Country Paper: Status and Major Challenges of Literacy in China

Prepared by the National Center for Education Development Research

June 2010

This paper was prepared as a contribution to the Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting. It has not been edited by UNESCO. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to UNESCO. The paper can be cited with the following reference: “Country Paper prepared for the Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting”
Contents

1. Background .......................................................................................................................... 1

2. Progress in the literacy strategy since 2000 ........................................................................ 2
   2.1. New objectives and tasks for literacy ............................................................................ 3
   2.2. Actively moving ahead with the reform of literacy ....................................................... 3
   2.3 Increase funding and enhance the research and assessment for literacy .................... 4

3. Progress of literacy education .......................................................................................... 5
   3.1. Adult literacy rate continues to rise .............................................................................. 5
   3.2 Gender parity index of literacy rate increased gradually ............................................. 7

4. Major experience in moving ahead with literacy .............................................................. 8
   4.1 Attach great importance to the development of the legal system, institutions and
       mechanisms for literacy ................................................................................................. 8
   4.2 Combination of literacy education and skills training .................................................... 10
   4.3 Supervision, Evaluation and Inspection and Acceptance Are Highlighted ................ 13

5. Enhancing policy measures for literacy ............................................................................. 16
   5.1 Improve understanding of the importance of literacy .................................................. 16
   5.2 Strengthening the planning of and the resource investment into literacy ................. 16
   5.3 Deepening the reform in literacy and improving the quality of literacy .................... 17
   5.4 Strengthen organizational leadership, overall coordination and social participation 18
1. Background

As a basic need for adults, literacy is an important component of the effort to guarantee the fundamental right of all the social members to learn. Literacy among the illiterate adults to help them master the basic reading, writing and calculating skills is an important way to eradicate the difference in knowledge, promote equity in education and reduce poverty. Literacy has become an indispensable basic means with rich intension to promote the survival and development of people.

China is one of the developing countries with the largest population. It is also one of the countries with a relatively large number of illiterates. For the 60 years since the founding of the PRC, the Chinese government has attached great importance to literacy and made sustained efforts to reduce illiteracy and meet the basic literacy needs of adults.

Since the “Education for All” scheme was launched, the Chinese government has persistently made the elimination of illiteracy one of the strategic focuses of “Education for All”. The China Education Reform and Development Outline of 1993 pointed out that China would strive to achieve the two strategic objectives of making nine-year compulsory education basically universal and illiteracy among young and middle-aged people basically eliminated (referred to as the “two basically” for short). These two objectives have greatly promoted the development of literacy in China. During the 10 years from 1990 to 2000, a cumulative number of 46.52 million illiterates learned how to read and write. National demographic census statistics shows that illiterates of 15 years old and above dropped from 182 million to 85 million, and adult illiteracy rate reduced from 22.2% to 9.1%; illiteracy among young and middle-aged people of 15 to 50 years old dropped from 61.71 million to 22 million, and illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people reduced from 10.4% to 4.8%. China has realized the two above-mentioned objectives in areas with 85% of the total population in the country.

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1Based on the 5th national population census of 2000, there were 85.07 million adult illiterates, of which 22.27 million were male and 63.2 million were female. Statistics of National population are based on national population census, sample survey of 1% of national population and sample survey of 1‰ conducted every 10 years, 5years and per year

2 Since 1990, China has treated young and middle aged(from 15-50 years old) literacy as working priority. Meanwhile, during the process of implementation, senior aged(above 50 year-old ) people has also been concerned. For instance, some aged people’s colleges have been established in some provinces and some community colleges have senior aged people involved who have relatively strong willing to learn. At the same time, statistics of adult illiteracy rate are percentage of illiterate population of 15 years old or above of total population of 15 years old or above, including senior aged people.

Figure 1 A falling trend in the number of illiterate of 15 years old and above as well as the illiteracy rate from 1949 to 2000

![Figure 1](image1.png)


Figure 2 A falling Trend in the number of illiterate young and middle-aged people of 15 to 50 years old and the illiteracy rate

![Figure 2](image2.png)


2. Progress in the literacy strategy since 2000

After China realized the strategic objective to basically eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged people nationwide and reduce the illiteracy to below 5%, there has been a change in the focus of literacy in China: first is to make more efforts on the literacy for the remaining illiterates, especially illiterate women and ethnic minority people and other key groups; second is to solidify and improve the literacy results, enhance the post-literacy continuing education and prevent relapse into illiteracy; third is to update literacy ideas.
according to the social developments and changes in the demands of literacy, enrich the intension of literacy, enhance functional literacy, reform literacy teaching and make literacy more targeted, effective and of better quality.

