers.

There are not only insufficient numbers of teachers in rural areas, but small schools in remote rural areas still lack qualified teachers. The gap in quality between urban and rural teachers is large. In 2013, the percentage of junior secondary school teachers with undergraduate diploma and above in rural areas was 16.2 percentage points lower than that in urban areas. It is difficult to recruit and retain good teachers in rural areas due to poor living and working environments in many rural schools.

Another issue is that many teachers in both urban and rural areas do not have the skills required to implement the new vision of 'quality education' and the new reforms to the curriculum and teaching methods. Many teachers therefore need more in-service training.

With the large numbers of children migrating with their parents to cities, the phenomenon of super-scale schools, with overcrowded classrooms and excessive student-teacher ratios, has become common in some urban areas. In 2013, 25 per cent of all classes in junior secondary schools had more than 45 students. To eliminate overcrowded classrooms, it is necessary to hire more teachers.

It is also necessary to change teaching methods. Rather than focusing on transferring information, as some teachers tend to do, teachers should pay more attention to developing students' abilities and encouraging students' personalities, curiosity and desire for knowledge, along with independent thinking and active learning. Teaching evaluation should also be improved to establish evaluation standards that are evidence-based.

Although the government established a basic education quality monitoring centre in 2007, and launched an academic performance assessment pilot scheme, it has yet to implement a unified academic performance test. To monitor and manage education quality it is necessary to strengthen China's quality assurance system. This requires fully implementing the national compulsory education quality standards and strictly implementing the national compulsory education curriculum standards and the professional standards for teachers. The education quality assurance system must be modified to be in accordance with the national quality standards for compulsory education.

5.2 POST 2015 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

In 2010, the government formulated and promulgated the National Education Plan 2020, which describes the strategic objectives, main tasks and significant initiatives for the development of education in China until 2020. The plan lists three major strategic objectives: the modernization of education, the basic formation of a learning society, and improved access to human resources. The five major strategic tasks listed in the plan include achievement of targets towards universal education, equal education for all, the provision of high quality education, construction of a lifelong learning system and a dynamic education system. The main indicators for education development and the targets for 2015 and 2020 are listed in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Major indicators and targets for the development of education

Indicators	Unit	2015	2020
Pre-primary educations			
Total enrolment	10,000	3,400	4,000
One-year gross enrolment rate in kindergartens	%	85.0	95.0
Two-year gross enrolment rate	%	70.0	80.0
Three-year gross enrolment rate	%	60.0	70.0
Nine-year compulsory education			
In-school students (primary school)	10,000	16,100	16,500
Retention rate	%	93.0	95.0
In-school students (junior secondary school)	10,000	4,500	4,700
Gross enrolment rate	%	87.0	90.0
Vocational education			
In-school students (secondary vocational schools)	10,000	2,250	2,350
In-school students (tertiary vocational institutes)	10,000	1,390	1,480
Higher education**			
Total number of in-school students	10,000	3,350	3,550
In-school students	10,000	3,080	3,300
Among them: postgraduates	10,000	170	200
Gross enrolment rate	%	36.0	40.0
Continuing education			
Number of employees participating in continuing education	10,000 person time	29,000	35,000

Note: *Including students receiving secondary vocational education.

** Including students receiving higher vocational education.

Table 5-2 Major human resource development targets for 2015 and 2020

Indicators	Unit	2015	2020
Number of people with higher education	10,000	14,500	19,500
Average length of education of the working-age population	Years	10.5	11.2
Percentage of those who have received higher education	%	15.0	20.0
Average length of education of recently added labour force	Years	13.3	13.5
Percentage of those who completed senior secondary education	%	87.0	90.0

Expand access to pre-primary education

China plans to enable access to pre-primary education for almost all children by 2020 and will then implement the second and third phases of the Pre-primary Education Action Plan (2014-2020). Under that plan, the following policies will be adopted:

- Continue increasing the total amount of resources dedicated to pre-primary education. The government will raise the proportion of pre-primary education expenditure relative to total public expenditure on education. This expansion of public resources will enable greater access to pre-primary schools, including for the impoverished, ethnic minorities, urban-rural continuum areas, and for groups with difficulties in accessing kindergartens such as stay-at-home children and migrant children.
- Increase public-welfare kindergartens and make kindergartens accessible. The government will strive to develop public kindergartens and support private kindergartens charging low tuition fees and serving the public.
- Improve management and finance mechanisms. The government will stipulate a standard for average public expenditure per child for public kindergartens, and establish a cost-sharing mechanism and financial assistance system for children from poor families, as well as for orphans and the disabled. In addition, the government will improve the deployment of kindergarten teachers and develop the governance and supervision system.

