

A Chinese Case Study of East- China Normal University

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October 2004

EFA Progresses in China

As the most populous country in the world, China is fully aware of its great responsibilities and immense challenges in promoting education for all. The Chinese government has given EFA high priority on its agenda, and a series of important policy measures have been taken to translate the burden of its large population into rich human resources to promote EFA. Ever since the 1990 Jomtien Conference, actions for EFA taken in China in the 1990s have achieved tremendous progress in improving access to education, in meeting the learning need of adults and in improving early childhood development programs.

In the early years of the 21st century, in order to achieve the goals set forth in the Dakar Framework for Action (April, 2001), based on its reality, China's efforts in achieving the goals of EFA focus on the following aspects: providing schooling to all children, ensuring free and compulsory primary education of good quality, considerably reducing the gender disparities in primary and secondary education to achieve gender equality in education. Besides, special attention has been focusing on the development of the education in rural and poor western areas and ethnic minorities; reducing adult illiteracy rates and meet the basic learning need of young people and adults.

According the *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China* edited by the Ministry of Education, Since the 1990s, EFA in China has made big strides and its accomplishments have attracted worldwide attention.

- By 2003 the net enrollment ratio of primary school-age children reached 98.65, and drop-out rate dropped to 0.34% ;
- The gross enrollment ratio at the lower secondary stage increased from 87.3% in 1998 to 92.7% in 2003;
- In areas inhabited by 91.8% (73% in 1998)of the nation's population, 9-year compulsory education has basically been made universal;
- The number of illiterate and semi-literate adults 15 years old and over declined from 153,000,000 in 1998, to 85,000,000 in 2004 with adult illiteracy rate reduced from 16.37% (in 1997) to 8.72% in 2004;
- The enrollment ratios of 3-5 year olds in kindergartens and preprimary classes have significantly improved.

Roles of Universities in Promoting EFA

Implementation of EFA is a systematic endeavor involving the concerted efforts of the nation, encompassing schools and society at large, governmental agencies and the broad masses. Universities, especially teacher education universities have the advantage of offering fields of study for the effective implementation of EFA. They could contribute to reaching EFA goals from various angles, such as improving the quality of education through personnel training and research that could help to foster the right to education and inform national and international policies. In promoting EFA in China and enhancing their role in the EFA process, teacher universities in China are committed to perform the following specific tasks leading to the achievement of the goals.

- a) **initiate in-service teacher training and headmasters training for decentralization and school-based management;**

The qualifications of teachers have decisive influence on the overall enhancement of the quality of education and the effective promotion of EFA. Since 1980s, schools in China have been empowered for the decision-making for their development. Decentralization in education has resulted in many dramatic changes in education, which is a challenge for both teachers and school leaders. To upgrade their educational concepts and practical abilities and maintain the sustainable improvement of teaching quality in support of EFA, teacher education universities in China have undertaken the major responsibilities of in-service training and headmasters training. By the end of 2002, about 80% of the total 10 million teachers of primary and secondary schools in China have received in-service training of all types in professional values, ICT and teaching skills. More than one million backbone teachers received intensive training in teacher education universities and more than 300 new textbooks have been developed for in-service teacher training.

b) Research on aspects of EFA

Universities are among the most important structures for research, they can use their comparative advantage to be involved in EFA movement. For example, they can build intellectual sources for renew and continued development in education. Since 1990s, teacher education universities in China have been committed to the research on aspects of EFA such as: early childhood care and development; improvement in learning achievement; eradication of adult illiteracy; sound approaches to training in essential skills required by youth and adults, etc. In conducting such research as action research or case studies or school-based research, effective collaborative partnership have been established between universities and primary and secondary schools.

c) Curriculum reform in basic education;

Curriculum reform in basic education was initiated since 1999 to meet the demands of the development of science and technology. More than 2,000 experts and researchers from universities and other institutions have been involved in the research and development of new curriculum to support the reform. Teacher universities have played an important role in the formulation of the guidelines, the development of curriculum criteria and they have also undertaken the task of providing consultation, supervision and related in-service teacher training. Take the Institute of Curriculum and Instruction, ECNU for example, in recent years, this institute has been active involved in the curriculum reform movement. Since 2000, many experts and scholars from the institute have been to more than 10 provinces and municipalities successively, including Jiangxi, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Hebei, Qinghai, Liaoning, and Tianjin. They delivered serial academic lectures to headmasters, teachers, and research personnel concerning general theories of curriculum and reforms in the field of basic education in our country. To further the transform process of research findings into practice, this institute has established partnership with more than 20 schools in the fields of curricula and teaching reform. Some of them have become "experimental schools of basic educational curricula reform authorized by the Ministry of Education". During the process of instructing these schools to carry out reforms□this institute appointed professionals to set up practicable schemes according to their respective conditions, and sent experts regularly to each school to guide their reform work.

