



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

联合国 2030 年可持续发展议程 教育目标 (SDG4) 中国进展报告

(2015—2021)



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THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development China's Progress Report on SDG 4-Education 2030

(2015—2021)

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China
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Education
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Foreword

China's uniqueness and push for the realization of SDG 4

In 2015, the United Nations adopted a resolution entitled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be met by 2030. This was a global call for action for all countries to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges we are all facing. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Education determines both our present and future. It is a catalyst that fosters the development of everyone and serves as the foundation for the realization of other SDGs. China has been firmly committed to implementing SDG 4 and other SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, China has established a national cross-ministerial coordination mechanism, set up the Leading Group for Education of the CPC Central Committee, formulated national-level action framework, and integrated SDG 4 into national medium-term and long-term development strategies such as China's Education Modernization 2035 and the 14th Five-Year Plan for education development. Moreover, it has improved access to pre-primary education, promoted the integrated and balanced development of compulsory education in rural and urban areas, accelerated the popularization of high-school education, improved conditions for vocational education, and enhanced the comprehensive development of higher education. These efforts have elevated the quality and equity of education.

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has substantially hampered progress towards the SDGs on a global scale. It is estimated that globally up to 1.6 billion students were affected by school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption posed a serious threat to the right to education particularly for populations in developing countries. During these times, aside from continuing to implement the existing policies, the Chinese government has prioritized the safety, wellbeing, and health of the people, and adopted strict measures to combat and prevent the spread of the pandemic. China made arrangements for nearly 300 million students to participate in online education. Despite the suspension of classes, learning of students was not disrupted, which continued to promote the advancement of SDG 4 throughout the country. Additionally, China has actively shared its knowledge and online education resources with the global community and provided support to the best of its ability.

Thanks to these efforts, China has made significant progress in promoting the implementation of SDG 4. In order to strengthen the exchange of knowledge acquired from the experience and facilitate the sharing of achievements, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO have jointly prepared the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development China's Progress Report on SDG 4-Education 2030 (hereinafter referred to as the "Report") with ardent support from UNESCO Beijing and UNICEF China. This Report provides an overview of the Chinese government's major measures and latest efforts towards achieving SDG 4 since 2015. The Report introduces specific initiatives and practices promoting the implementation of specific goals, and discusses potential challenges and future prospects in China's implementation of SDG 4. We hope that this Report will contribute to worldwide educational exchanges and collaboration, as well as help accelerate the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Chapter 1

An Overview of Education in China



(Source: Ministry of Education Website)

According to the Seventh National Population Census undertaken in 2020 (hereinafter called the "Seventh National Census"), China has a total population of approximately 1.412 billion. In 2021, 291 million students were enrolled in a total of 529,300 schools across all levels making China's education system one of the largest in the world. China has built an education system that caters to all citizens, fulfills the requirements of various groups of people, and fosters people's lives. In the subsequent sections of this Report, China's progress in each sub-sector of education will be analyzed.

Pre-primary education

Early learning of infants aged 0-3 years is mainly carried out at home under the guidance of nursery institutions and kindergartens. A three-year pre-primary education program is provided for children aged 3-6. This program is organized and implemented by pre-primary education institutions, such as kindergartens and kindergarten classes in schools of all levels. In China, pre-primary education is under the overall policy guidance and leadership of the State Council, and the tasks of creating and implementing the national plan are executed by local governments in the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. People's governments at the county level are the primary management authorities of pre-primary education. Pre-primary education requires the children to be put at the center of all initiatives. It must support and satisfy children's developmental needs helping fulfil their desire for new experiences by going out into nature, performing practical operations, and gaining personal experience as much as possible, thus encouraging their overall growth in health, language, society, science, and arts. In 2021, China had 294,800 kindergartens, with 3,191,000 full-time kindergarten teachers teaching 48,052,100 children.

Compulsory education

China has long implemented a nine-year free and compulsory education system. The Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Revised in 2018) stipulates that all school-age children and adolescents must receive the 9-year compulsory education as implemented by the state. Compulsory education is recognized as a public welfare and a public service that is guaranteed by the Chinese government. The law requires that parents or other legal guardians send their children to school at the age of 6 to undergo and complete compulsory education. For children in areas where these conditions cannot be met for various reasons, the requirement of admitting children at age 6 may be reconsidered by postponing it until the child reaches 7 years old. Compulsory education is divided into primary school and secondary school. Compulsory education usually consists of six years of study in a primary school and three years in a secondary school. In some areas, students may study for five years in a primary school and four years in a secondary school. In order to ensure the implementation of the compulsory education system, the Chinese government has established a compulsory education funding mechanism¹. Oriented towards all students, compulsory education must support all-round development of children encompassing moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic aspects in addition to a hard-working spirit. Additionally, it must place a high priority on cultivating students' capacity for independent thinking, creativity, and practice. In 2021, there were 207,200 compulsory education schools in China, with 158 million students and 10,571,900 full-time teachers, including 154,300 primary schools with 108 million students and 6,60,080 full-time teachers, and 52,900 secondary schools with 50,184,400 students and 3,971,100 full-time teachers.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education lasts for three years and is divided into regular upper secondary

¹ The Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Revised in 2018)

education and secondary vocational education. As an important part of the national education system, upper secondary education lays the foundation for the development of various talents and cultivates high-quality technical and skilled professionals. In 2021, China had 21,900 upper secondary schools, with 39,168,400 students and 2,723,700 full-time teachers, consisting of 14,600 regular upper secondary schools with 26,050,300 students and 2,028,300 full-time teachers, and 7,294 secondary vocational schools with 13,118,100 students and 695,400 full-time teachers. In addition, there were 326 adult upper secondary schools with 52,000 students and 1,769 full-time teachers.

Higher education

Higher education includes diploma courses/non diploma courses. Higher academic education is divided into junior college, undergraduate, and postgraduate education. In terms of duration of study, junior college, undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral education last for two to three years, four to five years, two to three years, and three to four years, respectively². The academic degree program in China awards bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees³. Master's and doctoral degrees can be further divided into academic and professional degrees. Non academic/degree mainly refers to training and education provided by institutions of higher learning and other higher education institutions⁴, including the use of distance learning. In 2021, China had 3,012 institutions of higher learning, consisting of 1,238 regular undergraduate universities, 32 vocational schools at the undergraduate level, 1,486 higher vocational schools (junior colleges) and 256 adult institutions. There were a total of 44.3 million students participating in various forms of higher education programs in 2021.

Vocational education

Vocational education is regarded as a parallel part with the regular education in Chinese education system. China has established an advanced vocational education system that meets the needs of economic and social development of the country. It integrates industry with education, and values vocational school education and vocational training equally. The education system integrates vocational with regular education, links different levels of vocational education together, and promotes lifelong learning for the entire population. Vocational school education is divided into secondary vocational education and higher vocational education. Secondary vocational education is provided as an integral part of secondary education by secondary vocational schools (including technical schools). Higher vocational education is implemented as an integral part of higher education by higher vocational schools at or above the junior college, undergraduate, and higher education levels, as well as regular undergraduate colleges and universities. Vocational training includes pre-employment training, on-the-job training, re-employment training and other vocational training⁵. Currently, vocational schools in China offer over 1,300 majors and over 120,000 specialty sites, covering almost all sectors of the national economy. This facilitates the ability for talent training structures to adapt to new changes

² Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Revised on December 29, 2018)

³ Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees (Revised on August 28, 2004)

⁴ Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Revised on December 29, 2018)

⁵ Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Revised on April 20, 2022)

in demand structures and construction, making China the only country in the world to have all industrial sectors.

Continuing education

Continuing education is an important part of the lifelong learning system. China's continuing education consists of academic and non-academic continuing education. Academic continuing education can be generally divided into adult upper secondary education and adult higher education. Non-academic continuing education serves as an essential platform for meeting people's different learning needs. It is provided in various forms such as self-study courses, preparatory courses, further studies, community courses, and courses and training for the elderly. Further study and training include administrative management, enterprise management, professional and technical, vocational training and other courses, which are provided by secondary vocational schools, vocational and technical schools and higher education institutions⁶. Among the various types of training methods include centralized training, remote training and on-the-job training. Community courses aim to improve people's moral qualities, scientific and cultural knowledge, health, and vocational skills. Provided to improve the health and quality of life for the elderly, courses for the elderly have become an important and effective part of life in addressing the issue of China's rising aging population.

⁶ The categorization of training is based on how training is classified in educational undertaking statistics.

Chapter 2

Advancing China's Action towards SDG 4



(Source: Ministry of Education Website)

The Chinese government attaches great importance to education and regards the further development of education as a cornerstone of the nation's growth. China's education policy is aligned with the SDG 4 while at the same time pursuing the strategy of promoting education modernization. It aims at building a stronger nation by enhancing the competitiveness of its education, and meeting people's demand for education to ensure that China's 1.4 billion people can receive a better and a more equitable education.

Prioritizing educational development

The Chinese government always attaches higher priorities of education in the national development. Since 2015, China has been continuously strengthening the top-level design and leadership of education development. The Central Committee for Comprehensive Deepening Reform has made important decisions on major matters of education reform and development, and established a central leading group for education development, which facilitates effective coordination and promotion of education reform and development. In 2018, China held a National Education Conference, which led to the formulation of a policy document called *China's Education Modernization 2035*. Subsequently, the government launched a series of dedicated actions to systematically promote the goals, tasks, and pathways of implementing SDG 4 and modernizing education in China.

Box 2-1 "The overall goal of promoting education modernization" proposed by *China's Education Modernization 2035*

By 2020, the development goals of the 13th Five-Year Plan will be fully realized. These include: the overall capacity and international influence are strengthened, the average duration of education for the working age population will be substantially increased, and important progress is achieved towards the modernization of education. This will make important contributions to the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. On this basis, after an additional 15 years of hard work, China will achieve an overall modernization of its education by 2035 and make China a powerhouse in the field of education. This achievement in the education sector will aid China's transformation into one of the most educated countries in the world. That means the country will possess ample human resources and an abundant number of professionals, thereby paving the way for the building of a rich, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and eco-friendly modern socialist power by the middle of this century.

The main development goals for 2035 are: establishing a modern education system that provides lifelong learning for the entire population; achieving universal attendance in quality pre-primary education; providing high-quality and balanced compulsory education; achieving maximum attendance in upper secondary education; significantly improving vocational education; building a more competitive higher education system; providing adequate education for children/youth with disabilities; and establishing a new education management system with participation from the whole society.

Education has always been a priority of the national development for the Chinese government. As the Chinese government has explicitly stated, the national expenditure on education will remain no less than 4% as a proportion to GDP. The 2030 Education Agenda calls upon countries to set aside 4 to 6 percent of their GDP to education. The share of education expenditure in the general public budget and the per capita education expenditure in public education will continue to increase year by year. In 2021, government spending on education was RMB4.6 trillion, and the government expenditure on education as a share of GDP has remained above 4% over the last ten consecutive years.

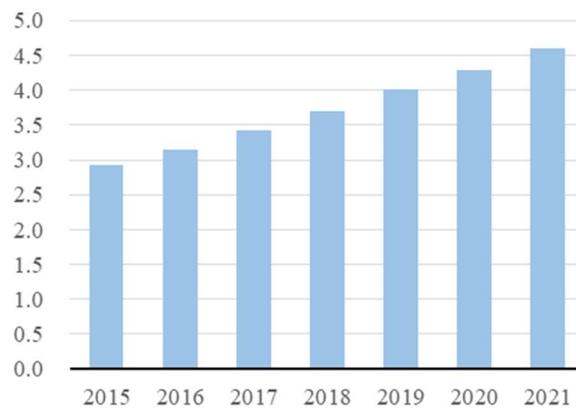


Figure 1 Change in Government Spending on Education Between 2015 and 2021 (in trillions of yuan)

Promoting the modernization of the education governance system and governance capacity

China has vigorously promoted educational and school governance according to the existing laws. Since 2015, the Chinese government has revised and improved the Education Law, the Higher Education Law, the Private Education Promotion Law, the Vocational Education Law, the Regulations for the Implementation of Private Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Education of Disabled People, and other educational laws and regulations. People's Congresses at all levels have carried out inspections to enforce education laws and maintained a strict oversight on the implementation of education laws and regulations.

Box 2-2 The Law Enforcement Inspection Group of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress has inspected the implementation of the Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China

According to the supervision work plan, the law enforcement inspection team formed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress conducted law enforcement inspection of the Higher Education Law from June to September 2019. The inspection aimed to gain a deeper understanding on how the law was being implemented, as well as promote the reform and development of higher education in accordance with the law, and ensure that major central government decisions were being implemented as stipulated in the law.

The inspection team visited 11 cities, inspected 37 colleges and universities, attended 17 symposiums, listened to progress reports from local governments and relevant departments, and discussed with college and university management, teachers and students. In addition, the inspection team authorized the Standing Committees of the People's Congresses of 10 provinces/municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guangdong, Guangxi, Chongqing, Guizhou, Shaanxi and Gansu) to carry out self-inspection on the local implementation of the Higher Education Law.