Consolidate and improve compulsory education

By 2020, the government plans to improve the overall quality level of compulsory education and achieve equality in access to education across the various regions. To achieve this, the steps to be taken will include:

- Optimizing school layout according to students' needs and convenience.
- Further supporting the children of migrant workers by expanding access to urban schools for migrant children, and establishing a care and assistance system for stay-at-home children.
- Increasing the subsidies for students from low-income families and eliminating dropouts due to financial, access and learning difficulties.
- Promoting standardized construction of schools and equality in the development of schools across regions, and equalizing the allocation of teachers, equipment and books, thereby further narrowing the gaps between schools, urban and rural areas and regions, while also ameliorating the conditions in weak schools.

Upgrade the skills of youth and adults

The government plans to increase the per capita schooling years of the working-age population to 11.2 years and the per capita schooling years of the new labour force to 13.3 years by 2020. To achieve these targets, the following policies will be implemented:

- Expanding access to senior secondary education and diversifying teaching at these schools to develop students' core competences and abilities in the areas of self-study, self-reliance and social participation, while encouraging these schools to provide career education.
- Vigorously developing vocational education through modernization of the vocational education system. This will involve reinforcing the connections between all levels and all kinds of vocational education programmes; promoting linkages and cooperation between vocational schools, higher education institutions and enterprises; enhancing career guidance and entrepreneurship education; accelerating the development of vocational education in rural areas; strengthening the integration of basic education, vocational education and adult education, and the combination of education, agriculture, science and technology in rural areas; implementing a skills-upgrading project for migrant workers; increasing investment in vocational education and expanding the tuition-free policy for secondary vocational education; and improving the quality assurance system for vocational education.

Establish a lifelong learning system

The government will make great efforts to establish a flexible and open system for lifelong learning, and will promote integration at all levels of education and linkages between all kinds of education and learning programmes, through implementing the following policies:

- Developing resources for continuing education and training programmes and increasing the enrolments in such programmes to 350 million persons by 2020.
- Establishing an accreditation, accumulation and transformation system for continuing education, and promoting the integration of formal, non-formal, and informal education.
- Establishing community education institutions and networks to increase resources for community education.
- Promoting legislation for lifelong learning and clarifying the learning rights of individuals as well as the obligation of employers, governments and other public institutions to support lifelong learning.
- Establishing a cross-sector steering and coordinating mechanism between the various government bodies and social sectors.
- Institutionalizing the encouragement of lifelong learning and developing an incentive mechanism that connects continuing education to employment, performance appraisals, post promotion, license registration, etc.

Further promote equity and equality in education

The government will refine the public education service system such that it covers both urban and rural areas equally, accelerating the process to narrow gaps and to achieve equal access to basic public education services. This will be achieved by:

- Focusing on achieving equal access to compulsory education and supporting disadvantaged groups; giving priority to the allocation of resources to rural, remote, impoverished and ethnic minority areas.
- Making every school and every student a success and ensuring no students drop out as a result of financial difficulties.
- Finding better solutions for migrant children, to guarantee their right to access compulsory education.
- Guaranteeing the right of the disabled to access education.

Improve the quality of education

To improve the quality of education, the government will make efforts to strengthen the capacity building of teachers and to improve the quality assurance system by:

- Increasing investment in teacher training to further support their professional development, and implementing a five-year cycle of full-participation teacher training.
- Perfecting the recruitment and deployment of teachers for rural schools, continuing the implementation of the ‘Special Posts for Rural Compulsory Schools’ project.
- Enhancing the education and training of bilingual teachers in ethnic minority areas.
- Raising teachers’ status and remuneration by increasing teachers’ salaries, introducing a performance-based payment system and improving the allowance and subsidy standards for teachers in rural and remote schools.
- Strictly implementing the teachers’ occupation admittance system, raising the qualifications and integrity requirements of teachers, and implementing a certification examination and a registration system for teachers.