d) Use of ICT in basic education

The use of ICT in basic education creates new challenges for teachers, including learning the skills of using ICT, designing innovative instructions through an integration of ICT with curriculum and so on. This calls for an enhancement of pre-service education and in-service training on ICT. Up to June 1999, more than 99 percent of teacher universities have set computer education as a mandatory course, and about 76 per cent of universities have established ICT related departments. To

promote the effective use of ICT in basic education, teacher education universities have contributed to the development of national policy environments, the creation of successful models which demonstrate the appropriate use of ICT and relevant ICT-based curriculum and teaching-learning materials.

Introductory to ECNU

East China Normal University (ECNU) is a key institution of higher learning under the direct auspices of the Ministry of Education. It boasts a strong faculty of nearly 1,600 full-time teachers and its modern instruction facilities. With education being its long established and most preponderant field as well as its key construction project, ECNU is a leading institution in the field of teacher education and training, influential both at home and abroad. Making it its mandate to be in the service of the reform and development of basic education (K-12) and adult education, the university makes every effort to take advantage of its research findings in education and has been actively involved in the curriculum reform movement of basic education nationwide. Its hard efforts were rewarded by outstanding achievements and all this comparative advantage has enabled ECNU to make its due contribution to EFA.

ECNU's Contribution to EFA: *Teachers/Headmasters Training, Research, Curriculum Development and Information Services*

ECNU's contribution to EFA by teacher education

In the past 50 years of development since its founding in 1951, ECNU has given priorities and great care to teacher education, which is composed of two parts: pre-service education and in-service training. It offers postgraduate and undergraduate degrees both in basic education and adult education. So far, ECNU has educated more than one hundred thousand teachers respectively for senior and junior secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special education (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1: Basic statistics of graduates from 2002-2003

	Doctors	Masters	Bachelors	Associate diploma students	Vocational-program students	Total
2002	223	524	2072	211	467	3497
2003	205	704	2566	192	699	3667

Table 2: Basic statistics of enrollment in ECNU from 2001-2003

	Doctoral students	Master degree candidates	Undergraduates	Diploma-program students	Total
2001	762	2269	10922	2253	16206
2002	903	2857	11802	2143	17705

2003	1135	3703	12271	1735	18844
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Follow-up surveys have shown that graduates from ECNU have well been received by their employers. Most of them have achieved high-level performance in their employing schools and have played a leading role in improving the quality of education, adult literacy and skills training in local communities. This has provided incentive to attract the best and brightest secondary school-leavers to apply for admission to ECNU.

In recent years, in the light of the concept of life-long education, theory of professionalism of teaching and principle of the optimal distribution of resources, ECNU has adapted its strategies of development to be engaged in the integration of teachers' pre-service education and in-service training. In-service training provided by ECNU has served teachers from schools of different types and at different levels. The training is mainly on strengthening professional values, educational theories and teaching abilities for those in-service teachers in support of their sustainable professional development to meet the emerging demands of EFA.

With a view to supporting EFA through teachers' sustainable professional development, **the College of Continuing Education of ECNU**, founded in 1998, has been exploring the new fields of continuing education, and offers training courses of five categories such as specialized courses, on-the-job skills, self-study education, adult education and commissioned training projects.

In 2003, the college enrolled a total of more than 3700 students for academic credentials, with the students enrolled amounting to 10859. The college offers undergraduate programs and associate diploma programs for correspondence education in 32 educational institutions in 12 provinces of the country. In recent years, this College has carried out different types of training for in-service teachers of primary and school schools.

- Programme of training of backbone teacher of primary and secondary schools at national level: from 2000 to 2002, a total of 679 teachers from 27 provinces in China were trained;
- Training Project for Backbone Teachers of Shanghai Secondary Schools: from April, 1998, to June, 2001, 83 teachers from 19 districts in Shanghai were trained;
- Non-degree education training provided to provincial backbone teachers of primary and secondary schools: by March, 2004, around 4,000 backbone teachers of primary and secondary schools from more than 20 provinces in China, involving 15 disciplines, were trained;
- More than 300 new training courses have been developed in the past five years;
- Long-term cooperative relationship has been established with more than 20 cities in about 10 provinces.

