

# Background of China's Higher Education Development

Mr. Fan Wenyao<sup>1</sup>, Professor and Deputy Director General of NCEDR

## 1. Background of China's Economic & Social Development

**1.1 Social development stage.** Currently China is in a special development period, transforming from planned economy to market economy, from incomplete industrialization to hi-tech industrial society, from a low income country to a mid to high income country. During this transformation and rapid economic development period, private economy sector weighted 65% of the total GDP. In 2006, China's GDP reached \$2.68 trillion US dollar, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> place after USA, Japan and Germany. However, GDP per capita was \$2,000 US dollar, ranked as 100<sup>th</sup>. GDP per capital for cities in east coast has exceeded \$5000, compared to less than \$1,000 for those in inland underdeveloped areas. There are still 23 million people who are on poverty and make less than \$100 per year. China's general policy is to promote balanced economic and social development and construct a harmony society.

**1.2 Level of human resources development.** Although short of natural resources per capital, China has the richest human resources. Within China's total 1.3 billion population, about 0.3 billion of them are students, carrying on the largest scale of human resources development activities. According to a survey at the end of 2005, employed population in China has reached 750 million. The number of years set for education of labors older than 15 is 8.5 years. The percentage for employees who went to college is 7.2%, and 13.4% for high school and 45.8% for junior high school. The ratio for employee distributed in first, second and third industrial is 45:24:31.

## 2. Summary of Education Development

**2.1 Compulsory education.** China has achieved its goal for popularization of 9 year compulsory education at year 2000. At the end of 2006, the coverage for compulsory education is over 98% of the population and the ratio of youth illiterates was controlled to 4% of the population. For the next 15 years we still face the task to strengthen the achievement and further improve the quality. We have to make clear of the responsibility of the government. We should also increase the fund for education and build up the

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Fan Wenyao, who has been the Deputy Director General of National Center for Educational Development and Research since January of 1999, was born in Shanghai in April, 1954.

Upon his graduation from Nankai University in 1982, Prof. Fan was recruited to the Ministry of Education (MOE), where he used to work in different department: the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Postgraduate Education (also known as "the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council"), the MOE's Office for 211 Project (for developing 100 first-class universities a number of key fields of study for the 21<sup>st</sup> century), going through positions from Deputy Director to Director to Assistant Director General. He also served as the Assistant President of the renowned Shanghai Jiaotong University from 1997 to 1998 before coming to the current position in January of 1999.

As one of the main staff, Prof. Fan Wenyao was responsible for the drafting of "2003-2007 Action Plan for Invigorating Education", "Education Development Outline for China in 2020", and chaired the research projects with OECD and HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Committee of England) and several other key national research projects.

Prof. Fan's publications include 8 monographs and more than 30 papers. Currently Prof. Fan is the director member of China's Society of Academic Degrees and Postgraduate Education, Acting Director Member of Higher Education Science Branch of China's Academic Society of Higher Education, Vice Chairman of Beijing Municipal Academic Society of Higher Education. (Prof. Fan can be reached at [wufan@moe.edu.cn](mailto:wufan@moe.edu.cn) or 86-10-66096554)

standard for curriculum development to ensure education quality and balanced compulsory education development.

**2.2 High school education.** The ratio of high school enrollment was around 59% in 2006. Among them, the size of general high school had increased to 25 million people. Number of students in vocational high school approached 18 million. In the next 15 years, high school education faces the tasks of further expansion, deepening reform in instruction, and making great effort in developing mid level technical education. State will achieve the goal to make high school education universal in year 2020.

**2.3 Higher education.** China has more than 1,700 colleges and universities. Federal government directly administers more than 100 of these institutes. The total number of registered students exceeded 25 million in 2006, which is close to double of year 2000 figure. The number of registered students account for 22% of the selected age population. According to available data, 3.66 million students were trained in non-degree programs in year 2006. By focusing on “211 project and 985 project” for higher education, government improved the level and quality of education. Meanwhile, the state constructed career qualification systems beside the degree education system, which promoted the opportunity of employment for college students by encouraging technical school students to gain professional qualification.

**2.4 Teaching skills.** There were 16 million faculties and staffs working in primary schools, high schools and colleges by year 2005. 13 million of them were faculties. 56.4% of primary school teachers have associate degrees. 35.3% of junior high school teachers have college degrees. 82% high school teachers have college degrees. 37% college faculties have master degrees and 10% of them are PhDs. Key universities have over 30% of faculties owned Doctor Degrees. At the end of 80's, government implemented teaching qualification systems to improve teacher's educational level. Currently, large scale training programs are offered to improve teachers' education level and teaching quality. It is also prepared to implement national level teaches qualification test and qualified teachers should renew their certificates every five years.