- Unifying teacher's deployment standards to compulsory schools in urban and rural areas, and implementing preferential policies for rural and outlying areas.
- Establishing a mobility mechanism for teachers and principals in compulsory education schools, and implementing a position-qualification and position-rank system for principals.
- Establishing national basic standards and a system for monitoring the quality of compulsory education.
- Strictly implementing the national curriculum standards and teachers' professional standards for compulsory education.
- Deepening the curriculum and teaching reforms and gradually introducing small-class teaching methods.
- Reforming the teaching and learning evaluation and assessment process by establishing evidence-based evaluation standards.

Increase public expenditure on education

The government will continue increasing public expenditure on education by implementing the following policies:

- Raising public expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP.
- Increasing public expenditure on education faster than recurrent fiscal revenue.
- Ensuring average education expenditure per student increases gradually.
- Guaranteeing an increase in public teaching expenditure per student as well as an increase in teachers' salaries.
- Fully collecting education surcharges based on value-added tax, business tax and consumption tax.
- Further clarifying the responsibilities of all levels of government in funding public education.
- Perfecting financing mechanisms at all education levels.
- Ensuring stable sources of funding and a continuous increase of funds.
- Supporting provincial and local governments to formulate basic standards of school expenditure per student and fiscal funding per student, in accordance with the national basic standards for school facilities and equipment and the basic requirements of teaching and learning.

To address the challenges brought about by industrialization, modern information and communication technology urbanization and changes in agriculture, China will give a strategic priority to education post 2015. China will put emphasis on equity and quality as the two keys for education development and reform, to get closer to universal education, to achieve quality education for all, to build an integrated lifelong learning framework and to furnish a dynamic education governance system by 2020.

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Glossary

1. Education for All

Education for All is a global movement led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, aiming to provide good quality basic education for all children, youth and adults by 2015.

2. Education for All Development Index

The Education for All Development Index (EDI) is a composite index that measures progress in relation to four of the six EFA goals (universal primary education, adult literacy, quality of education, gender equality in access to education). Each of the four goals is evaluated using a specific indicator, and each of those components is then assigned an equal weight in the overall index. The EDI value for a given country is the arithmetic mean of the four indicators.

3. Migrant workers

Migrant workers are people from rural regions who move to urban and more prosperous regions for employment.

4. National Teacher Training Programme

A special project launched by the Chinese Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance in 2010 to enhance the capacity of teachers in primary and secondary educational institutions.

5. 'Well-off Society'

Well-off Society, also called 'Moderately Prosperous Society', refers to the development goal of achieving a prosperous society for the whole of China by 2020. This goal was set by the 16th CPC National Congress in 2002.

6. Quality-oriented education

Also known as 'well-rounded education'. As opposed to 'exam-oriented education', 'quality-oriented education' aims for the all-round development of students and emphasizes the building of character and capacity.

7. Rate of illiteracy among the young and middle-aged adult population

This term refers to the rate of illiteracy among those aged between 15 and 50.

8. Spring Bud Programme

The Spring Bud Programme was launched, organized and carried out by the China Children and Teenagers' Fund, under the leadership of the All-China Women's Federation. The goal of the project was to assist girls from poor areas of China to attend or return to school.

9. 'Two Basics'

The 'Two Basics' policy, also known as the 'two essentials' policy, aims to 'basically' achieving universal access to nine-years of compulsory education and 'basically' eradicate illiteracy among the young and middle-aged population. 'Basically' universalizing nine-year compulsory education means universalizing nine-years of compulsory education in those counties covering 85 per cent population of the whole country, and such that the national enrolment rate of junior secondary schools reaches 85 per cent or so. 'Basically' eliminating illiteracy among the youth and middle-aged population means the literacy rate of youth and mid-aged population will reach 95 per cent or so.

10. 'Two Exemptions and One Subsidy'

This refers to the policy to exempt students from poor families from textbook fees and miscellaneous fees and to provide domestic subsidies to boarding school students.