The Training Center for High School Headmasters at ECNU is the only national base for training provincial key high school headmasters and other senior administrators of educational administration. In light of the national educational reform and development strategies, this center has been carrying out theoretical and practical researches in the cultivation of secondary school headmasters and policy consultation in this field.

In the past 15 years, the center has trained thousands of provincial key schools headmasters and educational administrators—see Table 3—. Also it puts emphasis on sharing educational experience in mainland with Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as on extending international exchange and cooperation in the field of continuing education for administrators at different levels of the education system.

Table 3: Number of trained provincial key school headmasters and educational administrators

Year	Trained headmasters and administrators
2001	751
2002	922
2003	1091

With special attention to the educational quality of nursery schools, **the College of Preschool Education and Special Education** of ECNU has been undertaking researches on infant education and special education, providing in-service training to teachers and heads of nursery schools, organizing advanced seminars, and applying the newest findings to teaching practice. As a result, both the teaching practices and the academic researches are promoted prominently.

Table 4: Basic statistics of enrollment of the College of Preschool Education from 2001-2003

	Doctoral students	Master degree candidates	Undergraduates	Associate diploma students	Total
2001	4	14	205	209	432
2002	7	26	229	122	384
2003	14	40	242	93	389

In recent years, this college has undertaken more than 30 national and provincial-level research projects, compiled and published a collection of academic writings and textbooks, and set up 35 school-based research bases nationwide in order to improve teacher behavior by engaging teachers in research, reflection and interpretation and application of relevant theories.

In 2002 and 2003, this college provided in-service training to about 3900 heads of nursery schools; and more than 1500 nursery school teachers have received pre-service training in this college. Besides, in-service training was also provided to nursery school teachers from other countries such as Singapore and Egypt.

The new development of ICT and its application in education has created dramatic changes in educational concepts, educational approaches, teaching contents, learning styles and management of learning environments. To meet all these challenges, the **National Research Center for School Computer Education** (Shanghai Branch) in ECNU has been engaged in ICT-based teacher education and training.

Since 2001, this center has undertaken the supervision and management of a pilot program of National ICT Education. This program consists of 75 research projects, involving the integration of ICT and curriculum, ICT courses, construction of school

networks and development of information qualities for both the teachers and students. Since 2003, the number of research projects has reached 104 projects. Case studies were conducted in 2002 and 2003, with a collection of 272 excellent lessons plans from primary and secondary schools and 31 research-learning cases. This center has been exploring a case-based mode of teacher training, which involves all the subjects in primary and secondary schools. About 400 teachers participated for each training program.

To extend its service for basic education and make its quality educational resources accessible to more students and teachers in rural and remote areas lack of quality education resources, **the College of Online Education** was set up in ECNU in 1999. This college offers undergraduate courses for teachers with associate diplomas and courses for Master of Education. Instruction is carried out by means of simultaneous exchange, displaying courseware upon request, websites, self-study guide, and electronic reading. Ten training modules have been developed, including Basics of computer and Network Applications, Courseware Design, Multimedia authoring, Distance Learning, Instructional design and practice and so on.

So far, more than 5898 students from local universities have been trained in this college. The training has created a good linkage between technological learning and educational practice through hands-on practices associated with study of modern educational theories.

Besides, in enhancing the capacity-building for school teachers, in-service training has been provided to 1039 teachers at all levels from different parts of China. The training has increased their abilities of integrating ICT with teaching, thus greatly improving teachers' professionalism.

ECNU's contribution to EFA through productive research

Meanwhile, in its effort to give full display to its academic superiority, ECNU has undertaken a great number of key scientific research projects and consultant projects both from the central and local government. The researches have contributed much to promoting the reform and innovation of teacher education, the institutional innovation of basic education and life-long learning and teacher professionalism in support of quality education and EFA.

Table 5: National and provincial-level Research projects undertaken By ECNU from 2001-2003

	Basic research projects	Applied research projects	Experimental development projects	Scientific service	Application of R&D findings
2001	521	933	27	33	35
2002	739 items	1226 items	16	50	40
2003	767 items	1080 items	9 items	29	34

Table 5: Research Funding from 2001-2003

2001	53,803,000 RMB
2002	72,568,000 RMB

Its recent researches focus on such areas as the establishment of standards of teacher professional development, creation of evaluation and accreditation system of teacher education, establishment of professional standards of accomplished teachers, promotion of effective training approaches to innovative teachers, curriculum development for teacher education and training, reflection-based processes and strategies of enhancing student-teacher understanding and so on.