A new relationship has been built among the various entities representing the government, schools and society. Since 2015, the Chinese government has continuously pushed for reform in the field of education with a view to streamline the administration and decentralize education authority. These reforms combine decentralization with management, and optimize various

services, which help to facilitate the transformation of the government's functions of educational administration, and clarify the relationships between the central and local governments, and between the government and schools. The government has also established a model of educational governance in which different entities of the government, schools and society work together to govern the sector. To encourage schools to continuously reform and develop, schools now have greater autonomy when it comes to managing their affairs.

There has been a deepened reform of education evaluation. In 2020, the Chinese government issued the *General Plan for Deepening Education Evaluation Reform in the New Era*. The plan provides for establishing and improving multi-dimensional evaluation models, optimizing the evaluation of the government's performance of educational responsibilities, implementing a scientific and effective evaluation of schools, teachers, and students, and promoting a more scientific method of selecting and employing people in society. It indicates that improvement of the national educational standard system needs to be accelerated and educational standards need to be revised in a timely manner to utilize the guiding role of educational standards to its fullest extent. It is recognized that the reform of the educational supervision system and mechanism should be deepened. The educational supervision and accountability mechanism and public participation mechanism shall be improved, strengthening the authority and effectiveness of supervision.

Promoting educational equity in a comprehensive way

As the cornerstone of China's education policy, the promotion of educational equity has always been a priority, and an increasing number of Chinese people have been benefitting from educational development. The Chinese government takes the promotion of educational equality across different regions, different schools, urban and rural areas, and people from different backgrounds as a priority. It has instructed developed regions to support less developed regions, and urban districts are expected to support rural districts. It has stepped up the construction of higher education institutions in the central and western regions, and strengthened targeted support for colleges and universities in the western region to fully revitalize the higher education system in the central and western regions, and further promote balanced development of education across the country. China has established basic education as a public service and unified the standards for the construction of urban and rural compulsory education schools, teacher establishments, the allocation of public funds per student, and the allocation of basic facilities within counties. China has also promoted the integration of urban and rural development and built a system of supervision and assessment for balanced development of compulsory education. This has greatly reduced the disparity in the allocation of educational resources across counties. China has also developed a special assistance and support system and national student support policies covering all education stages, schools at all levels and all students from low-income backgrounds to ensure equal access to education for disadvantaged groups.

Box 2-3 China continues to provide special programs at key institutions to recruit students from rural and poverty-stricken areas

"Thanks to the special program, I can study at a university in Beijing." Xie Fei is a student from a

low-income family in Xiji County, Guyuan City, Ningxia Province. Admitted to China Agricultural University in 2018, he is the first member of his family to attend college, and it was all, thanks to special initiatives from key institutions, which recruit students from rural and poverty-stricken areas.

Education is a permanent cure to prevent poverty from passing down to the next generation. Many students, like Xie Fei, have benefited from the special enrollment policy. In view of the recent economic and social growth in certain areas over the past few years, China has adopted specialized programs for key institutions to enroll students from rural and poverty-stricken areas. The number of students enrolled in the program has soared from 10,000 in 2012 to 117,000 by 2020, with a total of 700,000 students from poverty-stricken areas attending key universities.

Integrating SDG 4 with SDG 1

China views education as a crucial instrument for eradicating poverty (SDG 1), and therefore considers educational development to be a top priority for poverty alleviation. In order to promote education and ensure employment, China has implemented a series of education-focused poverty alleviation projects, improved the precise targeting of financial aid for students from low-income families, promoted the implementation of targeted allowances for poverty alleviation through education, and achieved the goal of universal education. China has alleviated poverty through education in a comprehensive way. This includes ensuring compulsory education, alleviating poverty through education, and preventing poverty from passing down to the next generation. By 2021, China completely eradicated absolute poverty, and education played a significant role in this accomplishment.

Box 2-4 Education plays a key role in poverty alleviation

Huang Baiyang (vice principal of Yangxianjiang Middle School in Cixi City, Ningbo) was appointed as the first principal of Fenghuang Middle School in Xingren City, Qianxinan Prefecture, Guizhou Province, for a one-year volunteer program in October 2018.

Fenghuang Middle School was opened in 2017 and has 119 teachers, 110 of whom have been at the school for less than two years. To promote the professional growth of young teachers, Huang Baiyang set up a workshop on emotional education and collective team-building activities. In addition, she also set up a Youth Health - the Path of Growth course and recruited the first batch of 10 volunteer mentors to provide students with educational guidance, career planning, health advice and other services.

The infiltration of the "Ningbo experience" facilitated a faculty team for the recipient areas to be created, which will allow for local education to be developed even after the volunteers leave. In 2019, 421 instructors (or principals) in Ningbo and all its districts and counties (cities) served as volunteers.

Using information technology to accelerate educational reform

The Chinese government places a high value on the transformative power of information technology on educational development. Since 2015, it has been accelerating the education informatization, which aims to provide greater access to a variety of IT facilities, including broadband network access among schools, high-quality resources among classes, and e-learning platforms among students. The action also helped build public service platforms for educational

resources and educational management. These efforts have narrowed the digital divide between urban and rural districts as well as between other regions. It has also allowed for digital teaching resources to be utilized to their fullest extent when it comes to solving education inequity. Full coverage of the basic network environment in schools has been essentially achieved, with active measures taken to ensure the supply of high-quality resources and elevate the level of teaching applications.

In 2022, the government launched a National Education Digital Strategy to boost the digital transformation and smart education upgrading. On March 28, 2022, the Smart Education of China was launched, integrating the resource and service platforms such as the national smart education platform for primary and secondary schools, the national smart vocational education platform, the national smart higher education platform, etc. and the National “24365” Graduate Employment Service Platform. The new platform addresses the national needs and hot topics, and a number of themed resource sectors such as "fighting against the epidemic", "Beijing Winter Olympics Spirit", "Mental Health", "Summer Teacher Training" and "Training Classes" have been launched, together with extensive digital education resources such as moral education, sports, aesthetic education, and labor education. The Platform has expanded government services such as examination services, academic degrees, and overseas study services. Since the platform's launch over a year ago, it has had over 1.1 billion visits. The platform has networked 529,000 schools, which is open to 18.44 million teachers, and benefited 291 million students, and a large number of community members. It has gathered 44,000 pieces of resources for primary and secondary schools.

Box 2-5 Ningxia: artificial intelligence is empowering teachers

In August 2018, the Ministry of Education decided to conduct an AI-assisted pilot project to facilitate the formation of faculty teams in Ningxia and at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. In January 2019, Shizuishan was designated as a pilot city in Ningxia. In the last two years, Shizuishan City has invested RMB140 million in over 30 artificial intelligence projects, including teacher management, education, and campus governance.

"Using the AI assistant, intelligent marking, intelligent test paper generation, intelligent analysis, and other AI technologies, our teachers have reduced repetitive workloads by more than 40%, improved teaching efficiency by over 20%, and relieved workplace pressure in general." said Chen Guanghua, principal of Shizuishan No.3 Middle School.

Members of the Shizuishan Experimental Middle School football team wear sports bracelets during training. The bracelet gathers sports data and sends it to the "smart playground" system in real time so that teachers can get a greater grasp of the athlete's participation and better determine how to proceed in their coaching. According to Xiao Lu, a PE teacher who has been teaching for more than 30 years, the bracelets can also record and upload dribbling and passing videos. In addition, facial and gesture recognition technology is used to identify players' actions that need improvement.

Strengthening the teacher's professional development

Respecting teachers and valuing education has long been a Chinese tradition. A great deal of

effort has been made over the past few years by the Chinese government to improve the social status of teachers and emphasize their importance as well as education itself. The government has put a high emphasis on forming teams of teachers to develop them as professionals who are highly qualified, competent and innovative. Teachers' social status has been continually advancing in China, so have systems which recognize and honor teachers' work. A series of awards are now available to recognize excellence in teaching, such as national educator and teacher role model and outstanding teacher awards. Constant improvement in teachers' professional status, working and living conditions, and guaranteed income levels has helped make teaching an enviable and attractive profession.

Box 2-6 The Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the Ministry of Education jointly launched a national role model study and publicity campaign for educators and teachers

The Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the Ministry of Education jointly launched a national role model selection campaign for teachers and educators in 2021 in honor of the 37th annual Teachers' Day. It aimed at highlighting the impressive accomplishments of outstanding teachers in modern teaching and education. Li Hongxia, a teacher at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Hebei Province, and Zhang Wanbo, a teacher at No.5 Middle School of Benxi Manchu Autonomous County, Benxi City, Liaoning Province, were among the ten national role models selected in 2021.

These ten individuals came from all educational levels, including higher education, vocational education, primary and secondary schools, pre-primary education, and special education. They hailed from across the country and varied in ethnicity, gender, and age. They were composed of prominent technological talents specializing in cutting-edge frontiers, as well as teachers who silently made contributions to rural education.

Promoting international education exchange and cooperation

China continues to open up its education system to the outside world and strengthen mutual tolerance, learning and exchange with other countries around the world. Since 2015, China has vigorously conducted bilateral and multilateral educational exchanges, accelerated the promotion of high-level cooperation in school administration for world-class resources, and created more internationally competitive education programs to attract overseas students to study in China.

In recent years, China is actively engaged in global education governance, sharing its expertise and experience. China has greatly extended its cooperation with UNESCO and supported UNESCO in taking forward the Global Education 2030 Agenda. To provide the international community with high-quality public education resources, China and UNESCO have held a series of high-profile international educational conferences and jointly set up the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education, the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy, the UNESCO Great Wall Program of Scholarships, and the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust Project. China has supported various Chinese institutions in their cooperation efforts with UNESCO. Five UNESCO Category 2 educational centers and more than 20 members (sister universities), learning cities, vocational education centers and UNESCO-affiliated schools established in China have made significant contributions to strengthen educational cooperation, promote teacher-capacity-building, and facilitate poverty alleviation and pandemic prevention. Following

the outbreak of COVID-19, China shared its experience in effectively preventing and controlling the pandemic in the field of education. It shared its experience of “suspending classes without suspending learning” with the international community via the UNESCO platforms, and highlighted its high-quality online education resources and platforms to the international community.

Suspending classes without suspending learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly disrupted normal education and teaching processes. Prioritizing people's lives and health, China enacted the most stringent measures to contain the pandemic, and achieved significant success. China has always prioritized the safety and health of its teachers and students, and has done so by coordinating epidemic prevention and control measures along with the resumption of classes and schools. It implemented scientific, comprehensive, and accurate pandemic preventive methods to avoid large-scale outbreaks in schools. China considers education to be a basic necessity and a fundamental human right. It therefore has given top priority to educational investment and ensuring equal educational opportunities for poor areas and disadvantaged groups despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. China has continued to broaden international collaboration on pandemic control in the field of education, promote the sharing of high-quality online education resources, share pandemic control experiences in the domain actively, combat racial discrimination and extremism, develop a global education community, and tackle the impact of the pandemic on education.

Box 2-7 China shares its experiences in the battle against COVID-19 on the educational front



In the first half of 2020, the Ministry of Education launched two free online international teaching platforms, the English versions of XuetangX and iCourse. These platforms provided over 700 free online courses in English for hundreds of millions of college students and global learners from more than 100 countries. UNESCO, the Ministry of Education of China, and other

international organizations, together with the education departments of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and other countries, conducted video exchanges on anti-epidemic practices. The Education Department of Heilongjiang Province conducted an online teaching experience exchange with the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in Russia. Tsinghua University held an online international university teaching symposium to share China's experience and achievements with more than a dozen universities throughout Asia and Europe.

Chapter 3

China's SDG 4 Progress (2015-2021)



(Source: Ministry of Education Website)

Combining the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the nation's 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, Outline for the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035, and other medium-term and long-term development strategies organically, China will strive to promote high-quality education development. China will take precise and targeted measures to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to achieve the specific goals set out in SDG 4.

SDG 4.1 Primary and secondary education: ensuring equitable quality of primary and secondary education

No.	Indicator	China ⁷		
		2015	2021	
1	Proportion of children and young people (a) in grade 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics (%) ⁸	(a) reading	81.8 (2016)	81.7 (2019)
		(a) math	84.6	84.8 (2018)
		(c) reading	79.6 (2016)	79.3 (2019)
		(c) math	78.9	78.8 (2018)
2	Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education) (%) ⁹	Primary	99.0	99.0 (2020)
		Lower secondary	97.1	97.1 (2020)
		Upper secondary	66.3	73.6 (2020)
3	Net enrollment rate (%)	Primary	99.9	>99.9
4	Retention rate of compulsory education (%)	Compulsory education	93.0	95.4
5	Administration of a nationally representative learning assessment (a) in grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education	(a) reading	Yes	Yes
		(a) math	Yes	Yes
		(c) reading	Yes	Yes
		(c) math	Yes	Yes
6	Number of years of (a) free and (b) compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed in legal frameworks ¹⁰	Compulsory education	9	9
		Free education	9	9

A better and fairer compulsory education

China has successfully universalized compulsory education across the country, raising the retention rate of compulsory education from 93.0% in 2015 to 95.4% in 2021. Dropout rates were virtually eliminated in the compulsory education years by the end of 2020. Since 2012, the Chinese government has promoted the balanced development of compulsory education and issued the *Interim Measures for Supervising and Assessing the Balanced Development of*

⁷ Except when noted otherwise, all data pertaining to China comes from China's national education development statistics. This also applies for the data below.