2.1. New objectives and tasks for literacy

In 2004, the State Council decided to implement the *Milestone Plan for the “Two Basically” Objectives in Western China*, coming up with the objective of making nine-year compulsory education basically universal and illiteracy among young and middle-aged people basically eliminated in west china by 2007. The *Outline Plan of Education Sector Development during the Eleventh Five-year Plan (2006-2010)*, coming up with the objective to reduce the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people to around 2% for the whole country and the rate to below 4% in underdeveloped areas.¹

At the end of 2007, the Ministry of Education and other 11 government departments jointly issued the *Guidance Opinion on Further Enhancing Literacy*, determining the objectives and tasks of literacy by 2010 and 2015, and coming up with a series of measures and policies to enhance literacy and promote education reforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Literacy objectives by 2010 and 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By 2010, reduce the adult illiteracy rate to 8%, especially the adult women illiteracy rate to below 12%; the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people of 15 to 50 years old to around 2%, especially the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged women to around 3%. By 2015, reduce the adult illiteracy rate to below 6% and maintain the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people to around 1%. Provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government with literacy tasks shall formulate their own literacy objectives by 2010 and 2015 in consideration of their local actualities and general objectives determined by the central government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Guidance Opinion on Further Enhancing Literacy</em> issued by the Ministry of Education and other 11 government departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2. Reform for literacy

In 2002, the Ministry of Education issued the *Guidance Opinion on Literacy Programs and Teaching Reform* (In Trial). It is the first time for the Chinese government to issue a guidance document on literacy programs and teaching, and the document has come up with many new ideas redefining literacy. As opposed to the traditional idea that literacy aims to teach illiterates how to read, the *Opinion* asks to establish new ideas. It stresses that literacy is both the comprehensive fundamental education for learners and basic education for social members to survive, live and develop. The purpose of literacy is to enhance the capability of sustainable development for learners and lay a foundation for them to keep improving their

life quality. Secondly, it stresses that literacy shall be human-oriented and based on the needs of learners; it should be an effort to improve the ideological, ethical, scientific and cultural quality of learners, help learners cultivate the new concepts of modern production and life as well as the spirits of entrepreneurship for development, develop the preliminary capabilities to use applicable technologies and lay a foundation for life-long learning. Thirdly, it stresses that literacy shall fully utilize the existing experience of adults, arouse their consciousness as the subject in learning and trigger their motivation in learning. Fourthly, it stresses that literacy shall be closely combined with the economic development of local communities, cultural development and individual development. Changes in these ideas have reflected the new definition of literacy and a new approach in the new situation. In other words, there is a shift from the approach of only teaching Chinese characters to a functional education approach, or from eradicating the ignorance of Chinese characters to removing the ignorance of culture knowledge. The purpose is to help adults master the basic skills needed for life and work while learning knowledge about culture. In this way, they may acquire more work opportunities and income, improve their health and life, and promote their participation in society.

From the perspective of the above new literacy concept, the Opinion comes up with the specific objectives in the reform of literacy, including:

- A shift from a reliance on exterior power to an incentive mechanism oriented by the actual needs of learners;
- A shift from the program objectives placing excessive focus on Chinese characters teaching to the program objectives of comprehensive qualities centering on the improvement in the life quality for learners;
- A shift from the tendency towards normalized education and elementary education to a focus on cultivating the knowledge utilization capability, entrepreneurship and practice capability and life-long learning capability for learners;
- Change the obsolete and backward contents in literacy programs and add the contents reflecting the requirements of modern society for the basic qualities and capabilities for citizens;
- A shift from the original organization forms and methods of literacy teaching to a full respect of learners in the activities they act as the subject and a full utilization of the rich life experience and learning capabilities of various aspects for adult learners;
- Develop diverse literacy program resources and promote the diversity in textbooks.

The Opinion requires the various localities to carefully survey and study the literacy learning needs for different human groups in different areas, and suggests them to establish pilots of literacy program and teaching reform while enhancing the training of teachers for literacy.

2.3 Increase funding and enhance the research and assessment for literacy

During the period from 2007 to 2010, the central government increases the annual funding for literacy from 8 million to 50 million Yuan, in order to reward the advanced regions with outstanding performance in the literacy scheme in western and central China, and move
ahead with the literacy scheme in western and central areas of poverty and among ethnic minority groups and women.

Meanwhile, education and scientific research organizations are encouraged and assisted to enhance the studies in the theory and practice of literacy, by researching and exploring the organization and mobilization methods of literacy in the new situation, literacy mechanism oriented by the actual learning needs of the target groups in the literacy scheme, literacy textbook formulation modes, effective measures for literacy in areas of poverty, ethnic minority groups and women, etc. For instance, Gansu Provincial Teaching Science Research Institute carried out a literacy reform research project in recent years, and formulated new literacy textbooks and teaching discs. This project has played an active role in making the literacy more practical and clearly targeted, and improving the quality and effect of literacy. Gansu Province has also implemented a sampling survey of literacy results (2005) and literacy project baseline survey and research (2009), analyzing the progress, results and challenges in literacy in the province as well as promoting the policy advice to further improve literacy in the future.¹

