

# The Full Implementation of The 2003-2007 Action Plan for Invigorating Education

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On March 3, 2004, the State Council approved and disseminated the 2003-2007 Action Plan for Invigorating Education (hereinafter called the new Action Plan) prepared by the Ministry of Education (MoE). This Plan is the fundamental blueprint for all parties involved in education to further implement the strategies of 'Rejuvenating China Through Science and Education' and 'Reinvigorating China Through Human Resource Development' and to speed up educational reform and development in the years to come.

## **I The Reason for promulgating this Action Plan**

Premier Wen Jiabao pointed out in the Second Session of the 10th National Congress that was held just now in Beijing that effective measures should be taken to prioritize educational development. More endeavors and financial support should be devoted to the acceleration of educational development in China. The new round of the 'Action Plan for Invigorating Education' should be implemented with the focus on compulsory education, especially the education in rural areas. This fully demonstrated that to implement this Action Plan is a priority for the governments at all levels, the educational circle in China and all the sectors in the society as well.

The new Action Plan is drafted on the basis of the successful implementation of the '1998-2002 Action Plan for Invigorating Education in the 21st Century' and the remarkable achievements that have been gained during the first stage. As practices have proved, making out an Action Plan every five years is a practical approach for educational development and can explicitly demonstrate the new government's intention in implementing the strategies of 'Rejuvenating China Through Science and Education' and 'Reinvigorating China through Human Resource Development. Therefore, soon after the conclusion of the 16th CPC Congress, MoE decided to continue the pattern of action plan to design the future development on the basis of inviting suggestions and comments within the educational circle and from all the other sectors of the society.

In the 21st century and with the context of economic globalization and knowledge economy, the competition in economy, science and technology lies its root in the competition of education and the advantage in human resource. To meet the challenges of the new century, the 16th Party Conference and the 3rd Plenary Session of the 16th Party Conference have identified the grand objectives of establishing a well-to-do society and perfecting the socialistic market economy in China. The philosophy of putting people first and pursuing overall, harmonious and sustainable development and the strategy of revitalizing China through human resource development have also been finalized at these meetings. In accordance with the new strategies, the relationship between education and modernization in three areas should be taken seriously when promulgating and implementing the Action Plan.

First, we should think seriously about the relationship between the educational development and the goal of establishing a well-to-do society by 2020. China is a developing country with a huge

population of over 1.3 billion. The most difficult problem for us to tackle during the process of establishing a well-to-do society is the mass population. However, the huge population is also our greatest advantage. This brings a serious contradiction to us. To solve the problem puts forward many requirements among which education is the most fundamental one. The key of changing the heavy pressure of population into a rich pool of human resource successfully lies in educational development. As education plays a fundamental and directing role with overall importance in the establishment of a well-to-do society, it must be prioritized strategically for further development.

Secondly, we should think seriously about the relationship between educational development and the overall development of human beings. To promote the harmonious development of human beings is not only the fundamental characteristic of socialism, but also the demand to implement the 'Three Represents' and build a well-to-do society. With the economic and social progress and the development of market economy, the need for employees to be comprehensively developed will be more demanding. To promote fully the quality-oriented education, cultivate younger generations with harmonious development in intelligence, morale, physics and aesthetic and build up a talent cohort with large scale, proper structure and high quality will always be the important tasks for education in promoting the harmonious development of human beings.

Thirdly, we should think seriously about the relationship between the reform of education system and the perfection of socialist market economy. The decision made in the 3rd Plenary of the 16th Party Conference pointed out explicitly the demands on improving the government functions in governance and public service. To develop education is one of the practical embodiments of public service for modern government and therefore should be placed at the top of the agenda in public administration system and public fiscal system. The governmental input into education should be continuously increased to ensure the fairness of education and the fulfillment of the governmental responsibility of developing education.