⁸ This SDG 4 indicator can accept the national assessment data of the corresponding grade (+1 or -1). Therefore, the national compulsory education quality monitoring data is used as China's data, which is the proportion of students in grade 4 (corresponding to 'a', grade 2/3 of the indicator) and grade 8 (corresponding to 'c', at the end of lower secondary) who reach medium or above in the subject assessment.

⁹ China's data of this indicator is calculated based on the sampling data of 1% of the population in 2015, the preliminary data of the Seventh National Population Census in 2020 and the education statistics. According to the enrollment age of primary school students and educational system of China, the completion rate of primary education for 14-16 years old, the completion rate of lower secondary school education for 17-19 years old, and the completion rate of upper secondary education for 20-22 years old are calculated respectively.

¹⁰ The value of this indicator in the world and upper middle-income countries is the proportion (%) of countries providing corresponding years of compulsory or free education, and the value in China is the number of years of compulsory education.

Compulsory Education in Counties. The government is committed to promoting education equity, narrowing the gap in education, promoting urban-rural integration, and running every school effectively. By the end of 2015, a total of 1,302 counties (cities and districts) in China fulfilled the supervision and assessment requirements of the basic balanced development of compulsory education at the county level. By the end of 2021, all 2,895 county-level administrative units across China met the national supervision and assessment requirements of the basic balanced development of compulsory education at the county level, realizing all indicators and conditions of basic balanced development of compulsory education in counties. In 2017, the government issued the *Supervision and Assessment Measures for the High-Quality and Balanced Development of Compulsory Education in Counties* to promote the evaluation of the high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education with higher standards and a greater emphasis on education quality and substance. This work was officially launched in 2019, with Haiyan County in Jiaxing City and Jiangbei District in Ningbo City in Zhejiang Province taking the lead in passing the evaluation. From 2015 to 2021, the net enrollment rate of primary education in China remained above 99%, while the gross enrollment rate of primary and lower secondary education remained above 100%.



Qinghai: Continue to increase investment in education to improve school conditions in rural areas (Boarding Central Primary School, Xiagongma Township, Gadê County, Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai)(Source: Xinhuanet)

The Chinese government places a high value on increasing the quality of basic education and sees fostering students' overall development as a key indicator for enhancing education quality. To this end, the Chinese government has issued a series of key regulations to continually expand education and teaching reform and encourage the development of a complete "Five Education Focuses" training system. The "Five Education Focuses" include moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor skills education. They prioritize moral education and place a high value on developing students' morals, knowledge, physical health, aesthetics, and hard-working spirit. In 2019, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued *Opinions on Deepening Education and Teaching Reform and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education*, proposing to establish a scientific quality concept, guide schools in deepening education and teaching reform, train high-quality and professionally competent teachers, optimize education and teaching methods,

improve school operation efficiency, and continuously improve the education quality. In 2020, recommendations for strengthening labor skills education, physical education, and aesthetic education in the new era were issued, and systematic design and overall planning were made to further perfect the comprehensive training system of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor skills. It also involved strengthening the curriculum and teaching materials system, reforming curriculum-based teaching, and incorporating a hard-working spirit into the comprehensive quality development system. In addition, sports and art disciplines have been included in secondary and upper secondary education academic examinations to enhance the overall development of students' physical fitness, artistic and humanistic qualities, and labor qualities.



The Roller-skating Team of Hebei Shuangluan Experimental Primary School was conducting intensive training on the newly poured ice rink in the school, marking the curricularization of winter sports and the institutionalization of school team training. (Source: Ministry of Education Website)

China has launched two rounds of compulsory education quality monitoring from 2015 to 2020, based on years of study and testing. Chinese, mathematics, physics, moral education, physical education, and art education were among the subjects included in quality monitoring. Every year, fourth and eighth grade students were monitored and assessed. The monitoring results showed that the proportion of students in the fourth and eighth grades who have reached the medium or higher proficiency level in Chinese, mathematics, and science remained stable at around 80%, and the overall proportion of excellent students increased slightly (see Figure 2 for details). The Chinese government issued the *National Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring Program* (Revised in 2021) in September 2021, initiating a new round of compulsory education quality monitoring and expanding the monitoring areas from six to nine subjects, including English, labor skills education, and mental health, with a three-year monitoring cycle and three fields monitored annually.

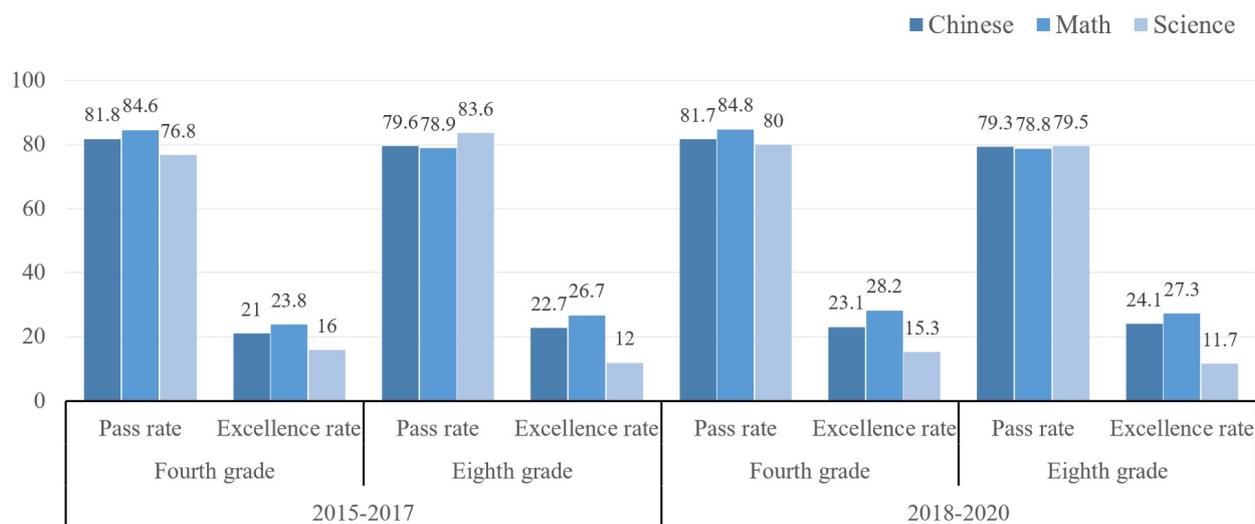


Figure 2 Subject Pass Rate and Excellence Rate of National Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring 2015-2020



Figure 3 National Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring in 2019 — Report on the Monitoring Results of Chinese and Art Learning Quality

China has also participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published the results of the 2018 PISA test, which tested 15-year-old students in 79 countries (regions). China's four provinces and cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang) participated in the assessment. The results show that students from these provinces and cities achieved the highest scores in all three subjects (reading, mathematics and science), with 94.8%, 97.6% and 97.9% of the students achieving a basic level of proficiency or above, respectively. According to the monitoring of the quality of compulsory education in China, approximately 80% of eighth grade students have reached at least the intermediate proficiency level in Chinese, mathematics, and science, which is essentially the same as the performance of 15-year-old adolescents from OECD countries in PISA tests.

Box 3-1 Reducing students' homework and off-campus training at the stage of compulsory education and facilitating students' healthy growth

As in other countries, Chinese families are increasingly concerned with their children's education and motivated to ensure their children attend good schools. In recent years, off-campus training institutions have

grown rapidly, often causing the off-campus training burden for students while the government has gradually reduced the learning burden and amount of homework for students. Primary and secondary school students have long been affected by the heavy homework burden, which has a great impact on the healthy growth of students, thus restraining the effectiveness of educational reform and development.

In recent years, various regions in China have worked to reduce students' homework and off-campus training in the compulsory education stage. While some achievements have been made, the problem of excessive off-campus training has not been fundamentally solved. To address this, China issued the *Opinions on Further Reducing Students' Homework and Off-campus Training Burden in Compulsory Education Stage* in July 2021, based on a big data evaluation of 18,600 training institutions, 680,000 students, and 740,000 parents in 100 districts and counties of ten provinces, as well as a large number of field research and demonstration projects. Significant measures have been taken to solve the heavy burden on primary and secondary school students, particularly the off-campus training burden. These measures include clarifying and defining the total amount of homework, prohibiting academic training by off-campus training institutions on national statutory holidays, rest days, and in winter and summer holidays, suspending registration and approval of off-campus academic training institutions in the compulsory education stage, and all existing off-campus academic training institutions re-registering as non-profit organizations.

The "double reduction" policy has two overall objectives. The first objective is to improve the quality of school education and teaching, as well as the service quality, optimize assignments of students, ensure that schools' off-campus service primarily meets the needs of students, and shift the primary learning site back to schools. The other objective is to regulate off-campus training institutions, eliminate non-compliant operations in academic training, and curb the expansion of off-campus training institutions.

Higher popularization of upper secondary education

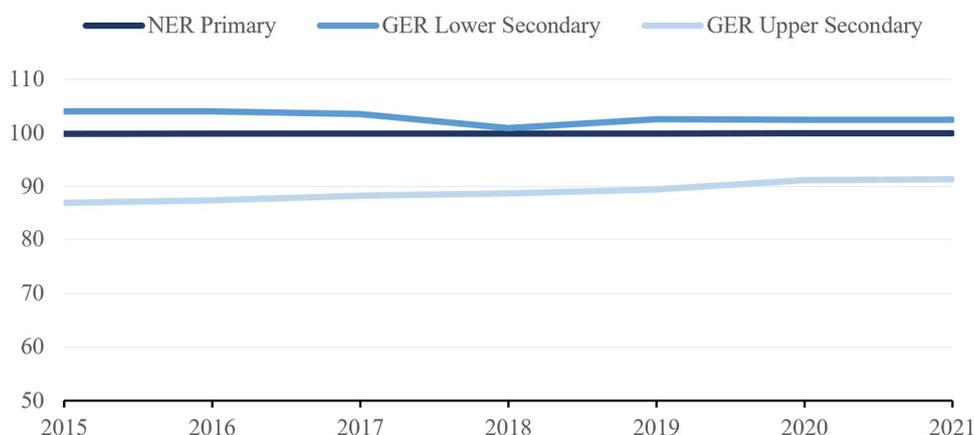


Figure 4 Enrollment Rate of Primary and Secondary Education (%) in China Since 2015

China has taken measures to popularize upper secondary education, including through the formulation of the *Plan for the Popularization of High School Education (2017-2020)*, and stepping up support to the central and western regions, especially impoverished and distant areas in the central and western regions. So far, the gross enrollment rate of upper secondary education in China has increased from 87.0% in 2015 to 91.4% in 2021, and all provinces achieved the goal of 90% gross enrollment rate by 2020. The completion rates of primary and lower secondary

education have remained high, reaching 99.0% and 97.1%, respectively. The upper secondary education completion rate rose dramatically, from 66.3% in 2015 to 73.6% in 2020. The completion rate of upper secondary education is expected to rise by the increasing popularization of upper secondary education.

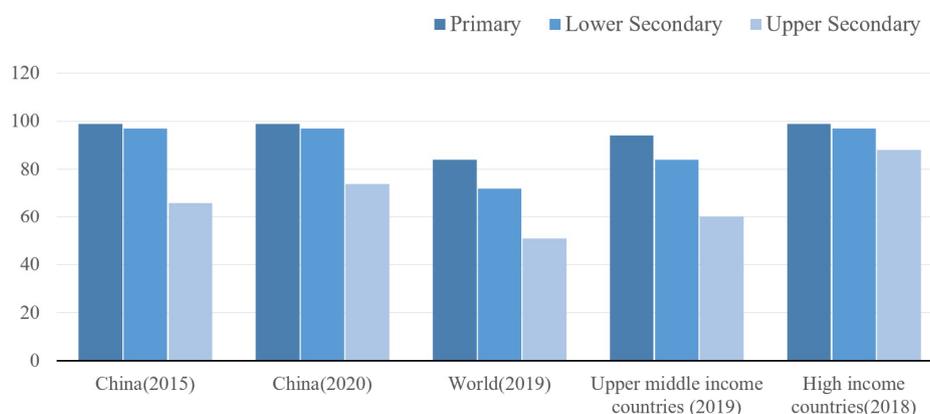


Figure 5 Changes in Completion Rates (%)

To promote free primary and secondary education, China has launched a tuition-free upper secondary education policy for specific groups at this stage of education. It has implemented the policy of free secondary vocational education for all rural students (including students registered in counties and towns), urban students majoring in agriculture and students from low-income families, as well as students from schools in ethnic minority areas. At the same time, China has implemented a free upper secondary education policy for students from low-income families.