### **3. Education Management**

**3.1 Construct legal system for education.** The state has passed 7 important laws for education including Education Law, Compulsory Education Law, Vocational Education Law, Higher Education Law, Degree Regulations, Teachers Law, and Law on the Promotion of Private Education. A complete legal system has already set up. However, more works still need to be done in law implementation and supervision and adjustment need to be made to adopt the new circumstances.

**3.2 Education management system.** To education itself, central government takes main responsibility by setting up standard, goals, funding projects and evaluations. Provincial governments arrange education management activities based on each county's or city's condition. Higher education plays an important role in the improvement of national actual capability. Public education institutes are under the governing of both central and provincial authorities and provincial authorities plays a more important role. Provincial government monitors private school. Central government has the rights to set up standard and approval procedures.

**3.3 Education funding.** The official investment for education is around 3% of overall GDP, which is lower than the average international level. Social investment is account for 2%. Families have to bear the heavy burden of education expenses. In terms of non-compulsory education, China framed policy to share responsibility by government, society, and family. In 2004, government educational investment accounted for 50% for high school and 43% for college budgets. However, schools needed more funds and incomes to ensure the quality of education. Low government inputs may affect the equality, justice and quality of education. Central government has made a decision to increase education funds to 4% of the overall GDP in the next few years. To the impoverished area in mid west, federal government subsidizes education and implements financial transferring payment policy.

**3.4 Financial aid policy.** The central government has already provided student loans and need-based financial aids for college education. Universities also have financial aids. This year, student loans and financial aids will expand to high school and career education. In compulsory education stage, government will implement a policy called “two waives and one subsidize”, which waives fees and cost of textbooks and subsidizes living expenses.

**3.5 Development of private schools.** Government encourages the development of private schools for high school education, career education and college education. In the year 2006, there were 590 private colleges that could issue official degrees. Students from these schools account for 15% of the overall registered college students. There were 3,200 private high schools in year 2006, nearly 20% of the total number. Government also allows persons or organizations to make profits in education after necessary costs deducted.

**3.6 Education to the outside world.** In 2006, there were 141,000 international students studying in China, and 134,000 Chinese students studying abroad. Government encourages cooperating in career education and higher education with international organizations. Aside from research projects, government had approved 5 education organizations cooperating with the UK, Germany, Holland and Hong Kong. Meanwhile, government invited foreign experts to participate in the evaluation of education quality. 120 Confucian institutes were built overseas.

## **4. Development Trend of Chinese Higher Education for Future 15 Years**

**4.1 Maintaining appropriate development.** According to the need of knowledge economy and creative country development, Chinese higher education needs to maintain appropriate progress. It is predicted that the population under education system will reach 40 million in year 2020, which is more than 40% of the education age population. Therefore, the average education years may reach 11 years for people of 15 or above which may satisfy basic requirement of social and economic development.

**4.2 Sufficient funding for higher education.** A public funding system needs to be established to ensure the basic need of higher education is met. Higher education institutes should be encouraged to make contribution to the economic and social development and win the social support at the same time. It is advised to better allocate the proportion of education cost to students and perfecting the student financial support system.

**4.3 Deepening the reform in management system of higher education.** The function of authorities in governing higher education needs to be better defined. The companies who serve the higher education institutes and take partial responsibilities should be encouraged and regulated. The supervision and evaluation to higher education institutes should be strengthened. “University Regulation” should be established to ensure the universities to operate within legal frame and self-regulation, and universities internal administration should be improved. Both Public and private higher education institutes should develop at the same time. Higher education institutes should take more responsibilities in local and regional development.

**4.4 Improving the quality of higher education.** Trainings offered to higher education faculty should be strengthened and further improved. Academic leave system should be implemented and faculty education level as well as degree level should be improved. Teaching condition should be improved and scientific research platform should be established to share resources. Major departments and key universities should be strengthened. Quality evaluation system should be perfected. A quality guarantee system should be established which includes government supervision, institutes self-regulation, social evaluation, and correlate institutes performance with funding.

**4.5 Establishment of lifelong learning system of higher education.** Higher education entrance exam system should be reformed. Various formats of continuing education after high school should be provided. A system should be established to facilitate academic credit transfer and acceptance. A communication channel like an “over bridge” should be built to connect general education, vocational education and technical training.

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