



Chapter 2

Part Two: Important Policies on China's Government-Led Basic Education Reform and Development

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(1) Opinions on Propelling the Coordinated Reform and Development of Compulsory Education in Urban and Rural Areas (2016)

Opinions on Propelling the Coordinated Reform and Development of Compulsory Education in Urban and Rural Areas, issued by the State Council, is an important document nationally formulated to achieve the goals of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and promote the sustainable development of compulsory education. It aimed to accelerate the narrowing of the educational gap between urban and rural areas, to promote educational equity and to advance coordinated and integrated reform and development of urban-rural compulsory education in counties. The following is the main content of the document:

Firstly, we should optimize the construction and layout of urban and rural schools. In details, more efforts should be made to construct urban schools simultaneously and provide students with adequate opportunities to accept education; more action should be taken to improve rural education, to plan the layout of rural schools in a proper way according to the population distribution and geographical conditions and to strengthen the weak link of rural education; more moves should be taken to promote the standardized construction of schools, improve school conditions, enhance informatization and upgrade the management and service of boarding schools; more steps should be

implemented to eliminate oversized classes, to increase chances to accept education, standardize the enrollment process, strictly control class sizes and gradually phase out oversized classes, all supported by building new schools and renovating or expanding existing ones.

Secondly, we should coordinate the teacher resources and their benefits. Specifically, action should be taken to establish a unified staffing standard for urban and rural areas, promote the exchange and rotation of teachers between urban and rural schools and ensure an adequate supply of teachers in rural schools and disadvantaged schools; efforts should be reinforced to reform the salary guarantee mechanism for rural teachers, implement an income allocation policy favoring rural teachers, and provide appropriate preferences in areas such as academic title evaluation and award commendations and recognition, which will increase the salaries or benefits of rural teachers and ensure that their remuneration is no less than that of urban counterparts at the same grade.

Thirdly, we should reform the education governance system. In details, more action should be taken to reform school system construction, strengthen ideological and political education across the board, gradually formulate a modern school mechanism with

Chinese characteristics and optimize school governance; more steps should be taken in implementing the educational evaluation reform and establishing a quality-oriented education evaluation mechanism to promote the all-round development of students.

Fourthly, we should reinforce efforts to guarantee students' rights. Specifically, more moves should be taken to reform the mechanism for reducing the number of dropouts and establishing a joint guarantee mechanism involving government, schools, families, and society to ensure that school-

age children do not drop out; more action should be taken to reform the mechanism for the enrollment of migrant children, promote the portability of "two exemptions and one subsidy" funds and the benchmark quota funds for per-student public operating expenses with student mobility, establish an enrollment policy based primarily on residence permits and ensure that migrant children have equal access to compulsory education; efforts should be increased to care about left-behind children to promote their healthy growth.¹⁰

10.Gov.cn | State Council Issues Opinions on Propelling the Coordinated Reform and Development of Compulsory Education in Urban and Rural Areas

(2) Opinions on Deepening Reform and Standardizing Development of Preschool Education (2018)

Opinions on Deepening Reform and Standardizing Development of Preschool Education, issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, is the major strategic decision and deployment made by the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core regarding preschool education, serving as an action guide for the deepening reform and standardized development of preschool education in the new era. The main content of this policy is as follows:

We should provide more preschool educational resources in various forms. More efforts should be made to develop public kindergartens, increase government investment in building, renovating, or expanding a batch of safe and applicable kindergartens. Non-governmental organizations or individuals were encouraged to run kindergartens in many forms. In urban residential areas without supporting kindergartens, kindergartens should be constructed in accordance with the residential area plan and the scale of the resident population, following relevant national regulations. It aimed at offering more preschool education resources in rural areas.

We should also reinforce efforts to optimize the preschool teacher resources through multiple channels. Based on national guideline and local reality, the student-

teacher ratio should be determined properly, the staffing of public kindergartens should be approved and gradually equip kindergartens should also be equipped with sufficient teaching and administrative staff. In addition, more action should be taken to legally improve the social status and benefits of preschool teachers and establish a sound training system for preschool teachers.

Investment should be increased in preschool education through multiple channels. Governments at all levels should include preschool education expenditure in their fiscal budgets. New educational funding should be allocated to preschool education. Based on local reality, per-student funding standards and per-student financial allocation standards for public kindergartens should be formulated. Preferential policies should also be formulated to encourage non-governmental organizations or individuals in running and funding kindergartens. Members in each household should properly shoulder the cost of preschool education. Establishing a preschool education subsidy system has become a must.