SDG 4.2 Vigorously promoting pre-primary education

No.	Indicator	China	
		2015	2021
1	Proportion of primary school entrants who have received pre-primary education (%)	98.0	99.5
2	Gross enrollment rate, pre-primary education (%)	75.0	88.1

China actively builds public welfare and inclusive pre-primary education system

China's pre-primary education adheres to the principle of education for the public welfare and inclusiveness.¹¹ Since 2011, the Chinese government has adopted three successive pre-primary education action plans to accelerate the growth of pre-primary education. From 2011 to 2020, the government allocated a total of RMB153 billion to support rural areas in the central and western regions, as well as remote poverty-stricken areas, for providing inclusive pre-primary education resources and improving the system and mechanisms to enhance the quality of early childhood care and education. In 2021, the number of public-interest kindergartens in China reached 245,000, accounting for 83% of total kindergartens, of which 128,000 were public

¹¹ The government and families share the cost of pre-school education in China. After 2015, China has vigorously developed public kindergartens and private inclusive kindergartens. For both types of kindergartens, childcare and accommodation fees are charged at government-guided prices, thereby reducing the financial burden of pre-school education on families.

kindergartens, a 65.7% increase over 2015, highlighting the leading role of public kindergartens in meeting people's pre-primary education needs and reducing education costs. The number of children in public-interest kindergartens nationally increased by 20.5 percentage points from 2016 to 87.8%¹², with more than 90% in 12 provinces, ensuring that a large vast majority of children received inclusive pre-primary education. The public pre-primary education service network has taken shape. Every town or village has a public central kindergarten. Kindergartens are operated separately by large villages and collaboratively by small villages. A public pre-primary education system has been established in China to address the issue of "difficult and expensive admission to kindergartens" and to meet people's expectation of attending a kindergarten close to home.



“Teeth Protection Campaign”, a themed activity during the Teeth Care Day event, was launched in the Central Kindergarten of Jiapu Town, Changxing County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province on September 16, 2020. (Source: Xinhuanet)

Box 3-2 Wuhou District, Chengdu, Sichuan Province: build more and better kindergartens to offer quality pre-primary education for children

The government of Wuhou District has formulated the "action plan for improving pre-primary education" in order to ensure high-quality development for all children, promote pre-primary education, and gradually improve the quality of pre-primary education. Over the past three years, a number of measures have been taken to accelerate the development of pre-primary education in order to meet SDG 4 for the development of early childhood care and education. These measures include:

1. Provide affordable and high-quality education to ethnic minorities and disadvantaged children in Chengdu, such as Tibetans and Yi people, and ensure that as many school-age children as possible can attend school.
2. Hire third-party evaluation institutions to monitor and track the quality of kindergartens.
3. Provide family education guidance, guide parents to raise children scientifically, and create a family education atmosphere suitable for children's overall growth.
4. Establish a mechanism of multi-party participation in pre-primary education, widely introduce social resources to promote the development of pre-primary undertakings, and cooperate with universities to carry out research projects.

¹² The proportion of children in inclusive kindergartens was calculated from 2016.

With the above measures in place, the "action plan for improving pre-primary education" has contributed to a gross enrollment rate of 106% for pre-primary education in Wuhou District, a coverage rate of 76.8% for public-interest kindergartens along with an addition of 1328 new quotas, and allowance for 3990 poor and disabled children and orphans. Third-party surveys indicate that social satisfaction rate for pre-primary education has reached 97.42%.

High popularization of pre-primary education among new primary school students

The gross enrollment rate of pre-primary education in China reached 88.1% in 2021, an increase of 13.1 percentage points from 75.0% in 2015. The proportion of primary education new entrants who have received pre-primary education has increased from 98.0% to 99.5%.



Figure 6 Change in the Gross Enrollment Rate of Pre-primary Education in China

Enhancing the quality of pre-primary education by accelerating the establishment of the pre-primary education system and relevant mechanisms

China has continuously improved the system and relevant mechanisms for pre-primary education management, supervision, and evaluation, and is committed to promoting healthy and scientific pre-primary education. The central and local governments have formulated a series of policies in recent years regarding kindergarten operation, safety and health, cost, financial allocation, teacher qualification, and kindergarten operation supervision and evaluation standards. Active supervision of kindergartens has been strengthened to urge kindergartens to improve management efficiency. The *Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6*, formulated by a team of experts, provide kindergartens with specific and operable professional guidance on strengthening scientific education and effectively preventing the tendency of developing kindergartens into primary schools. In addition to promoting scientific childcare and education in kindergartens, the Chinese government also encourages home-school co-education and guides parents in raising children in a scientific manner.

Box 3-3 Continue to meet people's needs for more and better kindergartens

China is committed to providing satisfactory education for the people. In pre-primary education, the goal is to meet people's expectations for more and better kindergartens constantly. The aim of pre-primary education in China has always been to improve the quality of pre-primary education, focusing on meeting children's physical and mental health needs.

The first measure is to regulate and evaluate pre-primary education simultaneously, urging kindergartens

to seek development above the bottom line.

To strengthen and improve kindergarten supervision and regulate kindergarten operations, the Ministry of Education developed the *Measures for the Supervision and Evaluation of Kindergartens Operations* in 2017. It then issued the *Kindergarten Responsibility Supervision and Listing Supervision Measures* in 2019 to promote the implementation of the former. By the end of that year, nearly 90% of kindergartens completed a system of supervision and listing of responsibilities.

The second measure is to improve the training and build a high-quality team of kindergarten teachers.

Following the requirements of the central government, all local governments have been continuously improving the teaching and research guidance network of pre-primary education, and have developed several teaching and research approaches, including immersion, experience and case studies, and guide teachers to improve educational quality in the process of solving problems.

The third measure is to promote curriculum reform and improve the quality of teaching by introducing plays and games to classrooms.

Kindergartens shall value the importance of children's life and games, strictly prohibit advanced education and intensive training in the pre-primary stage, and widely promote the play-based education model in kindergartens. For example, the Anji Game model has become a characteristic business card of pre-primary education in China, attracting the attention of the pre-primary education industry at home and abroad.



(Source: Ministry of Education Website)

Anji is a mountain county in Zhejiang Province's northwestern region and is well-known for its boundless bamboo forest and white tea. It has been more famous in recent years for its Anji Game. The outdoor environment design of the Anji kindergarten follows the principles of nature and wild fascination, such as a large sand pool, undulating grass slopes and tunnels, ecological mud (the habitat of weeds and wildflowers), trees and swings. The "Anji Game" mode highlights the principle of "returning games to children", which has been researched for more than ten years, ensuring that the games are free of utilitarianism and formalism. Children are the actual players of games and the rule makers in the process of Anji Game education. They may choose who to play with, what to play with, and how to play. This gives free reign to children's initiative, motivation, and creativity. Teachers are only spectators and recorders.

SDG 4.3 Vocational and tertiary education: more opportunities, more choices and more flexible supply of educational services

No.	Indicator	China	
		2015	2021
1	Gross enrollment ratio for tertiary education (%)	40	57.8

Significantly increasing opportunities for young people to receive vocational education and tertiary education

Young people are defined as those between the ages of 15 and 34 by the National Bureau of Statistics of China. Based on the definition and the population sampling data of the National Bureau of Statistics in 2015, China's youth population was about 405,528,000. The total numbers of students enrolled in tertiary education (including undergraduates Adult HEIs, web-based undergraduates and other types) and upper secondary vocational education were about 41,396,000 and 16,567,000, accounting for 10.2% and 4.1% of the youth population, respectively. As the population data is presented in 5 years intervals as an age group, if calculated based on adults over 20 years old, the total proportion stands at 5.4%. In 2020, China's youth population was about 363,618,000. The total numbers of students enrolled in tertiary education (including undergraduate in Adult HEIs, web-based undergraduates and other types) and upper secondary vocational education were about 52,230,000 and 16,634,000, accounting for 14.4% and 4.6% of the youth population, respectively. Based on the adults over 20 years old, the total proportion is about 6.4%.

In order to improve the cultivation of the population, promote economic development and alleviate employment pressure, the Chinese government implemented a special measure to expand the enrollment of vocational colleges from 2019 to 2021, encouraging more migrant workers, veterans, laid-off workers, new-type professional farmers and other groups, as well as those who want to improve themselves to be enrolled in vocational colleges. This measure has expanded the opportunities for people of different ages and occupations, especially adults, to receive vocational education and upgrade their vocational skills. In 2020, 50.9% of China's new labor force received tertiary education. According to the "Seventh National Census", the population with at least college level education per 100,000 people in China had risen from 8,930 in 2010 to 15,467 in 2020.

Gross enrollment rate of tertiary education continues to grow and is in the popularization stage

SDG 4 measures the popularization of tertiary education (or access to higher education) using the gross enrollment rate of tertiary education. In recent years, the gross enrollment rate of tertiary education in China has substantially grown from 40% in 2015 to 57.8% in 2021.

China has built the largest tertiary education system in the world, popularizing tertiary education for nearly all Chinese families. China College Student Survey (CCSS) conducted by the Institute of Education of Tsinghua University summarized the family background of Chinese undergraduates from 2011 to 2018, and found that more than 70% of college students are the very first college students from their families, often known as the first-generation of college-goers.

Among these college students, 69.74% come from rural areas, 70% have siblings, and the parents of 76.89% of these students are engaged in ordinary occupations. In addition to improving their own lives, the education of these college students enhances the living standards of their families as well.

Providing affordable vocational education and higher education to everyone

The Chinese government has seriously addressed the education issue of students from low-income families. Financial aid for vocational education students has steadily increased in recent years. In June 2019, China set up national scholarships for students in upper secondary vocational education for the first time, and developed a vocational education subsidy system, mainly consisting of national scholarships, grants and tuition-free education, supplemented by local governmental, school and social subsidies.

The Chinese government has established a variety of financial assistance programs for college students. These programs include national scholarships, national encouragement scholarships, national grants, and national student loans. Each year, the China National Center for Student Financial Aid writes to secondary and upper secondary education graduates to provide them with a better understanding of the student aid policy for the next stage of their education. From pre-enrollment to post-enrollment, it provides an overview of various aid policies, policy consultation methods, and methods for preventing financial aid fraud.

Box 3-4 "Two Letters" from the China National Center for Student Financial Aid to Junior and Senior High School Graduates

The China National Center for Student Financial Aid has drafted two letters one addressed to *Junior High School Graduates* and the other to *Senior High School Graduates* to inform them about the student financial aid policies. The purpose is to further improve the publicity of student aid policies, assist the majority of lower secondary and upper secondary education graduates to understand the national student aid policy for the next education levels in advance, alleviate their economic concerns in advance, and encourage them to study hard and prepare for the exams with ease.

The *Letter to Junior High School Graduates* said, "If you are enrolled in upper secondary general education, the state will pay at least two subsidies." One of these is the national student grant; the other is the exemption of tuition and miscellaneous fees, which is available to students from low-income families, disabled students from low-income families, and students from rural low-income families.

The funding strategy is equally effective if students are enrolled in upper secondary vocational education. Students studying in agriculture, as well as students from low-income families majoring in other fields, are eligible to apply for the national student grant. Tuition-free education is available to students in rural areas (including counties and towns), students majoring in agriculture in urban areas, and students from low-income families (excluding those majoring in arts-related subjects). Furthermore, individuals with exceptional academic performance and talents are eligible to apply for the national scholarship for students in upper secondary vocational education.

The *Letter to Senior High School Graduates* said: "Don't worry if you cannot afford to pay the tuition and accommodation costs; the national student loan policy will help you resolve the issue." After receiving the university admission letter, students can apply for a student credit loan from the student financial aid center of the local education bureau to cover tuition and living expenses, with the government paying the loan interest to the bank.

There's no need to worry about the cost of living in school; the state and schools have established a

number of financial initiatives. The national encouragement scholarship is available for outstanding students facing financial difficulties. The national student grant will subsidize students' living expenses. The temporary hardship allowance is granted to alleviate unexpected difficulties, and the work-study program allows students to improve practical skills while getting living expenses.

In addition, students with financial difficulties can go through the "green channel" for admission even if they have not paid the tuition in full. New students from families with special financial difficulties in the central and western regions can also apply to the student financial aid center of the local education bureau for new student entrance assistance programs to cover the travel expenses and short-term living expenses.