The newly formed leading group of the State Council attended and supervised the drafting process of this Action Plan. Premier Wen Jiabao has reiterated that education is one of the most important tasks and the incumbent administration will prioritise the development of education and science. The State Councilor Madame Chen Zhili also has pointed out that the new Action Plan must take opinions of all parties concerned into consideration since it is a comprehensive, directing, and operational plan for national education development in the coming years. She has attended the reporting meetings of MoE for many times and chaired coordinating meetings participated by over ten ministries for the overall planning and coordination of policies, measures, and fund-raising for the new Action Plan. On December 30, 2003, the National Steering Group for Science and Education held its second meeting to discuss the draft of this Action Plan. After this meeting, MoE was required to ask governments of all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, the central committee of democratic Parties and other sectors in the society for their comments and suggestions on the draft. This requirement clearly demonstrated the determination of the new administration in promoting rational and democratic decision-making process.

## **II How to implement this new Action Plan**

This Action Plan designs the blueprint for further implementing the strategies of 'Rejuvenating China through Science and Education' and 'Reinvigorating China through Human Resource Development'. It embraces the strategic thoughts and guidance for educational development in this crucial stage with strategic opportunities. The underlying philosophy for the new Action Plan is Deng Xiaoping's theory, the important thought of 'Three Represents', and the mission that 'education should serve the people'. It should follow the principle of consolidating achievements, deepening reforms, maintaining sustainable development, and improving the quality of education so that we can provide satisfactory education to the whole public. This Action Plan will aim at

realizing the three historical tasks in the field of education stipulated by the 16th Party Conference. They are to construct a sound system, cultivate talents, and contribute knowledge for modernization. To sum up, the cardinal theme of this Action Plan is 'one mission' and 'three tasks'. The mission refers to that of serving the people and providing satisfactory education to the public. This is the fundamental foothold for the educational circle to embody the important thought of 'Three Represents' into practice and of putting the people first to promote balanced development among human beings, economy and the whole society. This is also an issue concerned by both the education circle and the public. The concept of 'Three Tasks' was first put forward by the Report of the 16th CPC Conference. The first task refers to the establishment of a competent national education system and a life-long education system that then are combined into a modern education system with Chinese characteristics. The second task is to cultivate hundreds of millions of high quality workers, dozens of millions specialists, and large numbers of outstanding innovative talents. The third task is to promote the integration of education, technological innovation, and economic construction, and the integration of education, cultural prosperity, and social progress. These three historical tasks are components of the goal of building a well-to-do society by 2020. Of course, it is impossible for us to fulfill these tasks completely just within the next five years when the new Action Plan is to be executed. Nevertheless, we will try our best to lay a solid foundation for the future.

We will continue the educational reform and development in accordance with the guideline of 'consolidation, deepening, improvement and development', which means to consolidate achievements, deepen reforms, improve quality, and pursue sustainable development. This is the core theme of the new Action Plan.

First is to consolidate the achievements. We will collect the achievement and experience gained through the implementation of the previous round of Action Plan to consolidate the fruits of universalizing the Nine-Year Compulsory Education in the areas where 92% of the population inhabit and eradicating illiteracy among young and middle-aged groups. We will also try to maintain the achievements in senior secondary education, especially secondary vocational education and the achievements in mass higher education with the gross enrollment rate of 17%. At the same time, educational achievements in other forms and at all levels will all be consolidated.

The second part of the guideline is to deepen the reform. Educational reform is a sophisticated project. It should be preceded gradually from macro level to micro level with overall planning and clear priorities. The reform and innovation in training modes, management system, curriculum, teaching methodologies and teaching content should be promoted effectively.

The third part refers to quality improvement. Quality is the lifeline of education. The governmental functions should be further changed to carry out administration by laws, govern the practices in education strictly and strengthen our management. While accelerating the development, we should regard quality improvement as the most important task to have a rational understanding of quality, improve the quality assessment system and guide the educational institutions into justified competition.

The fourth is to continue our development. Development is the basic principle. We must devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the educational development so that the public will have the access to high-qualified education. Without sustainable development, it will become impossible to provide satisfactory education to the people. Directed by a rational understanding of development, we should not only consider the sustainable development of education itself, but also the cohesive development between education and economy and society. At the corner of this century, remarkable achievements have been gained in educational development in China with historical leapfrog development and breakthroughs in educational reform, bringing with us the best opportunity for educational development. However, there are also

severe challenges for educational development in China. The conflict between the increasing demand for education from the people and the capacity in education provision, especially the provision of high-quality education is still the main conflict at the current stage and for the long term. Besides, educational input is still quite inadequate and the level of infrastructure and teaching cohort is far from meeting the needs of modernization. In addition, there are many problems in the educational notions, training modes, management system and operation mechanism. All the problems require us to adhere to the mission of providing satisfactory education to the public and to promote the sustainable, healthy, cohesive and rapid development of education in accordance with the principle mentioned above.