In recent years, under overall planning and technical support by UNESCO, Mid-decade Assessment of Education for All in China has been conducted. Firstly, the Chinese government carried out a comprehensive assessment of literacy and life skills education for adults in a combined consideration of the mid-term assessment of education for all implemented by UNESCO, and published the assessment report of education for all in China (2008). Besides, a provincial education-for-all assessment was conducted in Shanxi, Henan, Jiangsu, Guizhou, Yunnan and Gansu. These assessment activities have played a facilitating role in learning about the progress in literacy for adults, defining the existing challenges and problems, and further promoting the literacy in China. Second, the government has enhanced the re-inspection of the areas where the objective to basically eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged people has been realized. The central government requires the provincial governments to re-inspect the county-level administrative regions after the acceptance test and on the basis of the data of the fifth national demographic census. The regions with lower performance in main indicators are required to adopt practical measures for rectification before a designated deadline. The national education supervision group shall carry out a random inspection and make verification for the country-level administrative regions under the application of provincial governments where the objective to basically eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged people has been realized. Some areas have carried out a basic situation survey of illiterate population and their learning needs in the forms of in-house survey, etc, laying a solid basis to effectively carry out literacy.

3. Progress of literacy education

3.1. Adult literacy rate continues to rise

Education statistics have shown that during the period from 2001 to 2008, the cumulative

¹Baseline Investigation and Research Report for the Literacy Program of Gansu Province, Gansu Provincial Department of Education and Gansu Provincial Teaching Science Research Institute, 2009.
number of people completing the literacy class course (number of people becoming literate) was 13.47 million. At the end of 2008, China had a cumulative number of 3038 county-level administrative region entities passing the acceptance test of “making nine-year compulsory education basically universal and illiteracy among young and middle-aged people basically eliminated”, accounting for 99% of the total counties in China.

With the gradual spread of compulsory education and development of literacy, the adult literacy rate continues to rise in China. According to the results of demographic sampling survey for the period from 2001 to 2008, the adult literacy rate in China was on a steady rising trend, and the literacy rate of people of 15 years old and above increased from 88.40% to 93.23% by nearly 5 percentage points. And the illiteracy rate for young and middle-aged people of 15 to 45 years old reduced from 4.09% in 2001 to 1.5% in 2008.

**Figure 3 Number of people completing the literacy class course from 2001 to 2008 (in 10,000 people)**

![Figure 3](image)

Source: previous issues of *China Education Statistics Yearbook*

**Table 1: Changes in the literacy rate for the population of 15 years old and above by gender in China (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Gender Index (Female/Male)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>93.23</td>
<td>95.98</td>
<td>88.48</td>
<td>0.9219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>91.60</td>
<td>95.65</td>
<td>87.56</td>
<td>0.9154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>90.69</td>
<td>95.13</td>
<td>86.28</td>
<td>0.9070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>88.96</td>
<td>94.14</td>
<td>83.85</td>
<td>0.8907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>89.68</td>
<td>94.21</td>
<td>85.14</td>
<td>0.9037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>89.05</td>
<td>93.88</td>
<td>84.15</td>
<td>0.8993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>88.37</td>
<td>93.57</td>
<td>83.08</td>
<td>0.8879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>88.40</td>
<td>93.59</td>
<td>83.12</td>
<td>0.8881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data of sampling survey in demographic changes for the years, except for the year of
Table 2: Changes in the illiteracy rate among the young and middle-aged people of 15 to 50 years old (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data of sampling survey in demographic changes for the years, except for the year of 2005 where data of sampling survey for 1% population is adopted.

3.2 Gender parity index of literacy rate increased gradually

Since the illiteracy rate among women is generally higher than men, illiterate women have always been the focus of literacy in China. During the period from 2001 to 2008, literacy rate among women have been increased dramatically, with 7.5 million women among the 13.47 million people becoming literate by taking the literacy class, accounting for 56% of the total. And the literacy rate among adult women rose from 83.12% to 88.48% by nearly 5.4 percentage points, significantly larger than the margin of 2.4 percentage points in the literacy rate among men. The gender equity index of the literacy rate among adults rose from 0.888 to 0.922, showing that the difference in adult literacy rate between men and women is getting smaller.

Figure 4 Number of men and women completing the literacy class course from 2001 to 2008 (in 10,000 people)

Source: statistics announcements of national education development of the previous years

Literacy not only lays a foundation for women to improve their cultural qualities and social status, but also promotes the participation of women in occupational skills training. The government departments of finance, agriculture, S&T, education, etc have enhanced their policy support for women, especially women in rural areas, playing a facilitating role in increasing occupation education and training opportunities for women. For instance, the
Green Certificates Project, Trans-century S&T Training Project for Young Farmers, New Farmers Entrepreneurship Cultivation Project, Sunshine Project, Sparkle S&T Training Dedicated Scheme and other training projects explicitly came up with the idea to have women account for 40% or an appropriate proportion of the total trainees. In 2008, women were 8.4 million and 2.37 million respectively within the enrolled students and graduates of intermediate occupational school in China, accounting for 49.8% and 49.3% respectively of the total; and women reached 23.99 million and 26.84 million within the enrolled students and graduates of urban and rural occupational skills training agencies in China, accounting for 47.8% and 46.9% respectively of the total. Participation in the occupational skills training will not only help women master the fundamental labor skills, but also increase their motivation to participate in literacy in return.