SDG 4.4 Skill development: China accelerates the training of knowledge-based, skilled, and innovative workers

Action plan for promoting vocational skill development

The aims, standards, and vision of SDG 4 on job skills are strongly aligned with China's development goals of vigorously promoting lifelong vocational skill training and cultivating knowledge-based, skilled, and innovative employees. The General Office of the State Council released the *Action Plan for Developing Vocational Skills (2019-2021)* in May 2019, suggesting that "we will continue to develop vocational skills from 2019 to 2021, increase the relevance and efficacy of training, and thoroughly improve employees' vocational skills, employment and entrepreneurial capabilities. Skilled employees will account for more than 25% of all employees by the end of 2021, with high skilled talents accounting for more than 30% of all skilled workers." Given that the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on centralized offline vocational skill training, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the *Notice on the Implementation of the "Internet+ Vocational Skill Training Plan" for Vocational Skills Development* in February 2020. More than 50 high-quality online vocational skill training platforms were selected and digital training resources spanning more than 100 vocations (job categories) were developed. In 2020, online vocational skills training was provided for more than 1 million person/times.

Box 3-5 Shandong enhances farmers' vocational skills, building a permanent team of rural revitalization talents

A total of 652,600 person/times of labor relocated from rural areas received vocational skill training in Shandong in 2020, supporting the rural revitalization initiative. It is recognized that it is important to broaden training content, emphasize the development of "six new agricultural industries", include agricultural practical technology training in the vocational skill training, and cultivate a number of blue collar farmers with advanced practical technologies. Measures were taken to develop professional vocational ability assessment programs aligned with agricultural development, and launch small programs to increase the skills of the rural labor force. Dongying City, for example, implemented project-based training in fields such as forest and fruit planting, cicada breeding, vegetables planting, hairy crab breeding in the Yellow River estuary, and lotus root planting in Yong'an. The training course "planting technical knowledge + field practical operation + online sales" promoted the transformation and upgrading of agricultural pillar industries, effectively improving people's scientific and technological planting and breeding management and sales capabilities.

These initiatives have improved the training level and can now cultivate leading agricultural experts.

China has intensified the selection of leading experts in agricultural science and technology, and selected 12 Mount Tai scholars in agriculture and rural areas, 25 Mount Tai industry leading experts, and 150 Shandong rural "leaders". To cultivate rural leading experts, Shandong has implemented the "leading geese" cultivation project, and invested RMB110 million to train 42,000 high-quality farmers such as leaders and agricultural managers of new agricultural business entities, and support the local transformation, promotion and popularization of business results and development experience. To develop backup professionals, Shandong has encouraged technical colleges and universities to set up agriculture related majors. 33 technical colleges and universities have set up agriculture related majors such as agricultural machinery use and maintenance and rural economy. Currently, there are 304,700 students enrolled from rural districts.

Actively cultivating technical and skilled talents to support economic and social development

The average length of education for China's newly added labor force is 13.8 years. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences jointly launched the first round of professional and technical personnel knowledge update program from 2011 to 2020. In the decade since the launch of the program, 12.643 million person/times of knowledge updating and continuing education activities have been organized in 12 key fields such as equipment manufacturing, information, biotechnology, and new materials, as well as nine modern service industries like modern logistics, intellectual property, and food safety, building 200 national continuing education bases for professional and technical personnel, and every year training millions of high-level and urgently needed professional and technical personnel.

To facilitate regional development, China has promoted the three major actions of "full-coverage vocational college cooperation between the east and west regions, secondary vocational school enrollment cooperation between the eastern and western regions, and full participation of vocational colleges in east-west labor cooperation". China has invested more than RMB1.8 billion of financial aid and equipment to set up 683 specialty sites, 338 practical training bases, 63 branch schools (teaching sites), and 99 vocational education groups (alliances), and provided vocational skill training for more than 140,000 people, skill enhancement training for more than 160,000 people, and entrepreneurship training for more than 23,000 people.

Integrating digital skills education into primary and secondary school curricula

SDG 4 focuses on job and entrepreneurial skills, with a specific emphasis on ICT skills and digital literacy. China places a high value on the use of information technology in teaching at schools and the development of students' digital literacy. The *Core Literacy for the Development of Chinese Students* and the *Action Plan for Education Informatization 2.0* issued by the Ministry of Education in 2016 and 2018 both highlight the development of students' information awareness and skill application. China has integrated digital literacy training, digital skill education, and other themes into primary and secondary school curricula. All students are required to study information technology during the compulsory education stage. All secondary school or higher education graduates have basic ICT skills and digital literacy, according to the goals of *China's Information Technology Curriculum Requirements for Compulsory Education*

(2022).

Box 3-6 Goals of *China's Information Technology Curriculum Requirements for Compulsory Education (2022)*

Among the main qualities that information technology courses should cultivate are information awareness, computing thinking, digital learning and innovation, and information society responsibilities. Each of these four aspects contributes to the improvement of students' digital literacy and skills, and they are interconnected and support one another.

These courses will enable students to achieve the following goals:

1. Establish correct values and form information awareness;
2. Gain the preliminary ability to solve problems and develop computational thinking;
3. Improve the ability of digital cooperation and exploration, and enhance the spirit of innovation;
4. Abide by the laws and regulations of the information society and fulfill information society responsibilities.

SDG 4.5 Ensuring equal access to education

Eliminating the gender gap in compulsory education

According to the results of the Seventh National Census in 2020, the average length of education of the population aged 15 and over was 9.91 years, including 10.22 years for males and 9.59 years for females, a difference of 0.6 years. By 2020, primary school education had been popularized among China's primary school-age girls, suggesting that all girls in the primary school age-group attended school. The net enrollment rate has been maintained above 99.9% for six consecutive years since 2015, approximately the same as for boys. The gender gap in compulsory schooling has been fundamentally eliminated. According to 2021 statistics, female students outnumber male students in all types of higher education, with 1.717 million female postgraduates accounting for 51.5% of all postgraduates. There were 17.561 million and 4.805 million female students in regular colleges and adult colleges, accounting for 50.2% and 57.7%, respectively.

Increasing financial investment to promote education equity

Between 2016 and 2020, more than half of China's compulsory education budget was used in the central and western regions. More than 80% of the central government's transfer payment for compulsory education was used in the central and western regions, especially in the old revolutionary base, border, ethnic minority and poverty-stricken areas. In 2021, the government allocated RMB19.84 billion in special transfer payments for pre-primary education, RMB500 million in special transfer payments for special education, and RMB30 billion for the improvement of weak stages and capacity in compulsory education, continuously enhancing the facilities of under-developed schools.

Table 1 20 Poverty Alleviation Education Policies

No.	Policy
1	Three-year action plan for pre-primary education
2	Comprehensively improve the facilities of compulsory education schools in poverty-stricken areas

No.	Policy
3	Nutrition improvement plan for rural compulsory education students
4	Pre-primary education subsidy policy
5	"Two exemptions and one subsidy" for compulsory education (exemptions from tuition and miscellaneous fees and textbook fees, and living subsidy for boarder areas)
6	Financial aid policy for upper secondary education students
7	Secondary vocational school tuition exemption and living subsidy policy
8	Student financial aid policy for higher education
9	15 years of education at public expense in Tibet and 14 years of education at public expense in the four prefectures in southern districts of Xinjiang
10	Policy of aiding Tibet and Xinjiang through education
11	"Thousand primary and secondary schools hand in hand" cooperation between Xinjiang and other provinces and cities
12	"9 + 3" free education program in Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province
13	Special university enrollment plan for ethnic minorities
14	Training plans for high-level backbone talents of ethnic minorities
15	Pair-up support by vocational education teams
16	Specially targeted enrollment plans for impoverished areas
17	Pair-up support for colleges and universities in Xinjiang and Tibet
18	Targeted poverty alleviation by universities directly under the governance of the Ministry of Education
19	National Development Plan for Children in Impoverished Areas (2014-2020)
20	Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015-2020)

Unifying the benchmark quota of public funds for compulsory education to promote education equity between urban and rural districts and among different regions

As of 2015, China had unified the benchmark quota of public funds for urban and rural compulsory education, "realizing the two exemptions and one subsidy" as well as the transfer of the benchmark quota of public funds per student based on the actual enrollment of students. In 2019, China replaced the regional benchmark quotas of public funds per student with the national unified benchmark quotas and increased the public funds in areas such as boarding schools. The expenditures are shared proportionally by the central and local governments, with 80% shared by the central fiscal budget of the central and western regions. Public funds for schools with less than 100 students in rural districts have been allocated based on the standard of 100 students. The public funds subsidy is offered for boarding schools based on the standard of RMB200 for each boarding student per year.

Ensuring equal access to education for special groups

To ensure equal access to education for special groups, the Chinese government has implemented two special education guarantee plans. The number of students enrolled in special

education has increased from 440,000 in 2015 to 920,000 in 2021, a growth of 109%. The enrollment rate of children with disabilities in compulsory education has reached more than 95%. On this basis, special education has been extended to the preschool stage and the stage above upper secondary education. More than 10,000 students with disabilities enter universities every year. Special education has received a significant increase in financing, and the public budget standard of special education schools in the compulsory education stage and disabled students in regular schools is RMB6,000, which is 6-8 times higher than the average costs incurred for an ordinary student in pre-primary to upper secondary education.

In terms of helping disadvantaged groups, China has implemented special plans for key universities to enroll students from rural and poverty-stricken areas, and a cooperative plan for supporting enrollment of students from the central and western regions, so as to increase the opportunities for rural students to enter universities and increase high-quality higher education resources for the central and western regions. In 2020, the retention rate of nine-year compulsory education in poor counties reached 94.8%, an increase of nearly 5 percentage points from 2015 and close to the national average. By the end of 2020, among the 145 million students enrolled for compulsory education nationwide, the number of dropouts decreased from more than 600,000 in 2019 to 682. Among them, more than 200,000 dropouts that occurred due to poverty with registered cards had been resolved, addressing the long-standing dropout issue caused by poverty once and for all.

Promoting a common language as a means of alleviating poverty and rural revitalization

Poverty alleviation begins with knowledge, and knowledge begins with a common language that is understandable to everyone. Language is the most important communication tool and information carrier in China. Popularization of Mandarin Chinese is an important driving force for promoting national unity and social progress. Therefore, promoting Mandarin Chinese is one of the important means of preventing poverty from passing down to the next generation. The language barrier often inhibited people's cognitive development, production capacity, and economic development. The use of national common language can strengthen the communication, exchange, and integration of all ethnic groups, stimulate the inner motivation among the low-income population, help them interact and communicate with the outside world, and pursue a better life for themselves.

The Chinese government began implementing the *Action Plan for Promoting Mandarin Chinese to Alleviate Poverty (2018-2020)* in 2018, which called for the organization and development of Mandarin Chinese training among young and middle-aged farmers. It also provided for building respect for minority languages and ensuring that minority students learn their own languages, while promoting vocational and technical training. The action plan has notably improved the use of Mandarin Chinese along with the level of vocational and technical skills, leading to improved employment competitiveness. This has not only promoted employment and poverty alleviation but also prevented poverty due to language barriers. In 2021, the Chinese government continued to implement the Plan of Promoting Mandarin Chinese Popularization to Boost Rural Revitalization. Evidence suggests that the connection between the achievements of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization can be consolidated by building rural campus, implementing the plan of vitalizing the countryside, carrying out voluntary language

services, and strengthening vocational skill and Mandarin Chinese training. Popularization of Mandarin Chinese is a powerful means of achieving common prosperity.

Box 3-7 Promotion of Mandarin Chinese has improved the lives of tens of thousands of Tu people

Language is the key to poverty alleviation. Learning and speaking Mandarin Chinese is undoubtedly a shortcut for people to escape poverty and live a prosperous life. The common national language has “soaked” into the land at the southern foot of Qilian Mountain through active promotion and popularization. This campaign has helped tens of thousands of Tu people leave the valleys and climb out of poverty, able to make ends meet or even lead fairly comfortable lives. They do that by being engaged in tourism, singing, dancing, tour guiding, hosting and commentating, folk culture, handicraft, commerce, catering and other labor services.

The great change in the quality of life of Qi Jinhua, a Tu woman, is a typical example. The 48-year-old Qi was born in Xiaozhuang Village, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Qinghai Province. She had never learned Mandarin Chinese before the age of 10. Because her family was poor, she started schooling at a later age and dropped out when she was in senior high school. As she liked to sing and dance since she was a child, she went to Nadun Manor, a scenic spot that preserves the Tu ethnic folk culture in the county, to work in the tourism sector. Diligent and studious, she practiced Mandarin Chinese hard. She also learned singing, dancing, hosting, tour guiding, hosting and commentating. She excelled in every task assigned to her. She improved her Mandarin Chinese on the job, and after working hard for over a decade, she has become the backbone and a "Superstar" of the Manor. She has participated in several large-scale cultural and trade fairs in China in recent years. As an important member of the Manor, she once participated in the Tu embroidery auction in Shanghai, and raised 200,000 yuan in funds for the Manor. Later, on behalf of her county, she participated in the World Internet Conference held in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province. At the conference, she introduced Tu embroidery in fluent Mandarin Chinese and made outstanding contributions to the promotion of her hometown’s culture. She once said proudly, “I want to thank Mandarin Chinese, which has led me thrive in the tourism sector. I now have a house, a car, and savings. I've also successfully brought up my daughter, who is now a student of Qinghai Normal University. I feel so happy.”