The new Action Plan has 14 parts with 50 articles and over 13,000 words, including two major strategic priorities, six priority projects, and six important measures.

First, two strategic priorities are highlighted to focus on major issues and define key solutions. Educational development in rural areas is a basic, directing issue with overall significance to the establishment of a well-to-do society and is also an issue much concerned by the incumbent administration. According to the requirements raised at the National Conference on Education in Rural Areas in September 2003, we will continue to regard education in rural areas as the priority among priorities. In the next five years, we will concentrate our resources to fulfill the objectives of making breakthroughs in universalizing the nine-year compulsory education and eradicating illiteracy among young and middle-aged groups in the western areas, consolidating the achievements and pursuing improvement in the middle areas and further improving the quality of compulsory education in the eastern areas. The comprehensive educational reform in rural areas will be deepened and the new management system with the county-level government as the main management body will be implemented by this Action Plan. In addition, the system for facilitating students with poor economic background will be improved and the efforts in building up a teaching cohort in primary and secondary schools will be further intensified. Moreover, the 'Programme for Modern Distance Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Rural Areas' will be implemented as well. A working conference for the 'Programme on Making Breakthroughs in Universalizing the Nine-year Compulsory Education and Eradicating Illiteracy among Young and Middle-aged Group in the Western Areas' was just held and other key issues concerning educational development in rural areas will be all proceeded in the mean time.

In accordance with the policies made by the Central Committee of CPC, we will optimise resources from various parties to develop some world-class universities, a group of research universities with international reputation and some key disciplines to strengthen the comprehensive capabilities of our higher education, to enhance the construction of a national innovation system, and to improve our national power and competitiveness. Therefore, this new Action Plan will continue to implement the '985 Project', the '211 Project', and the 'High-Level Innovative Talents Project'. Meanwhile, initiatives such as the 'Plan for the Innovation in Postgraduate Education', the 'Project for Scientific and Technological Innovation in Higher Education Institutions', and the 'Project for Social Science Prosperity in Higher Education Institutions' will also be launched by this Action Plan. It is expected that via these programmes and projects, the new Action Plan will offer an overall coordination for the development of various disciplines, talent training, science and technology innovation, the establishment of teaching and researching cohort, and international cooperation and exchanges. As a result, remarkable improvements could be witnessed in the key universities and key disciplines which then can drive the sustainable, healthy, cohesive and rapid development of higher education at the national level as a whole.

Secondly, six major projects are included into this Action Plan to cover all the educational undertakings that must be completed before 2007.

The first Programme is the 'Project for Quality-oriented Education in the New Century'. It aims at promoting quality-oriented education, strengthening moral education in schools, deepening curriculum reform and the reform of evaluation system in basic education, actively developing senior secondary education, pre-school education and special education, thoroughly improving the physical well-being, moral integrity, and artistic attainment of the students, promoting the studies of Chinese language and Chinese characters.

The second Programme is the 'Programme on Innovation in Vocational Education and Training'. The development of vocational education has entered into a crucial period. The basic vision of this Project is to change the mode of vocational education into an employment-oriented one and to adopt an 'order-form style' or 'module style' characterized by a close link between employers and vocational schools. We will speed up the cultivation of a large pool of urgently needed technical human resource, especially the senior technicians of all types to actively contribute the transfer of labour force from rural areas and agriculture to urban areas and non-agricultural industries.

The third Programme refers to the 'Programme on Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform in Higher Education Institutions'. It is of overwhelming importance for higher education to strengthen and improve its quality. This new Action Plan will put more emphasis and efforts on the teaching reform and the establishment of an evaluation and quality assurance system. A once-every-five-year evaluation mechanism for regular universities has been launched and demonstrated satisfactory primary results.