We should strengthen the access management of kindergartens, improve laws or regulations to standardize the management of preschool education and strictly implement the kindergarten access system. Multiple kindergarten operation standards

should be established, according to national basic standards and different social demands for early childhood care and education. Additionally, more action should be taken to improve or implement the annual inspection system for kindergartens and classify or address the problems of unlicensed kindergartens in a proper manner.

We should strengthen safety supervision over kindergartens. Governments in different regions should attach great importance to the safety guarantee of kindergartens and strengthen the construction of safety facilities. Relevant departments should establish a comprehensive safety protection system for kindergartens according to their functional divisions. The streets, communities, and village committees

where kindergartens are located should jointly ensure the safety of kindergartens.

We should standardize the payment of kindergartens. The relevant state departments issued a kindergarten fee management method in 2011. Provincial-level relevant departments should formulate fee standards for public kindergartens based on the level of urban and rural economic and social development, operating costs, and the affordability of the masses, following the principle of reasonable family sharing of education costs in the non-compulsory education stage. More action should be taken to reinforce the fee management of private kindergartens, refine the filing procedures and advance classified guidance.¹¹

11. www.gov.cn | Opinions on Deepening Reform and Standardizing Development of Preschool Education

(3) Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Education or Teaching and Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education Across the Board (2019)

Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Education or Teaching and Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education Across the Board, issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, is a programmatic document formulated to thoroughly implement the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress and the deployments of the National Education Conference, accelerate the modernization of education, build a strong education country, and run education that satisfies the people. It provided a comprehensive explanation of national in-depth educational or teaching reform in the new era and improvement in compulsory education across the board. The following is the main content of this policy:

In terms of constructing an education system that comprehensively cultivates moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, we should adhere to the all-round development and quality education. (1) Highlight the effectiveness of moral education and create a large classroom for social practice for primary and secondary school students. (2) Enhance the level of intellectual education and ensure that students meet the national academic quality standards. (3) Strengthen physical exercise and strictly implement the student physical health qualification standards. (4) Enhance aesthetic education and implement actions to improve

school aesthetic education. (5) Strengthen labor education and incorporate it into the comprehensive education system.

In terms of improving the quality of classroom teaching, we should play a full part of the classroom as the main battlefield and effectively improve the quality of classroom teaching. (1) Optimize teaching methods, focus on teaching according to students' aptitudes, widely promote the application of excellent teaching achievements, and guide schools to emphasize heuristic, interactive, and inquiry-based teaching. (2) Strengthen teaching management. (3) Improve homework, examination, and tutoring practices. (4) Promote the integration of information technology with education or teaching and accelerate the construction of digital campuses.

In terms of optimizing the compulsory education teacher resources, we should build a high-quality and professionalized teacher workforce in accordance with the standards of "Four Good Teachers" (ideological morality, professional knowledge, teaching methods, and love for students). (1) Reform the training system to enhance teachers' abilities. (2) Improve the management system to optimize teacher allocation, clarify that on the basis of determining the total staffing, the county-level education department should coordinate or allocate teacher resources, and increase the

intensity of two-way exchanges and regular rotations between urban and rural teachers. (3) Improve teachers' benefits through offering better condition.

In terms of deepening reforms in key areas, there were also specific moves. (1) Strengthen curriculum and textbook construction, strengthen supervision of school-based curricula, and establish a school-to-school co-construction and sharing mechanism. (2) Improve the enrollment and examination system, promote the full coverage of compulsory education schools' enrollment of students living nearby without entrance examinations, and implement an enrollment and admission model for senior high schools based on junior high school academic performance examination results combined with comprehensive quality evaluations. (3) Improve the quality evaluation and monitoring system and establish a scientific evaluation system oriented towards the development of quality-oriented education. (4) Give full play to the

supporting role of teaching and research and improve the national, provincial, municipal, county, and school teaching and research systems.