SDG 4.6 Literacy and numeracy: remarkable achievements in literacy

No.	Indicator	China	
		2010 ¹³	2020
1	Youth/adult literacy rate (%)	99.30/95.12	99.76/96.74

As the literacy rate among young people has approached 100%, most efforts have shifted towards special groups and functional illiteracy

According to China's *Regulations on Eradicating Illiteracy*, "the standard for individual literacy is as follows: Farmers can read 1500 Chinese characters; employees of enterprises and institutions and urban residents can read 2000 Chinese characters; they must be able to read simple and popular newspapers and articles, keep simple accounts, and be capable of simple practical writing." Data from the Seventh National Census indicates that 3.26% of China's

¹³ For 2020, the data is from the Sixth National Population Census..

population aged 15 and over was illiterate in 2020, primarily the elderly. Since 2018, the literacy rate of Chinese youth aged 15-24 has reached nearly 100%, thanks to the popularization and development of education in China.

Remarkable results have been achieved in eradicating illiteracy. The number of adult primary schools has decreased over the past five years, from 948,000 in 2015 to 255,000 in 2020. The number of students in the literacy classes decreased from 475,000 in 2015 to 135,000 in 2020. With the continuous reduction of illiteracy in China, the focus of literacy has been directed towards special groups, especially in the new era. In particular, the traditional farmers, new farmers and new-generation migrants who are involved in urbanization and continue to experience functional illiteracy are the targets. Functional illiteracy mainly refers to people who lack required skills and comprehensive qualities relevant to modern society. Using various kinds of educational resources, China has established county, township and village vocational and adult education and training networks led by rural vocational schools, promoted the implementation of rural practical technology training programs and rural labor transfer training programs, and strengthened continuous education to eliminate illiteracy and functional illiteracy.

SDG 4.7 Sustainable development and global citizenship education: developing a promotion model and path aligned with the realities of China

No.	Indicator	China	
		2015	2020
1	Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education (%)	—	90 ¹⁴
2	Percentage of students in lower secondary showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience (%)	83.6 (2017) ¹⁵	79.5

Raising awareness of global citizenship around the sense of community for a shared future for mankind

As part of his 2015 speech at the United Nations Headquarters entitled *Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind*, President Xi Jinping stated that we should "build a new type of international relation featuring win-win cooperation, and create a community of shared future for mankind." In 2016, authorized by the Ministry of Education, a research group of Beijing Normal University published an official document detailing the requirements for education that can promote international understanding. The document outlined the following key points: having global awareness and an open mind; understanding the process of human civilization and the development of the world; respecting cultural diversity and differences; actively participating in cross-cultural exchanges; paying attention to global challenges facing mankind; and understanding the meaning and value of the community of shared future for mankind. On the issue of climate change, President Xi Jinping addressed the students of the Francis Holland School in the UK, stating that "our planet is a big family, human beings are a community, and

¹⁴ In 2020, 90% of secondary schools, nine-year schools, vocational middle schools, six-year high schools, upper secondary educations and twelve-year schools provided courses and activities related to AIDS prevention and sex education.

¹⁵ Source: China Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring Report (2017)

climate change is a challenge we should all address together." "All levels of education in China attach great importance to the teaching of ecological civilization. Students in Chinese schools are encouraged to start with small things, develop good habits of energy conservation and environmental protection, and develop a green and low-carbon lifestyle." Educating people helps strengthen the awareness of belonging to a community of shared future for mankind and protect peace in our minds. China has incorporated the common values of peace, development, fairness, integrity, democracy, and freedom into its teaching materials and teacher training programs, helping students build the awareness of community of shared future and sowing the seeds of peace in the depth of their hearts.

Improving the quality of ecological civilization and promoting education for sustainable development

The creation of an ecological civilization is the millennium plan for China's long-term development. Education for ecological civilization is a vital prerequisite for the implementation of the plan. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains a plan for education for sustainable development, which is highly aligned with China's relevant plans. For example, the *13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education* has put forward elements of education for sustainable development (ESD) extensively. China has incorporated the basic national policy of saving food, water, energy and protecting the environment into curriculum standards and the textbooks of compulsory courses such as Morality and Rule of Law (Ideology and Morality), geography and biology, guiding students to raise awareness about ecological civilization, including conservation, respecting nature, conforming to and protecting nature, and developing sustainable development concepts, knowledge and capabilities. The *Biology Curriculum Standard for Regular High Schools (2017 and 2020)* incorporates "social responsibility" as a core quality of biology, requiring students to establish and practice the concept of "clear waters and green mountains are as valuable as gold and silver mountains". The *Geography Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2022)* guides students to pay attention to nature and society, so that students can form the concept of human-land coordination and develop the awareness of sustainable development. The *Geography Curriculum Standard for Regular High Schools (2017 and 2020)* identifies the concept of human-land coordination as one of the core competencies of geography. The *China Compulsory Education Quality Monitoring Report* indicates that in 2017, 83.6% of eighth grade students reached a medium level or higher level of proficiency in science, and 12% reached an excellent level of proficiency.

To develop students' environmental literacy, a new development phase of the green campus has begun with the concept of green campus as the space carrier, green education as the core foundation and a green system as the supporting system. By 2022, more than 60% of schools across the country and 70% of schools in regions with favorable conditions will meet the requirements for the green campus. The Ministry of Education places great emphasis on education for ecological civilization in primary and secondary schools. It has made positive progress in promoting ecological civilization education in textbooks, classrooms, activities, and management for more than 200 million students by promoting the theme of "Beautiful China, I am an actor".



Students from Donggaobu Primary School in Qingdao Oceanec Valley High-tech Zone were carrying wheat harvested in the wheat fields on June 8, 2022. (Source: Xinhuanet)

China attaches great importance to cultivating students' ability and awareness of saving resources. The Ministry of Education revised and promulgated the *Code for Primary and Secondary School Students* in 2015, highlighting the guidance of core values. The code clearly encourages "being thrifty and diligent to protect the environment", requiring all students to "save food, water, electricity, and maintain a low-carbon and environmentally friendly lifestyle." In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued the *Notice on Effectively Implementing Food-saving Education and Management in Primary and High Schools*, which aims to promote food-saving education in schools across the country. The food-saving education focuses on teaching students the concept of "clear waters and green mountains as valuable as gold and silver mountains", and the idea of harmonious coexistence between human and nature. In August 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the *Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, which incorporated ecological civilization education into moral education. Schools across the country have carried out conservation and environmental protection education in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Education. In 2019, the *Notice on Promoting the Classification of Domestic Waste in Schools* was printed and distributed to guide local education departments and schools to comprehensively disseminate domestic waste classification knowledge through various forms, standardize the classification, collection and storage of domestic waste, and explore the establishment of a long-term mechanism for waste classification publicity and education and a management system for the classification, collection and storage of domestic waste in schools. As a result of these efforts, the popularization rate of domestic waste classification knowledge in schools had reached 100% by the end of 2020.

China has also set up compulsory ecological civilization courses at normal colleges and universities to improve the ecological civilization literacy of teachers. Demonstration areas of ecological civilization construction have been selected as research sites for students. China has initiated the evaluation of national teaching achievements to reward and promote excellence in ecological civilization education and teaching. China has actively built a social practice base for environmental education in primary and secondary schools, with the primary goal of improving teenagers' environmental literacy and popularizing the concept of ecological civilization and sustainable development. Taking environmental protection as the theme, environmental education

experience and practical activities have been carried out for primary and secondary school students. The concept of environmental friendliness has been embodied in the process of learning and the implementation of educational activities.

SDG 4.a Educational facilities and learning environment: make the school the brightest and safest place

No.	Indicator		China		
			2015	2021	
1	Proportion of schools offering basic services (%), by type of service	Primary school	Drinking water	—	99.6
			Sanitary toilets	—	99.6
			Hand-washing facilities	—	99.5
		Primary and secondary schools	Electricity	—	99.5
			Teaching computers	—	98.7
			Internet	80.6	100

Continuously improving basic educational infrastructure

A safe and healthy learning environment is the basis and guarantee for an effective classroom learning. In 2019, the Chinese government conducted a comprehensive renovation of toilets in primary and secondary schools as part of its efforts to "bridge the gap" in basic education. As of 2019, 67,000 toilets that did not meet sanitary conditions had been renovated in primary and secondary schools and kindergartens. Toilets at most primary and high schools, and kindergartens across the country meet the safety, cleanliness, and hygienic conditions, with the exception of a few schools that have not replaced toilets due to the difficulty in the treatment of feces. At the same time, issues such as the lack of toilets and an imbalance in the proportion of male and female toilets were addressed. In 2020, 99.6%, 99.5%, and 99.4% of Chinese primary schools had drinking water, toilets with proper sanitation conditions, and basic hand-washing facilities, respectively; 99.5% of primary and secondary schools had electricity; and 100% of primary and secondary schools (including teaching sites) had Internet access.

Box 3-8 China's school networking actions

In 2018, the Ministry of Education launched the *School Networking Action* to encourage basic telecommunications carriers to strengthen optical fiber network construction and to promote optical fiber network coverage in remote areas by speeding up pilot projects of universal telecommunications services and organizing new-generation information infrastructure construction projects, and accelerating the upgrading and transformation of optical fiber school networks to ensure basic network access for information-based education and teaching. China has organized and implemented a new round of pilot projects on universal telecommunications services, improving 4G network coverage on campus. China has encouraged basic telecommunications carriers to offer preferential policies for broadband access to schools and promote the application and popularization of "Internet + education".

Thanks to the joint efforts of all parties, the Internet access popularization rate in primary and secondary schools (including teaching sites) across the country had increased from 85.3% at the end of 2017 to 100% at the end of 2020, dynamically eradicating non-networked schools in China.

Building and improving the school bullying prevention and control mechanism

The prevention and control of school bullying among primary and secondary school students is closely related to the physical and mental health of the students, family happiness and social harmony. The Ministry of Education and relevant departments have jointly developed policies and measures to prevent and control bullying among students. Documents such as the *Notice on the Special Governance of School Bullying*, the *Guiding Opinions on the Prevention and Control of Bullying and Violence among Primary and Secondary School Students*, the *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Safety Risk Prevention and Control System in Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools*, and the *Notice on the Implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Control Year among Primary and Secondary School Students* have been issued. These documents provide general and practical guidance for preventing and dealing with bullying and violence among students. Local education departments and schools are required to implement organizational structures, work systems, and rules and regulations to prevent and deal with bullying among students. In November 2017, the *General Management Program for Strengthening Handling of Bullying Among Primary and High School Students* was released by 11 departments including the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Security, which clarified the criteria for determining bullying among students along with preventive measures, disposal procedures, disciplinary measures, specific responsibilities of departments and schools, and long-term mechanisms such as training, evaluation, accountability and legal governance. It gives recommendations for schools across the country on how to prevent and handle school bullying.

SDG 4.b Scholarships: China as a key promoter and contributor in the international education aid system

To promote mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and the people of other countries and facilitate exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries in politics, economy, culture, education, and trade, the Chinese government has increasingly been playing an important role in the international education aid system by providing government scholarships, initiating education aid projects, and constructing a multi-dimensional international education aid system. According to *China's White Paper on International Development Cooperation in the New Era* published in 2021, China had sponsored over 4300 people from other developing countries to study master's and doctoral degrees in China since 2013, and, through the "20 + 20" cooperation program between Chinese and African universities and the Atomic Energy Scholar program, strengthened scientific research cooperation, mutual visits of teachers and students and joint development of high-quality professionals.

No.	Indicator	China		
		2015 ¹⁶	2020 ¹⁷	
1	Scholarships by sector and type of learning/in USD (million)	Number of scholarships	18	22
		Imputed student cost	317	349

Offering governmental scholarships to encourage foreign students to visit China for exchanges

The Ministry of Education provides Chinese government scholarships to international students, and the China Scholarship Council (CSC) is responsible for the management of these affairs. Scholarships for academic courses include undergraduate, master, and doctoral programs, whereas non-academic education is subsidized for preparatory and advanced students.