The fourth Programme is the 'Programme on Employment Promotion for University Graduates'. Employment is the basis of people's livelihood. With emphasis attached by the central government, improvements have been witnessed in the graduates' employment. For the institutionalization and systemization of this issue, this Action Plan will further strengthen the construction of leadership system, operation mechanism, policy framework and service system for university graduates employment, and to deepen reforms both in and outside the domain of education orientated by the labor market.

The fifth comes as the 'Educational Informationization Construction Programme'. The informationization of education is an important approach to achieve educational modernization and to develop ahead of times properly. We will intensify our efforts in infrastructure construction, resource building, talents training, and the application of IT inside the educational circle.

The sixth Programme is the 'Programme on Building Up A Competent Teaching and Administrating Cohort'. Educational innovation and talent cultivation depend on the hard work of our teachers, as well as their qualities. We will prioritise the deepening of personnel system reform for teaching staff to reinforce the management of school scale so that all the teaching positions and different units inside schools can be planned scientifically. The teacher certificate system will be implemented with the policy of 'accessing with qualifications, competing for vacancies, and working with employment contracts'. Additionally, this new Action Plan will further promote this practice and improve the teacher training system and the further education system for in-service teachers.

Thirdly, important measures will be taken to guarantee the deepening of the educational reform and innovation in educational systems.

The first important measure is to strengthen systematical innovation and to manage education by law. This includes the perfection of legal systems for education, the implementation of the Law of Administrative Approval, the adoption of practical approaches to change the function of educational authorities, the reinforcement of supervision and evaluation, and development of management system reform as well as the reform of internal management system within education institutions.

The second key measure is to forcefully support and promote the sustainable, healthy, cohesive and rapid development of non-public schools. A system in which public schools and their non-public counterparts can enjoy supplementary advantages, compete fairly and develop together should gradually take shape. At the same time, attentions should also be given to the systematical reform and innovation so that non-public education can be developed in various forms.

The third measure is to further expand the openness of education to the outside world. It include the expansion in international cooperation and exchanges in the field of education, the improvement in sending students and scholars abroad for studies and researches and in receiving more international students coming to China, the promotion of Chinese Language Teaching and Learning in other countries and the exploration of international market for education services.

The fourth measure refers to the reform and improvement of educational input system. It includes establishing an educational financial system compatible to the public financial system, expanding fund-raising channels, perfecting the national education facilitation and social education facilitation systems, tightening up management and improving efficiency.

The fifth measure is to strengthen the Party organization and moral education. This includes strengthening and improving the Party organization in schools, improving the 'two lectures' and the moral education in higher education institutions, carrying out effective, clean and honest politics within the Party and establishing decent practices in the educational circle.

The last measure is to build and perfect a modern education system with Chinese characteristics. It includes improving the national education system for the public and the life long learning system as well. It also includes the approaches to support educational development in the Western areas, areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, areas that used to be revolutionary basis, and old industrial basis in Northeastern China so that a harmonious balance in educational development among eastern, middle and western areas can be promoted. In addition, the promulgation of the 'Outline for Educational Development in China by 2020' is also a part of the last measure.

The new Action Plan embodies the essence of the wisdom of the Chinese educational circle in planning the future educational development guided by 'Three Represents'. It is also a fundamental project during the process of establishing a well-to-do society and implementing the strategies of 'Rejuvenating China through Science, Technology and Education' and 'Reinvigorating China through Human Resource Development'. The Action Plan designs the blueprint for continuing the educational system reform in the context of developing socialistic market economy. It also represents the strategy to realize new leapfrogging development after the successful implementation of the 'Action Plan for Invigorating Education in the 21st Century', approved by the State Council in 1999. Therefore, MoE appeals to all educational organizations to acknowledge the significance of this new Action Plan, adhere to the principle of emancipating minds, seeking truth from facts and keeping pace with the times, and carry out attentive study, dissemination and full implementation of this Action Plan. At the same time, we sincerely hope that governments at all levels will continue to increase their input and support to education. We also sincerely hope that all sectors of our society including the press will continue their concern, participation, support and facilitation to our educational development.

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