In terms of family education, we should accelerate the legislation of family education and strengthen the sense of responsibility of main guardians. (1) Strengthen the construction of community parent schools and family education guidance service stations to provide parents with public-interest family education guidance services. (2) Give full play to the leading role of schools and strengthen the connection between schools and families. (3) Parents should foster a scientific outlook on parenting, earnestly fulfill their family education responsibilities and enhance communication with their children; they should cultivate good thoughts, behaviors, and habits in their children, rationally help their children set growth goals, overcome blind comparisons and prevent imposing excessive extracurricular burdens on their children.¹²

12. www.gov.cn | Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Education or Teaching and Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education Across the Board

(4) A Set of Guidelines to Ease the Burden of Excessive Homework and Off-campus Tutoring for Students Undergoing Compulsory Education (2021)

The Document, A Set of Guidelines to Ease the Burden of Excessive Homework and Off-campus Tutoring for Students Undergoing Compulsory Education, issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, is a programmatic document formulated at the national level to address the issue of excessive burdens on students in the compulsory education stage, providing clear directions and guidance for different areas to carry out the "Double Reduction" educational reform. The overall goals of the "Double Reduction" work is divided into two aspects: On the school side, we should further improve the quality and service of school education and teaching, make homework assignments more scientific and reasonable, ensure that school after-school services basically meet students' needs, and enable students to better return to campus for learning. On the off-campus side, we should comprehensively standardize the training behaviors of off-campus training institutions, basically eliminate various chaos in subject-based off-campus training and gradually reduce the popularity of off-campus training.

Firstly, we need to reduce the excessive homework burden on students. (1) Reduce the total amount of homework, improve the homework management

mechanism, refine homework management, reasonably regulate the structure of homework, and establish a homework in-school publicity system. (2) Improve the quality of homework, resolutely overcome mechanical or ineffective homework and eliminate repetitive and punitive homework. (3) Strengthen teachers' responsibilities. Teachers should earnestly fulfill their homework guidance responsibilities and guide primary school students to basically complete written homework at school and junior high school students to complete most written homework at school. (4) Reduce the burden imposed on parents. It was strictly prohibited to assign or disguisedly assign homework to parents or require parents to check or correct homework.

Secondly, we should improve after-school service. (1) Solve parents' worries about being unable to pick up their children during working hours by extending after-school service hours. The end time of after-school services should, in principle, be no earlier than the local normal quitting time. (2) Meet students' individualized needs and enrich their learning lives. (3) Expand after-school service resources, give full play to social resources, and enable students to enjoy more high-quality after-school service resources. (4) Increase incentives for teachers and relevant fellows providing

after-school services; through coordinated approval of staffing, equip schools with sufficient teachers to ensure an adequate guarantee of school teachers.

Thirdly, we should comprehensively standardize off-campus training. (1) Adhere to strict approval of institutions. Governments in different regions would no longer approve new subject-based off-campus training institutions targeting students in the compulsory education stage. Existing subject-based training institutions would be uniformly registered as non-profit institutions, and online subject-based training institutions would be changed to an approval system. (2) Strictly prohibit capitalization operations. Subject-based training institutions were not allowed to go public or raise funds. (3) Establish a training content filing and supervision system. It was strictly prohibited to provide ultra-standard and advanced training, offer overseas educational courses, and in accordance with laws and regulations, resolutely investigate and handle prominent issues such as out-of-scope training, uneven training quality, vulgar and illegal content, and piracy and infringement. (4) Strictly

control the opening hours of subject-based training institutions. (5) Incorporate subject-based training fees into government-guided pricing, with local governments scientifically and reasonably determining pricing methods.

Fourthly, we should also improve the quality of school education to ensure that students learn sufficiently and well at school. (1) Expand high-quality resources for compulsory education and actively carry out the work of creating high-quality and balanced compulsory education. (2) Enhance the quality of classroom teaching. Schools should fully offer all courses stipulated by the state, strictly teach according to curriculum standards from scratch, and ensure that all that should be taught is taught. (3) Reduce examination pressure. The presentation of examination results should implement a grading system to reduce students' examination pressure. (4) Seriously investigate and handle teachers' paid tutoring outside of school. It was strictly prohibited for off-campus training institutions to hire in-service teachers. Once discovered, the run-school license of the institution will be resolutely revoked.¹³

13. www.gov.cn | A Set of Guidelines to Ease the Burden of Excessive Homework and Off-campus Tutoring for Students Undergoing Compulsory Education

(5) Opinions on Strengthening Science Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in the New Era (2023)

The "Opinions on Strengthening Science Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in the New Era" jointly issued by 18 departments, including the Ministry of Education, is a systematic deployment of science education in primary and secondary schools at the national level. It is also a specific action to implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important instruction on "adding science education into the 'double-reduction' process of education", providing clear guidance and guarantee for the integrated promotion of high-quality development of education, science and technology, and talents.