The scholarships provided by the Chinese government fall into three main categories. The first category of scholarships is offered to bilateral projects as part of education cooperation and exchange agreements or consensus reached between governments, institutions and schools of relevant countries. The second category covers the special scholarships established according to the educational exchange agreements signed with international organizations and institutions, such as the UNESCO Great Wall Program Scholarships, the China-AUN (ASEAN University Network) Scholarships, and World Meteorological Organization projects. The UNESCO Great Wall Program Scholarships was established in 1994 by China and UNESCO as a joint scholarship program. The program supports and subsidizes students from government departments, universities, and research institutions in developing and the least-developed countries who wish to study and conduct research in China. In total, 835 students have been admitted to study in 274 majors at 112 universities in China. The third category is the Independent University Enrollment project, which provides scholarships to education administrative departments of some provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government in China, as well as to some Chinese universities, so that they may directly attract and admit outstanding foreign students to study in China.

Providing education aid to support Africa's development

As one of the follow-up activities to the FOCAC actions in Africa, China has set up the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust Project, providing USD2 million annually to help African countries build teachers' capacity and promote the development of higher vocational education. This project marks the beginning of China's support for Africa's development through a trust established by UNESCO. This project seeks to assist African countries in improving the capacity of their teacher training institutions in order to cultivate high-quality teachers in Africa. The two phases of the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust Project have been implemented to develop nearly 1,000 teachers for 10 African countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, and Ethiopia. Currently, the third phase has been launched, which will train innovative, technical and skilled professionals

¹⁶ Source: Global Education Monitoring Report 2017: Accountability in Education: Meeting Our Commitments. Paris, UNESCO

¹⁷ Source: Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All. Paris, UNESCO

for African countries.

The Chinese government has also provided intellectual support for talent cultivation in developing countries through projects such as the "20 + 20 Cooperation Plan for Chinese and African Institutions of Higher Education ". The Ministry of Education has actively implemented the outcomes of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The "20 + 20 Cooperation Plan for Chinese and African Institutions of Higher Education", which was launched in June 2012, identified 20 pairs of cooperative universities, including Peking University and Cairo University. By integrating the resources of the Chinese government and society, the program has provided human resources training and Chinese government scholarships to Africa, conducted academic research and Chinese language training, and promoted the development of education aid.

On June 24, 2020, China and UNESCO co-hosted an online China-UNESCO high-level dialogue on priority support to Africa during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with the goal of putting into action the spirit of the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19, exchanging and sharing experience and methods in combating the epidemic, and exploring practical measures to support Africa during and after the epidemic. The dialogue received positive responses from both China and Africa. Heads of relevant local governments, universities, enterprises, and research institutions from China participated in the dialogue to discuss ways to strengthen exchanges and cooperation between China and Africa within the framework of UNESCO.

China actively provides international public goods of education

Since the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in 2015, China has fully implemented the "Ten Cooperation Plans" between China and Africa agreed at the Johannesburg Summit and has fulfilled the committed financial support of USD60 billion. From 2016 to 2020, the third phase of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy established by China in cooperation with the UNESCO was launched. The Chinese government awards USD200,000 each year to three Member States, non-governmental organizations, or individuals worldwide in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the promotion of universal education and the eradication of illiteracy. In 2016, China and UNESCO jointly set up the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education, providing USD200,000 annually to recognize two individuals or institutions who make outstanding contributions to promoting girls' and women's education globally.

SDG 4.c Improving teacher quality and assurance levels continuously

No.	Indicator	China		
		2015	2021	
1	Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level	Pre-primary	100	100
		Primary	100	100
		Lower secondary	100	100
		Upper secondary	100	100

No.	Indicator	China		
		2015	2021	
2	Pupil-trained teacher ratio by education level ¹⁸	Pre-primary	18.1	15.1
		Primary	17.1	16.3
		Lower secondary	12.4	12.6
		Upper secondary	14.0	12.8
3	Percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level and type of institution (%)	Pre-primary	97.8	99.0
		Primary	99.9	100
		Lower secondary	99.7	99.9
		Upper secondary	97.7	98.8
4	Pupil-qualified teachers ratio by education level	Pre-primary	18.5	15.2
		Primary	17.1	16.3
		Lower secondary	12.4	12.6
		Upper secondary	14.3	13.0
5	Teacher attrition rate by education level (%)	Pre-primary	—	3.3
		Primary		5.5
		Lower secondary		3.8
		Upper secondary		1.9
6	Percentage of teachers who received in-service training in the last 12 months by type of training (%)	Pre-primary	—	97.8
		Primary		98.3
		Lower secondary		98.0
		Upper secondary		98.2

Importance of teacher training

China institutes a teacher qualification system to ensure that classrooms are staffed by highly qualified, trained and competent teachers. Candidates who wish to become teachers must have required corresponding records of formal schooling, pass the national teacher qualification examination, and have certain educational and teaching abilities. Currently, all primary and secondary school teachers in China are required to obtain teacher qualification. Moreover, the qualifications of primary and high school teachers are subject to re-registration every five years, and teachers are required to complete a minimum of 360 hours of training during each registration period. The proportion of teachers with the minimum qualifications in Chinese primary and secondary schools has reached 100%.

China had about 18.44 million teachers in 2021, which makes a large teaching force that strongly supports education reform and development of the country. China has continuously implemented the "National Training Program" for teachers' professional development since 2010.

¹⁸ Note: The data of China is pupil-teacher ratio

More than RMB20 billion was invested by the central government in the national training program between 2010 and 2021, and the program has trained over 18 million person-times of principals and teachers in total.

The Chinese government places a high priority on the continuous professional improvement of the teachers' ability and quality. In 2018, the *Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Development in the New Era* was issued, which formulated a systematic plan for strengthening teacher training and improving the quality of primary and secondary school teachers. According to a third-party study, China's "National Training Program" implemented over the past decade is recognized as the largest teacher training initiative in the world. The study also confirmed that the program has created a national platform for rural teacher professional development, greatly improved the competence of teachers in central and western China, built a modern teacher training system with Chinese characteristics, promoted the balanced development of education, and facilitated poverty alleviation.

Proportion of qualified teachers with required academic qualifications at the basic education stage reaches nearly 100%

At present, China's data on teacher qualification mainly reflects teachers' academic qualifications. The Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China (2009) stipulates that "to obtain qualifications for teachers, corresponding records of formal schooling are required". According to law, a high school diploma or upwards is required for kindergarten and primary school teachers and corresponding minimum academic qualifications for junior high school and senior high school teachers are a college degree and an undergraduate degree, respectively.

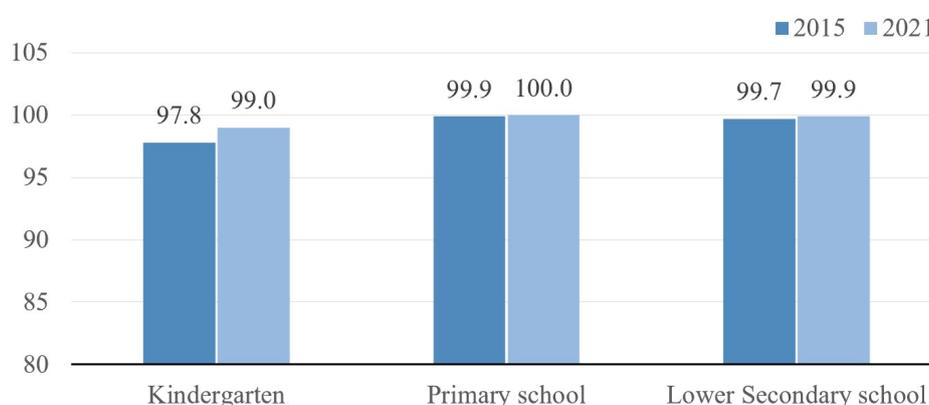


Figure 7 Proportion of Qualified Teachers with Required Qualifications in China in 2015 and 2021 (%)

With the popularization of higher education, the overall educational level of teachers at the elementary education has significantly improved. In 2021, it was reported that the proportions of qualified teachers in kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools in China were 99.03%, 99.97%, and 99.91%, respectively. The proportion of teachers with bachelor's degrees and above in compulsory education was 77.72% in 2021, which is a significant increase when compared with that of 2015. The proportion of qualified teachers at all levels of education in China is close to 100%. Most teachers who do not meet the minimum academic requirements choose to upgrade their academic qualifications while working. In 2021, the ratio of students to qualified teachers was 15.2, 16.3, 12.6 and 13.0 in pre-primary education, primary education,

lower secondary education and upper secondary general education, respectively. China is currently revising relevant laws, exploring ways to improve academic requirements for teachers of all levels and types, raising pre-primary education teachers' qualification requirements to college diploma and primary and lower secondary education teachers' qualification requirements to undergraduate degrees. China is considering establishing a system for examining and reviewing teachers' qualifications, and strengthening the supervision on teacher admission.

The status of rural teachers are significantly improved

Rural teachers were once considered to be a weak link within the Chinese teaching force. China has implemented the *Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015-2020)*, the Special Post Teacher Recruitment Plan, National Training Plan, Special Program for Teacher Development in Three Districts, Retired Teacher Re-employment Plan, Excellent Teacher Development Plan, and Rural Teacher Living Subsidy (hereinafter referred to as "five plans and one subsidy") to address the challenges of teacher recruitment, deployment and professional development in rural areas. Since the implementation of the *Retired Teacher Re-employment Plan* in 2018, nearly 15,000 retired principals, special-grade senior teachers and senior teachers have been recruited to teach at rural compulsory education schools. In 2021, a total of 450 retired teachers were recruited by colleges and universities under the administration of the Ministry of Education to support 10 universities in the western regions of China. The year 2021 marked the 16th anniversary of the implementation of the Special Post Plan. Over 1.03 million special post teachers have been recruited, benefiting more than 1,000 counties and 30,000 rural schools in the central and western provinces. Nearly 1.3 million teachers in 22 provinces in the central and western regions have benefited from the living allowance policy for rural teachers, which provides a monthly allowance of RMB393 for the teachers deployed in about 76,000 rural schools in 725 formerly contiguous poverty-stricken areas. The central award and allowance policy has also sped up the implementation of local allowance policies. In 2021, rural teachers in 1086 non-contiguous poverty-stricken areas and counties across the country were granted living allowances of RMB12.37 billion in total.

Box 3-9 Rural teacher support plan of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (2015-2020)

According to the plan, the retired super grade teachers and senior grade teachers volunteering to teach in rural schools, after being reviewed and publicized by the education authorities of the rural schools, will receive subsidies from the city and county (district) finances, according to the standard of RMB20,000 per person per year. The subsidy standard for rural school teachers at the compulsory education stage will be raised to RMB500 per person per month in southern mountainous areas and RMB300 per month in northern plain areas. The funds required will be borne based on the current graded financial classification ratio. A support plan for rural backbone teachers will be implemented. Every city and county (district) will select and recognize rural backbone teachers at a rate of 10% each year. Local governments will formulate specific evaluation, assessment, reward, and punishment measures based on the actual conditions. Autonomous regions, cities, and counties (districts) will provide incentives for teachers who have been teaching in rural schools for 20 years, 15 years, and 10 years, respectively. A rural teacher rehabilitation system will be established, funded by the autonomous region. The rehabilitation system aims to serve 100 excellent teachers who have been teaching in

rural schools for more than 20 years. Social forces will be encouraged and guided to establish special funds to reward outstanding teachers with long-term service in rural schools.

Teachers' status, working conditions and compensation have improved continuously

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of the teacher force, and invests in it heavily. Between 2015 and 2020, about 61% of the national financial education funds had been spent on salaries and benefits for teachers and staff. In accordance with the Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China, the average salary of teachers shall be at least as high as the average salary of the civil servants and shall be gradually increased. In 2020, 2846 districts and counties in China committed to fulfilling this goal, and formulated a long-term mechanism to ensure teachers' salary funds and a mechanism to adjust the income of compulsory education teachers in line with the incomes of local civil servants. In addition, other benefits such as housing, medical care, insurance, and other living conditions of teachers of all education levels and types have been improved substantially. The establishment and improvement of compensation, teacher grading evaluation and employment systems, and the national teacher honor system have allowed teachers to enjoy a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment in their jobs and career, and teachers are now much more revered in society.

Box 3-10 Promoting teacher training amid the COVID-19 pandemic

The Ministry of Education published and distributed the Notice Concerning Specific Teacher Works during the Pandemic Prevention and Control Period, encouraging all local educational authorities to establish technical service teams to provide online training for college teachers on topics related to learning diagnostic assessment, teaching designs, class organization, teaching management and academic evaluation, in order to improve the organization and implementation of "Internet + education".

Qinghai Province vigorously promoted online training of teachers in primary and secondary schools and kindergartens during the pandemic prevention and control period. Centering on the training course setting and platform construction, the local educational authority fully solicited opinions and suggestions from all parties through various forms, learned about and streamlined the situation, and introduced pertinent and effective teacher training projects. It also developed training contents in three areas, namely, COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control practices in primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, basic methods of learning diagnostic assessment, textbook analysis and teaching design, and learning method guidance based on information technology, to help front-line teachers perform effective pandemic prevention and control, lesson preparation in advance and online teaching.

Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Wuhan co-organized online training for kindergarten teachers. To improve the theoretical literacy and practical ability of kindergarten principals and teachers during the fight against COVID-19, the Education Bureau of Wuhan Dongxihu District organized the principals of public kindergartens and all caretakers in the whole district who did not participate in pandemic prevention to participate online in training of kindergarten principals and key teachers in Nanshan District, Shenzhen.

Chapter 4

Challenges and Prospects



(Source: Ministry of Education Website)

As we face a rather unpredictable future, we should uphold the concept of mankind as a community with a shared future, enhance international cooperation in the field of education, strengthen exchanges of experience and mutual learning, promote the sharing of high-quality education and teaching resources, and make greater contributions to the successful realization of UN 2030 SDGs.

Difficulties and challenges in the implementation of SDG 4 by 2030

Changes in population structure require a profound education supply-side reform

Based on the Seventh National Census, China's total birth rate has been declining as families are choosing to have fewer children hoping to provide better care and education for them. Within the next five years, China will reach a state of a moderately aging population, and by 2035, it will reach a state of a severely aging population. The floating population amounts to 376 million. Medium and large-sized cities are becoming increasingly populated. Moreover, China faces rising level of public anxiety concerning child-bearing, high cost of raising and educating children, shortages of universities for the youth and elderly in many cities, and residential requirement to be eligible for public education service. In view of the above, increasing the quality of education for the youth and elderly, reducing the high cost of education, and ensuring that the children of the floating population receive quality education are critical goals for the Chinese government when carrying out structural changes to ensure supply-side reform in education.

The development of education remains unbalanced and inadequate

Chinese educational reform and development aims to provide all children with a fair and quality education. Currently, China is confronted with multiple education challenges, including an unbalanced development of compulsory education in rural and urban areas. There is a large gap between the supply and demand for high-quality educational resources, and the need to increase educational support for relatively poorer and disadvantaged groups. In particular, China's rural areas, remote areas, ethnic minority areas, and underdeveloped urban areas urgently need to be replenished with educational resources. Small rural schools and boarding schools in towns should be established. The special education support system must be improved. To enable every student to grow up in a healthy and happy environment and ensure the opportunities to excel in life, China needs to make more sustained investment in education, put in place equitable measures and establish a more solid governance system that ensures a closer, coordinated and harmonious symbiotic relationship among schools, families and society. China also aims to establish and improve a high-quality and balanced public basic education service system to comprehensively improve the quality of education.

Huge challenges still loom large when trying to provide a suitable education for everyone

Student-centered sustainable development needs more attention and deeper level of commitment and planned implementation. The cultivation of correct values, necessary characteristics, and key abilities necessary for personal development and social development in the future needs further improvement. China still has a long way to go in implementing the concept of high-quality education, improving talent training methods, and promoting the comprehensive development of students.

The modern educational system serving economic and social development requirements needs to be improved urgently

China's education system needs to put in place a high priority on vocational education. This requires the development of high-quality schools that can offer a myriad of specialties within vocational education to address the needs of changing labor market. There is a need to

enhance the capacity and efficiency of demonstration and backbone schools. Many issues have negatively impacted the development of a modern and dynamic vocational education system. The system and mechanisms involving industry-education integration and school-enterprise cooperation for vocational education need to be further strengthened. The existing school-enterprise cooperation mechanisms lack stability. Some enterprises are not motivated enough to participate in personnel training. Some cooperation projects need to be deepened and systematic design is required. The understanding of practice base construction needs to be improved. Higher education does not adequately serve the new momentum of economic and social development. Many college graduates still face difficulties finding employment and establishing their own businesses. The structure of higher education needs to be further optimized and the characteristics of schools need to be sharpened. Despite a large number of universities and disciplines, quality continues to be a key concern. A large gap exists between educational and scientific research achievements in terms of the capacity to carry out forward-looking basic research and groundbreaking original discoveries. Most universities remain unaware of and unable to actively contribute to major national strategies and important international agendas.

The reform of education and teaching methods lags behind the scientific and technological revolution

The new round of scientific and technological revolutions in education forms, models, and learning methods presents both new opportunities and challenges. However, the development of China's education infrastructure remains largely unbalanced. If appropriate actions are not taken, there is a risk that the digital divide between urban and rural areas may further widen. The education informatization process needs to be deepened in terms of effective operation and maintenance. Further development of education informatization is required. There is still a lot of room for improvement in the integration of information technology into classroom education and teaching. Educators' digital literacy needs to be improved, and the motivation to use technology to enhance and innovate education needs to be stimulated.

Education development needs to improve the monitoring system

Among the 43 indicators included for SDG 4 monitoring, only 21 were technically available in China in 2015. China's education census system and improved statistical capabilities have helped reduce the number of unavailable indicators to 8 by 2020. However, some indicators are not applicable to China. For example, China's literacy program focuses on special groups rather than the masses because of almost universal literacy. The international evaluation standards and methods are still being developed and need to be further clarified. Although the number of unavailable indicators has decreased significantly, future implementation still faces significant challenges. Most of them require special tools, household surveys, sample surveys or assessments (such as youth digital literacy, adult literacy/computing ability, youth/adult participation in formal and informal education, etc.). As China has a vast territory, relevant projects require significant funding and are difficult to implement. Furthermore, the foundation of education quality assessment in China's vocational education, higher education, and other fields remains weak.

The plan for and future of SDG 4 implementation and educational modernization in China

The Chinese education system has reached a new stage of development after China embarked on a new journey of building a modern socialist country. The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that we shall continue to prioritize the development of education by speeding up the ongoing work to build a strong, high-quality educational system that follows a people-centered approach, develops students holistically, promotes fairness in education, and strives towards the digitalization of education. Through that, we shall build a country where lifelong learning is pursued by all. By 2025, China will have built a high-quality education system that is more complete, more efficient, and has a more comprehensive guarantee system. The effectiveness of morality education will be improved. Education will be further popularized. Talent training will be strengthened. Educational services will reach new heights. The comprehensive reform of education will witness new breakthroughs and a new layout will be created for the modernization of education. By 2035, China will achieve the overall modernization of education and become a powerful nation in education, propelling the construction of a modern socialist country.

China will develop a world-class education with Chinese characteristics. What kind of people should we cultivate, how to do so, and for whom—these are the fundamental issues that education must address. The most basic aim of education is to foster virtues. The fundamental tasks of morality education will be fully implemented to constantly improve students' ideology, political awareness, moral values, and cultural literacy. China will enhance the comprehensive quality of education, establish the educational concept of health first, comprehensively strengthen school physical education, improve aesthetic education, advocate the hard-working spirit, and enhance the cultivation of practical, cooperation and innovation abilities. China will gradually develop the education quality standard system that will define quality standards covering the entire learning period. This will reflect the features of the world's advanced level, and conform to the characteristics of different levels and types of education being formulated to clarify the requirements for the development of students' core literacy. The talent training methods should encompass more creative, and heuristic, inquiry-based, participatory, cooperative and other modern teaching methods. A flexible system of course selection and credit accumulation will be adopted to cultivate students' innovative spirit and practical ability and earn credits that are counted towards a qualification, China will step up the construction of campus cultures, highlight family and social education, and optimize the education quality evaluation and monitoring mechanism.

China will continue to popularize high-level and high-quality education at all levels. It will adhere to the principle of people-centered development, focus on public welfare during education development, develop a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system and actively expand inclusive resources. Pre-primary education will be universally available in rural, remote and poverty-stricken areas and cities and the quality of education in ethnic minority areas will be improved. China will ensure that everyone benefits from the achievements of educational reform and development. Extra efforts will be made to popularize pre-primary education in rural areas, optimize the pre-primary education

management system, kindergarten management system and investment system, vigorously develop public kindergartens, better support inclusive private kindergartens to provide inclusive services.

China will speed up the balanced development of compulsory education and the integration of urban and rural areas, allocate better educational resources across regions, improve the existing weak links noted in compulsory education, and optimize compulsory education from a basic balance to a high quality balance. Strong measures will be taken to popularize and diversify high school education, which will aim to achieve distinctive development of high school education keeping in tune with the development of vocational education. China will revitalize higher education in the central and western regions. We will ensure children of migrant workers enjoy equal schooling benefits through increased supply of urban schools. China will run special education with the goal of appropriate integration and will accelerate the establishment of the special education system and constantly improve the special education guarantee mechanism.

China will build a lifelong learning system that serves the entire population covering learners in all age groups. A more open and smooth talent growth pathway is to be constructed to refine the enrollment, bringing together flexible learning and continuing education systems with formal systems of education, and coordinating the transformation of all pathways of learning. A national lifelong learning framework, a national qualification framework, and a mechanism for cross-sectoral and cross-industry working and professional support are continually being developed. China will establish and improve the national credit bank system and the learning achievement certification system. With the continuing education and social training service functions of vocational schools and institutions of higher learning being strengthened, employees will have the opportunity to benefit from various types and forms of continuing education for employees. The supply of community education resources will also be expanded, and the development of the elderly education in urban and rural communities will be accelerated to build a country where lifelong learning is pursued by all.

China will step up efforts to train and cultivate world-class talents. China will strive to develop basic disciplines, emerging disciplines, and interdisciplinary subjects and speed up the development of world-class universities that are able to integrate strong disciplinary knowledge with uniquely Chinese features. The organic connection and deep integration of vocational education and industrial development will also be promoted to build more high-quality vocational colleges and specialties with Chinese characteristics. China will optimize the talent training structure and reinforce training of innovative talents, especially top-notch innovative talents. The construction of the innovation systems of colleges and universities should be strengthened, to comprehensively improve the original innovation capability of colleges and universities, reinforce cooperation between enterprises, universities, research institutes and application, and set up a scientific research system that stimulates innovation vitality and promotes the transformation of scientific and technological achievements.

China will build a high-quality, professional and innovative teaching force. China will strengthen the professional integrity, conduct, and ability of teachers, foster public respect for

educators, and encourage public support for education. China will optimize the allocation of teacher resources and refine the teacher qualification system and assessment system. A teacher education system with Chinese characteristics will be constructed to strengthen the organic connection between pre-employment training and on-the-job development, consolidate the professional development system of teachers, and cultivate high-quality teachers. Teachers' benefits and additional rewards for outstanding teachers will also be ensured to enhance the political, social and occupational status for teachers.

China will boost education reform in the digital age. China will promote the digitalization of education and build a society and country where lifelong learning is pursued by all. China will also promote the strategic campaign of digital education in depth, continue to strengthen the construction of national education digital resource centers, and strive to improve the digital literacy and ability of teachers and students. China will continue to improve the resources of the national smart education platform, enhance the supply capacity of high-quality digital education resources, innovate the business model of education services, and establish a sharing mechanism for digital education resources. With education big data being put into use, the reform of education governance will be promoted in order to build a modern education management and monitoring system, and promote accurate management and scientific decision-making.

China will drive forward the modernization of education governance system and governance capacity. With the reform of education evaluation as a guide, the government will comprehensively promote the reform of education mode, school running mode, management system and security mechanism, and build a world-class evaluation system that conforms to China's reality. Legalization of education should be strengthened in terms of building a complete system of educational laws and regulations, providing legal support for school operations, as well as strengthening the implementation and supervision mechanism of education laws. Government management and services should be reinforced in a comprehensive manner by putting in place modern governance tools such as laws, standards and information services. China will optimize the system and mechanism of education supervision and improve the authority and effectiveness of education supervision. The independent management ability of universities will be improved through the refinement of governance structure, regulations and constitutions of universities. Normalized social participation in education governance will be promoted and the supervision mechanism of social participation in school management and education evaluation will continuously be established.

China will comprehensively promote international exchanges and cooperation through mutual recognition of academic qualifications and degrees, exchange of standards and sharing of experience with other countries. China will vigorously promote the education initiative of "the Belt and Road". Cooperation with UNESCO and other international and multilateral organizations will be further strengthened and China will emerge as an active player in global education governance along with other nations. We will optimize Sino-foreign school running cooperation projects, optimize services for students studying abroad, and comprehensively improve the quality of education for overseas students studying in China. The mechanism of cultural and educational exchange between China and the rest of

the world will also be developed to expand the scope of cultural and educational exchanges, and encourage cultural exchanges and mutual learning between the Chinese people and the rest of the world. In addition, the Chinese government will continuously improve the mechanism of external educational aid.

To sum up, the direction of China's education is in complete alignment with the SDG 4. In recognition of the principles, goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, China is committed to uniting its people, developing human resources, cultivating talents, and benefiting the entire population. China will put morality first by highlighting comprehensive development, ensuring educational equality and equity, promoting lifelong learning, catering to the learning needs of learners, and integrating knowledge with practice. Among the actions to be pursued include promoting joint construction and sharing of knowledge, providing better and fairer education for the entire population, actively expanding the scope of international exchanges and cooperation in education, and finally contributing to the creation of a community of shared future for humanity.