4. Major experience in moving ahead with literacy

4.1 The legal system, institutions and mechanisms for literacy

4.1.1 Development of legal system related to literacy

The Constitution, Law of Education and other important laws all have clear stipulations on the right and obligation to provide and receive literacy. In order to guarantee the implementation of literacy, the Chinese government also formulated and issued the Work Rules on Literacy (formulated in 1988 and revised in 1993), specifying the details on the obligations, rights, responsibilities and work mechanisms, etc. Many local governments have also formulated their own work rules on literacy.

Box 3: National laws, regulations and policies on literacy

"The government shall develop various education facilities and eliminate illiteracy."

——The Constitution for the People’s Republic of China, revised in March, 2004

People’s governments at various levels, autonomous organizations at grassroots for the general public, public corporations and enterprises shall adopt various measures and carry out literacy to eliminate illiteracy. According to the national regulations, citizens with the capability to receive literacy shall accept the literacy.


Illiterate and semi-illiterate citizens at 15 years old and above and of any gender, ethnic group and race, except for the ones without learning capability, shall have the obligation and right to accept the literacy.

—— Work Rules on Literacy, August, 1993

4.1.2 Promote literacy institutional arrangement

After the reform of government agencies in 1998, the functions of the division were transferred to the Basic Education Department of MOE. Literacy became the responsibility of the Literacy Division and is now the responsibility of the Policy Division under the Basic
Education Department I of MOE. There are also corresponding administration agencies established under the education administration departments of the provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the State Council), prefectures (municipalities), county (municipalities), with full-time personnel employed responsible for organizing and managing the literacy work (Please see Box 4). At the level of county governments, the double-line contracting responsibility system is adopted by the governments and education administration departments to delegate education responsibilities to people’s governments at the county and village levels as well as the executives of enterprises and public corporations. Some localities have incorporated the performance in literacy into the scope of performance review for government officials. In rural areas, China has established a three-tiered literacy teaching network composed of county, village and rural schools, and delegated the literacy tasks to villagers' committees, literacy teachers and illiterate students. County and village governments have full-time and part-time administration personnel of literacy, with the teachers from the township and village schools, township and village adult culture and skills schools or elementary schools in rural areas acting as part-time teachers for literacy.
4.2 Combination of literacy education and skills training

Combination of literacy with skills training and post-literacy continuing education will not only help motivate adults to participate in literacy, but also facilitate relapse into illiteracy. There are many reasons for relapse into illiteracy, including both the social, economic, cultural, education development and other external reasons, but also the internal reasons of the illiterate individuals themselves. The key to the prevention of relapse into illiteracy is to meet the constant learning needs of learners, closely integrate the contents of literacy learning with the life and production of learners, combine the effort to become literate with poverty alleviation, and promote knowledge learning with S&T learning.
The various localities have fully utilized the local rural education resources of various types, give play to the role of elementary schools, middle schools and adult schools in rural areas, adjust to local conditions, and carry out the post-literacy continuing education with different contents and in various forms to meet local needs. And they have fully integrated the effort to solidify and improve the learning results for people just shaking off illiteracy with the practical technologies training in rural areas, surplus labor transfer training, young farmers S&T training, social life education for adults in rural areas, etc., in order to help such people learn one to several practical technologies on the basis of a preliminary reading, writing and calculating capability, master the basic knowledge and skills needed to develop production and adjust to social life with a view to helping them increase revenues and expand employment opportunities. Qinghai Province carried out the “One School Brings Along One Village” literacy and S&T promotion activity. This activity integrates the elimination of illiteracy among young and middle-aged people with post-literacy solidification & improvement efforts through many forms of remote education with elementary schools and middle schools, and combines culture & knowledge learning and practical technologies learning, in order to help learners enhance their capability and skills to absorb and apply technologies as well as the capability to participate in economic activities and social life while mastering the basic reading, writing and calculating capability, in order to help them walk out of ignorance and poverty and improve their living conditions and life quality.

The adult education network spreading across the urban and rural areas has laid a foundation for the post-literacy continuing education. According to the statistics of the education department, there were 48,272 elementary schools for adults in 2008 in China with more than 2.35 million enrolled adult students; 1401 middle schools for adults with more than 0.108 million enrolled adult students; 753 high schools for adults with more than 0.127 million enrolled adult students; 1983 secondary technical schools for adults with more than 1.206 million enrolled adult students; 162,049 vocational training schools with 50.2 million enrolled students. Culture & technologies training schools have been established in rural areas in China, preliminarily achieving a culture & technologies education and training network for farms divided into three tiers including counties (municipalities), townships (villages) and villages. Led by county vocational schools or adult schools, this network relies on township and village culture & technologies schools for adults as the backbone, and sits on the foundation of village culture & technologies schools. In 2008, there were 137,827 culture & technologies schools for adults in rural areas with 36.95 million enrolled students. During the period from 2001 to 2008, the farmers completing technical training reached a cumulative number of 0.4 billion person times nationwide, greatly improving the production, life and management skills for the farmers, and forcefully promoting the economic and social development in rural areas.