Researchers and experts from ECNU pay much attention to the combination of theory with practice, they show great concern for the issues in the reform of basic education and have been actively involved in the development of primary and secondary schools. In doing so, ECNU has entered into partnership with the basic and secondary schools.

Since 1994, **the Institute of Reform and Development in Basic Education, ECNU** has been undertaking the project of “New Education Facing 21st century” in an attempt to bridge the great gap between theory and practice, which has been haunting people for a long time. They proposed the scrolling-forward mode in order to combine theory with practice effectively. This mode suggests carrying out theoretical researches first, and then applying theoretical hypothesis and modes to practical researches. In this way, the research findings were gradually tested, enriched and developed; the research work was also forwarded and perfected step by step. This influential research project has spread from Shanghai to other regions nationwide, and more than 200 experimental schools have taken part in it.

Institute of Curriculum and Instruction, ECNU is a key research base for humanities and social sciences authorized by the Ministry of Education. It has taken up a new round of theoretical researches, including the drafting and revising of relevant documents, and the regulation of criteria for basic educational curriculum reform movement; meanwhile, the second phase of educational curricula reform of Shanghai is under way, this institute also shoulders the great responsibility of contributing to regional educational development. In the past four years, this institute has undertaken over fifty state and provincial-level research projects and 11 national flagship projects of basic educational curriculum reform.

Since 2000, a large number of experts and professionals from this institute have devoted themselves to national as well as local curriculum reform movement. Experts of this institute took part in the drafting and revising of *The Guidelines for the Curricula Reform in Fundamental Education*, a programmatic document issued by the Ministry of Education in June 2001. *The Guidelines* puts it clearly that new curricula design should take into account the life experiences of students in order to cultivate their surviving, practical and creative abilities, as well as enable them to grasp information technology and acquire the consciousness and necessary abilities to contribute to the development of both the community and the society.

University student body as a resource for EFA

University students from ECNU as a resource of EFA have contributed much to EFA through volunteer programs. In the past two years, there have been about 19 well-organized volunteer programs with a total of more than ten thousand participants. The programs include working with the local communities in solving their problems

involving education, health and hygiene, providing support to the rural school students or disadvantaged students or the disabled, offering short-term teaching service in rural and remote underdeveloped areas and so on.

Lessons and Prospects

Lessons Learned

As a result of this university's strong commitment to EFA during the past decade, encouraging progress has occurred as reported above, lessons from the past experiences in pursuing the goals of EFA can be summarized as follows:

- In using their comparative advantage to be more visible with the EFA agenda, universities should adapt their strategies dynamically to the ever changing world in achieving the goals of EFA. In this regard, the College of Continuing Education of ECNU was set up in 1998 to meet the requirements of teachers' continuing education, and the College of Online Education of ECNU was set up in 1999 to serve the disadvantaged and rural areas. Both colleges have so far contributed much to EFA and have been very popular with both the teachers and students.
- ECNU should be proactive to be integrated in the EFA movement, their due contribution to EFA would bring in more funding and more support from broader external communities.
- Without the active engagement of teachers, efforts to enhance teachers' practical abilities through in-service training are unlikely to yield results of any significance. Therefore, ECNU has established productive partnerships with hundreds of primary and secondary schools in implementing its action research programs.
- Normal universities should pay special attention to the integration of teacher education and strive to balance the improvement of pre-service education and in-service training, especially in terms of teacher preparation.

Prospects:

In view of its past experiences, cognizant of the goals of EFA and the emerging challenges in the promotion of EFA goals, ECNU hereby commits to the following strategies:

- More efforts should be invested in developing and strengthening partnerships with international educational institutions and other sectors with an interest in supporting citizens to acquire higher-order knowledge, skills and values.
- Strengthening its co-operation with UNESCO and its branch offices and participate actively in international educational programs.
- Concerning with teacher capacity-building to give full play to the critical role of the teachers in ensuring quality education. Embracing the concept of life-long learning, establishing support systems to provide encouragement for professional development and encouraging innovation in teaching techniques and foster greater commitment of teachers to EFA.

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