First, improve school teaching and services. 1. Improve the curriculum and teaching material system and refine the standards for science education standards. Meet the needs of scientific and technological development and industrial transformation, highlight the cultivation of students' core qualities, and make an overall plan for science education and engineering education. 2. Deepen school teaching reform and improve the quality of science education. 3. Create conditions to enrich the content, expand scientific practice activities, and carry out scenario-based and experiential scientific practice activities. 4. Incorporate science education into after-school service programs to attract students to participate actively. 5.

Strengthen the training of the teaching staff and give full play to the leading role of teachers.

Second, make good use of the social classroom. 1. Comprehensively mobilize relevant units to serve scientific-practice education. 2. Guide enterprises to assist in constructing bases, improve practical teaching conditions, and encourage primary and secondary school students to be diligent in exploration and courageous in practice. 3. Encourage colleges, universities and scientific research institutions to take the initiative in connecting with primary and secondary schools and leading the development of science education. 4. Promote all-media communication, create an atmosphere for science education, and vigorously promote the scientific spirit and the spirit of scientists. 5. Optimize the digital intelligence platform, enrich science education resources, and arrange for localities and schools to choose and use them efficiently and orderly.

Third, ensure effective coordination between related reforms. 1. Regulate after-school science and technology training to complement school education effectively. 2. Strictly manage competition activities, cultivate students' spirit of "dedication to science", and guide primary and secondary school students to rationally choose to

participate in competitions on the "whitelist".
3. Coordinate projects for top innovative talent, and explore long-term mechanisms for selection and cultivation. 4. Promote the reform of high school and college entrance exam content, improving the design of academic proficiency assessments. 5. Emphasize

systematic design and arrangement to facilitate the organic connection between different educational stages. 6. Implement family science education and promote the collaborative education of schools, families, and society. 7. Enhance the development of disciplines, and conduct research in science education.¹⁴

14. www.gov.cn | CPC Central Committee and State Council Guidelines on Easing Homework and After-school Tutoring Burden in Compulsory Education

(6) Opinions on Establishing a Quality and Balanced Basic Public Education System (2024)

The "Opinions on Building a High-Quality and Balanced Basic Public Education Service System", issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and General Office of the State Council, is a policy document formulated to thoroughly implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the CPC, accelerate the equalization of basic public services nationwide, and establish a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system. The document sets the following goals: By 2027, a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system will be preliminarily established, with service provision further expanded, supply structures optimized, and equity significantly improved. By 2035, the conditions of compulsory education schools—including facilities, teaching staff, funding, and governance systems—will meet the requirements of building a leading education nation. School-age students will enjoy fair and high-quality basic public education services, with overall standards ranking among the world's most advanced. The document focuses on the following three key areas:

First, we will comprehensively guarantee the high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education. Continued support will be prioritized for

economically disadvantaged regions in central and western China. At the national and provincial levels, a dynamic tracking and regular evaluation mechanism will be established to monitor school conditions in underdeveloped counties. The national education digitization strategy will be vigorously advanced to integrate wired, wireless, and IoT networks in campuses. A demand-responsive public education service mechanism will be implemented, which is coordinated with changes in resident populations. We will explore establishing a probationary training program for newly hired teachers to undergo training in high-performing schools. Additionally, education funding structures will be optimized, with increased investment in teaching quality and faculty development.

Second, we will enhance assistance to ensure all economically disadvantaged students receive support. A robust preschool subsidy system will be established, covering tuition reductions to guarantee access to affordable early childhood education for eligible families. Qualified high school students will receive national grants and tuition waivers, while vocational secondary students will benefit from similar aid packages. Different regions will adopt differentiated subsidy criteria and coverage rates based on local economic conditions,

fiscal capacity, and the distribution of economically disadvantaged students.

Third, we will holistically improve basic public services for students. Individual health archives will be created and gradually linked to preschool health archives. Schools will provide services to students, including health education, health counseling and health outreach,

delivering knowledge and practical skills according to students' characteristics and needs. Career guidance and employment support will be strengthened through building high-quality job service platforms, offering policy consultations on entrepreneurship and labor regulations and implementing a graduate destination survey system.¹⁵

15. www.gov.cn | Guidelines of the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Building a High-Quality and Balanced Basic Public Education Service System