In recent years, there have been great changes in productions and lifestyles in the society of China, especially the emergence of large number of migrant workers leaving rural areas for urban areas. In order to meet the basic needs of migrant works for life skills, night schools for migrant workers have been established in many urban areas, providing training in
occupational skills, urban life, transport safety, professional ethics, labor laws and regulations, etc., thus playing an important role in illiteracy elimination and post-literacy continuing education for migrant workers.

**Box 6: Spare-time schools for migrant workers should be popularized**

According to newspapers, 203 spare-time schools for migrant workers have been established at the various construction sites in Guangdong. The total number is expected to reach 800 at the year end, covering one third of the 2,300 construction sites.

Current data has shown that there are about 0.12 billion migrant workers coming into urban areas. They are mostly low in their education level, and can only engage themselves in certain types of manual work with low technical content. Faced with a huge difference between urban and rural areas and frustrated by problems in real life, they have an urgent need for spiritual and cultural nurturing.

Cities provide opportunities to migrant workers to receive education and training, which can both improve their occupational skills, and change their relatively closed living environment to a great extent, thus expanding their horizon and help them fit into urban life.

Efforts have been made to enhance education and training for migrant workers in many approaches and forms. Generally speaking, there is too big a distance between site of full-time training classes and the migrant workers and the tuition of commercial training classes is much too expensive for them, the new mode of opening spare-time schools in the vicinity of construction sites has been well received among migrant workers without any doubt. According to sources, since Guangzhou established spare-time schools for migrant workers at construction sites in April of this year, there have been 25432 people receiving the training from the spare-time schools and acquiring the national occupational qualifications certificate.

(Source: *China Information Newspaper*, August 14th, 2007)

Literacy in rural areas shall be closely integrated with the cultural activities in rural areas and construction of rural communities. In recent years, China enhanced the construction of reading rooms and libraries for farmers in rural areas, and carried out diverse cultural and sports activities in rural areas. In some provinces, experiments have been carried out to establish life-long learning centers in rural communities. And in some areas, efforts have been made to enhance the integration of literacy with production practice, social services and technologies promotion at the culture & technologies schools for adults at the village and township levels as the main venues, to help illiterate students improve their learning, production and living capabilities, cultivating a courteous, healthy and scientific lifestyle, thus making a contribution to the effort to develop new farmers with knowledge, skills and operation capability, cultivate practical human resources in rural areas and facilitate labor transfer. This has played a facilitating role in establishing a long-term effect mechanism for literacy and post-literacy continuing education in rural areas and improving the environment for life-long learning in rural areas.
Box 7: Literacy among ethnic minority groups and women in Lancang County, Yunnan Province

Women account for 70% of the total number of illiterates in Lancang Lahu Autonomous County, Yunnan Province. The county government sees women as the focus for the literacy work and carries out the “Mothers Education Project for Lahu Nationality” within the scope of the county: one is “modern mothers education”, designed to popularize knowledge on culture and S&T through literacy and S&T training, in order to give women laborers access to practical technologies training and cultural knowledge education; second is “future mothers education”, designed to help Lahu nationality girls develop in an all round way through the popularization of nine-year compulsory education, carry forward the excellent traditional cultures of their own nationality, and grow into new women with knowledge of Lahu nationality.¹

Survey Report of Literacy for Ethnic Minority Groups in Western China, 2005

There are many ethnic minority groups in Lancang County, Yunnan Province. And the Chinese language is not used in many localities, thus making it difficult to eliminate illiteracy. Therefore, the local governments use the languages of ethnic minority groups for literacy. However, in consideration of the limited scope of use for the languages of ethnic minority groups and a small quantity of reading materials, literacy teaching with the Chinese language has been carried out for people becoming literate in their ethnic languages, in order to improve the production and living standard for the young and middle-aged people. The ethnic minority learners studied the languages of their nationalities, and then gradually studied the Han Chinese language and Chinese characters with the assistance of their ethnic languages they had learned. In the process, bilingual teaching has been followed through, such as the textbooks of Chinese characters translated into the ethnic languages. Lijiang County Government used three types of ethnic languages including Naxi, Yi and Lisu for literacy in recent years, and Jinping County Government used the Hani language for literacy, both achieving positive results.


4.3 Supervision, Evaluation and Inspection and Acceptance Are Highlighted

After the publication of Regulations for the Work of Eliminating Illiteracy, China gradually puts in place a hierarchal system, under which the higher-level governments evaluate, inspect and accept the targets of lower-level governments for young and middle-aged illiteracy elimination. According to this system, the central government inspects and accepts the targets of provinces, autonomous regions and municipal cities while the latter ones inspect and accept targets of counties. Counties inspect and accept the targets of townships which inspect and accept those of villages. In this way, the situation of young and middle-aged illiteracy

eliminating goals in the targeted areas can be established. Report of literacy and notification system are also established, according to which people’s government of each province, autonomous region and municipal city shall at the beginning of every year submit to the Ministry of Education the progress of the work of eliminating illiteracy and its annual plan. The latter shall irregularly spot-check illiteracy elimination work carried out by local regions. The results of spot-check shall be notified. Each local government shall also conduct such work as special inspection of the illiteracy eliminating work, and illiterate placement tests and registration. In recent years national education supervision teams have bolstered their efforts to supervise and inspect the work of illiteracy elimination. The establishment of inspection and acceptance system for literacy has vigorously promoted the development of China’s literacy.

Box 8 Inspection and Evaluation Measures for Illiteracy Elimination among Young and Middle-aged People by County-level Organizations (Trial implementation)

Chapter 1 Ranges and Organizations to be Inspected and Evaluated

Article 1 The inspection and acceptance of illiteracy elimination among young and middle-aged people by county-level organizations shall be organized and conducted by the people’s government of each province, autonomous region and municipal city in accordance with relevant documents and this measure. The National Education Commission shall take responsibility for guiding and supervising this work.

Article 2 The targets to be inspected and evaluated: other county-level administrative district organizations designated by the people’s governments of counties, county-level cities, municipal cities and provinces to implement the work of illiteracy elimination among young and middle-aged people.

Chapter 2 Target Requirements for Inspection and Evaluation

Article 3 Evaluation standard for illiteracy elimination among young and middle-aged people

1. In rural areas, the non-illiterates above the age of 15 shall account for 95% of the whole population; in enterprises, institutions and urban areas, 98%.
2. Elementary education shall be made universal;
3. The consolidation rate of people becoming literate in recent three years shall be up to more than 95%;
4. Rural administrative villages, residents’ committees in cities and towns, and enterprises and institutions of the same level under the jurisdiction shall meet the aforementioned standards (except for regions with special difficulties);
5. Townships (towns) and administrative villages under the jurisdiction shall build farmers’ cultural and technical schools or teaching units (except for regions with a sparse population).

Article 4 Target Requirements for Setting up Schools

1. For counties and townships which have built adult education and management institutions, dedicated or part-time personnel shall be deployed in accordance with
national and provincial regulations;

2. Farmers' technical and cultural schools or teaching units in townships (towns), and villages shall employ dedicated and part-time cadres and teachers. After these schools and units are equipped with basic teaching facilities, they shall conduct education and training of farmers according to plan.

3. Regulations for illiteracy elimination and farmers’ educational expenses put in place by the State Council, the National Education Commission, provinces, autonomous regions and municipal cities shall be properly implemented.

Chapter 3 Process for Inspection and Evaluation

Article 5 If counties (cities, districts) achieve the aforementioned illiteracy eliminating targets for the young and middle-aged after their self-inspection, they can report to their local administrative offices, people’s governments of cities. When the approval is obtained after review, the counties can report to the people’s governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipal cities.

Article 6 The people’s governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipal cities shall annually organize relevant departments to participate in the inspection and acceptance teams. These teams shall organize inspection and acceptance in accordance with relevant documents and this measure. For those counties (cities, districts) who meet various target requirements across the board, they can be accepted as the ones that have eliminated illiteracy among the young and middle-aged people. Relevant reports on inspection and acceptance shall be submitted annually to the National Education Commission before the end of July.

Article 7 The National Education Commission shall annually spot-check the counties (cities, districts) which have been inspected and accepted to have eliminated illiteracy among the young and middle-aged people by provinces, autonomous regions and municipal cities.

Meanwhile China also puts in place a commending and rewarding system to regularly motivate the advanced organizations and individuals. The Ministry of Education has set up a “China Illiteracy Elimination Award,” co-established the “Female Illiteracy Elimination Award” with All-China Women’s Federation, and co-created the “Advanced Region Award for the Work of Illiteracy Elimination” with the Ministry of Finance. The aforementioned awards have been issued to numerous organizations successively, including 655 advanced organizations which have made prominent achievements in eliminating illiteracy and rural adult education, 507 advanced schools, 1365 advanced illiteracy-eliminating individuals. All these awards play a positive role in promoting the work of illiteracy elimination and adult education.

Moreover, some regions have made vigorous efforts to explore diversified motivation system for literacy. Let’s take the following measures as examples. Academic certificate for education equal to elementary schooling is awarded to adults who become literate and are proved to have met certain standards after inspection. Various accesses to poverty alleviation subsidies are combined with rural illiterates' participation in the illiteracy eliminating studies. Part-time teachers’ performances in illiteracy eliminating work are considered important references...
when they are assessed for their professional titles and promotion. For example, in recent years Gansu province has established *Standards and Assessment Measures for Academic Certificate for Adults’ Education Equal to Elementary Schooling*, and developed the assessment of people who become literate and adult tests for education equal to elementary schooling.

5. Enhancing policy measures for literacy

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and other 11 government departments jointly issued the Guidance Opinion on Further Enhancing Literacy, making a comprehensive arrangement for literacy by 2015, which propose main literacy tasks and political measures as follows:

5.1 Improve understanding of the importance of literacy

The *Opinion* stresses that the effort to carry out literacy on an in-depth and sustained way and improve the quality of learning of whole Chinese people is an important way to promote social civilization advancement, a dire need to promote the new socialist rural construction, and an important foundation to establish a harmonious socialist society. The document requires the government at all levels to start by focusing on the existing problems and actual needs in literacy, further improve their understanding of the importance of literacy, and incorporate literacy into the master plan of economic and social development as an important task in the education sector, actively move ahead with literacy according to the needs from development of the times, deepen their commitment to literacy teaching reform, solidify literacy results, improve literacy effectiveness, eradicate remaining illiterates, make efforts to equip every one with knowledge and skills, and comprehensively improve the holistic quality of the Chinese people, in order to provide a stronger support of human resources for the socialist modernization construction efforts.

5.2 Strengthening the planning of and the resource investment into literacy

5.2.1 Establishing feasible objectives and implementation plans.

It is advised that all provinces, cities and municipalities establish, in line with local realities, the objectives and plans on literacy within their jurisdictions by 2015 and guide the counties under their jurisdiction in working out relevant implementation schemes. The important prerequisite of developing a new goals and planning is to clearly check the base number of illiterates, with administrative village or neighborhood committee as the unit, enhancing the monitoring on newly increased illiterates or those among the floating population, perfecting the working files on illiteracy elimination and building a dynamic management mechanism on illiteracy elimination.

5.2.2 Universalizing and consolidating the nine-year compulsory education and curbing resolutely the increasing of new illiterates.

As to school dropouts below 15 years old, it is advised to supervise and urge their parents or other guardians to send them back to school for compulsory education and to provide necessary assistance in the process. As to illiterate young people between 15 and 24 years
old with a capacity in learning, all literacy measures shall be taken in line with production and living practices so as to ensure that they cast off illiteracy within a time limit.

5.2.3 Increasing the inputs into literacy

It is advised that an illiteracy elimination fund investment mechanism be established from place to place at the expenses of provincial, municipal and county governments. A special award fund shall be further added to the Central Government budget to support the implementation of illiteracy elimination work especially for women or the nationalities with a comparatively small population.

5.3 Deepening the reform in literacy and improving the quality of literacy

It is advised to improve the literacy and establish a people oriented illiteracy elimination system so as to turn illiteracy elimination into an effective measure for the general public to raise their cultural and scientific level, economic income level, life quality, health level and social reintegration capacity.

5.3.1 Enhancing the effectiveness of illiteracy elimination

Based on the literacy standards stipulated in the Regulations for Eliminating Illiteracy, it is advised to add more practical and necessary contents of learning in close integration with production and life, especially the contents on casting off poverty and achieving prosperity, practical rural techniques, family financing, health care, family planning and family education, etc.

5.3.2 Improving the evaluation, test and certificate issuing on literacy

It is advised to research and develop suitable literacy test methods according to the characteristics of illiterate trainees, test by various means, such as words, pictures and videos, their capability in acquiring and using knowledge, change the limited practices of tests and exams and intensify the scientificity of literacy testing. If applicable, some provinces can establish a question bank designed for literacy testing in all prefecture-level cities and counties.

A literacy certificate with unified codes shall be issued by the county –level educational administrative departments to the literacy trainees who have passed relevant tests. All regions should reinforce the management on literacy certificate issuing and change the degree of education filled in the household registration according to the literacy certificate acquired by relevant trainees.

5.3.3 Innovating teaching methods and perfecting the teaching materials on literacy

In accordance with the Guidance Opinion on Literacy Programs and Teaching Reform (In Trial) issued by the Ministry of Education in 2002, all regions should develop various forms of teaching materials on literacy and relevant further learning materials according to the differences in town or country, region, gender, age and nationality, etc. and also develop “bilingual” teaching materials on literacy suitable in minority regions based on the actual requirements. The provincial administrative authority on education shall be responsible for
organizing, planning and compiling the teaching materials on literacy. The Ministry of Education shall organize relevant departments in developing modular teaching materials of a favorable commonality for selection and use by all regions.

It is advised to develop visual distance education resources free of ambiguity and make use of modern teaching means such as the distance education facilities in rural primary and middle schools so as to help the illiterate trainees and the people who have accepted the literacy training understand and master the target knowledge or skills.

5.3.4 Enhancing the continuing education after literacy training and consolidating the achievement in literacy

All counties and towns should integrate literacy with new countryside culture construction and carry out the further education mainly revolved around vocational and technical training according to the actual requirements of literacy trainees and also organize all kinds of cultural activities so as to increase their opportunities of communicating and exchanging in use of the acquired reading and writing skills.

5.4. Strengthen organizational leadership, overall coordination and social participation

5.4.1. Strengthen coordination between different departments

Give full play to the coordination team of the national illiteracy elimination work department. Plan and coordinate the functions of the following relevant departments in the illiteracy elimination work in an overall manner: educational administration, press publicity, development, reform and planning, finance, agriculture, nationalities affairs, culture, labor and social security, radio, film and television, statistics, communist young league and women’s federation. To make full use of the advantages of relevant departments and put in place responsibilities of relevant departments, the Opinions clearly specify the job responsibilities of relevant departments within the coordination team.

Establish and complete the leadership and coordination organization for the illiteracy elimination work at local government level; set up illiteracy elimination management system and operation mechanism of “centralized leadership by the government, division of labor and responsibilities between relevant departments, coordination and acceleration by the whole society, joint efforts and management”. Every provinces (regions, municipals) and counties whose literacy works are lagging behind should strengthen institutes building and resources input, in order to meet the financial needs. Increase the input and overall arrangement of education resources (fund, personal, etc.) to literacy work. Take full advantage of the existing resources, the organization and activity venue of the primary & middle school and villages to carry out illiteracy elimination work.
Box 9: Division of responsibilities of relevant illiteracy elimination education departments

Educational administration department should conduct careful planning, teaching and management for the illiteracy elimination work; reinforce the building of illiteracy elimination management team, teaching team and scientific research team; make efforts to enhance the quality and benefit of illiteracy elimination work. Organize adult culture and technology schools and rural primary and middle schools to conduct rural practical techniques training and surplus labor transfer training for the literate trainees.

Press publicity department should do a good job in the public opinions publicity to create social environment in favor of the conduction of illiteracy elimination.

Development and reform department should incorporate illiteracy elimination into national economy and social development planning and provide active support to illiteracy elimination work.

Financial department should give full play to the effects of public financial functions; appropriate special fund for illiteracy elimination work; reinforce supervision and management, increase the fund application benefit.

Agricultural department should strengthen agricultural practical techniques and transfer techniques training for the villagers becoming literacy combining the training for farmers.

Nationalities affairs department should assists relevant department to incorporate the illiteracy elimination work into the overall planning on the economic and social development in minority nationality regions, and participate the illiteracy elimination work of the nationalities with comparatively small population.

Cultural department should reinforce the construction of rural facilities and the cultural facilities in the community; organize and conduct cultural popularization activities which are very popular among the illiterate population; and provide venue and various books, periodicals and reading materials according to actual situations.

Labor and social security department should support the employer to carry out cultural compensation education and training for these illiterate workers.

Radio, film and television department should urge the television stations, broadcasting stations to manufacture and broadcast educational programs which are helpful to illiteracy elimination so as to bring into play the effects of radio and television resources in illiteracy elimination work.

Statistic department should pay more attention to the statistics of illiterate population in relevant statistic work; meanwhile reinforce the study and analysis on the tendency,
distribution areas, gender, age and other characteristics of illiterate population; and report the information to relevant departments, such as education department.

**Communist youth league** should organize students from college and secondary technical schools to participate in summer vacation “three activities going to countryside” volunteer social practice activity, western service plan of volunteer university students, poverty alleviation tandem plan of Chinese young volunteers; and organize literate youngsters to join in the illiteracy elimination work in the form of volunteer service.

**Women’s federation** should organize and mobilize illiterate women to participate in the illiteracy elimination study; organically combine the illiteracy elimination work with “double study and double competition” activity; make full advantage of the existing technology demonstration base, rural women school and other training resources; actively participate in the illiteracy elimination work for women.

*Guiding Opinions on Further Strengthening literacy issued by 12 Departments including the Ministry of Education*

### 5.4.2. Put in place the job responsibilities of local government departments in illiteracy elimination work

Make the illiteracy elimination task the responsibility of the person in charge of administrative affairs in government departments at county and township levels, enterprises and public institutions and take it as an important element in the evaluation of work achievements. Give full play to the effects of village committee and community residents committee and assign illiteracy tasks to specific individual. Various regions should honor and reward the companies and individual who have made contributions to the literacy work made actively exploration and innovative initiatives in the literacy work.

### 5.4.3. Reinforce the supervision & inspection, direction & evaluation

The Education Supervision Office shall organize special supervisory inspections while the education supervision departments at all levels intensify the supervision on the process of illiteracy elimination activities, make an assessment on the progress of illiteracy elimination work for all regions and then make the assessment results public appropriately. All regions should submit at the beginning of each year the developing circumstances and annual plan of illiteracy elimination activities to the National Eliminating Illiteracy Work Inter-Department Coordination Group and reexamine the approved counties (cities and districts).