

Provincial EFA Review of China 2015



CHENGDU / GANSU / GUIZHOU / HENAN / YUNNAN



Chinese National Commission for UNESCO
Beijing Normal University
UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED)
EFA Working Group in Chengdu/Gansu/Guizhou/Henan/Yunnan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This synthesis report undertakes the stock of China's progress towards achieving the Six Education for All (EFA) goals in Chengdu City, and economically impoverished western provinces of Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan. The report contains four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the socio-economic background of the Chengdu City and the four western provinces. Chapters 2 -3 explain and analyse how achievements were made; identify the shortfalls, remaining challenges and prospects. Chapter 4 concludes the experiences of China as well as those of the four western provinces and Chengdu City in setting policies and implementing strategies of particular interest to the education and development field nationally and provincially and suggests some policy directions for post-2015 era.

While China's policy setting and implementation mechanisms are remarkably unique in many ways, the contextual examination of the process in the report brings to light many lessons learnt for its own reflection as well as for interested readers in China and other countries. The former is increasingly pertinent as China's EFA successes are accompanied by still lingering gaps and needs, many of which involve access to and quality of education for disadvantaged population groups and for rural areas.

China is very close to achieving EFA quantitative targets but the major challenges are inequality, quality and inclusive education. All of these have not come along the way as revealed by the City and Provincial EFA review reports.

While orchestrating the EFA Policy Agenda beyond 2015, China must look beyond counting numbers. Getting children to school alone is not sufficient. What is required is to know and learn: What do we do in the school? What should be our focus on the phenomenon of "silent exclusion"? How we can harmonise the national and the provincial EFA initiatives with the changing demands and expectations of the globalised knowledge society? Mere expansion of the system will not serve the purpose. In the process of developing EFA agenda beyond 2015, China will have to pursue a "Transformative Goal" rather than mere quantitative expansion of the system.

The new development agenda must be based on the people's needs, experiences and aspirations, and informed by the achievements and failures of the past decades. The priorities must be formulated in dialogue with civil society and trade unions, giving an opportunity to education unions to share their experiences and expertise, and shape the education agenda.

That effort requires three primary components. First, Chinese educators and policy makers must ensure that the instructional programme is complete and that the content is not short-changed for an ephemeral pursuit of skills. Second, provinces, cities, municipalities, counties, school districts, and schools need to revamp how they think about human capital in education- in particular how teachers are trained. Finally, China needs new assessments that can accurately measure richer learning and more complex tasks.

The report reiterates that the post-2015 education agenda of China should not focus on counting the numbers. It should be aspirational, transformative and holistic, and an integral part of the broader post-2015 development agenda. It should be of universal relevance and mobilize all stakeholders, particularly the private sector.

The future agenda should be rights-based and reflect a perspective based on equity and inclusion, with particular attention to gender equality and to overcoming all forms of discrimination in and through education, ensuring that no one is left behind. It must support free and compulsory basic education.

It should expand the vision of access for all to reflect relevant learning outcomes through the provision of quality education at all levels in safe and healthy environments. It should take a holistic and lifelong learning approach, and provide multiple pathways of learning by integrating all key reforms in curriculum, teacher expertise and students' learning assessment using innovative methods and information and communication technologies. Efforts to create more formalized common standards would help address some of the challenges by focusing efforts in a common direction. But common standards will not, by themselves, be enough.

The future EFA agenda should provide a common approach to monitoring national goals, while offering the flexibility to respond to aspirations of Chinese people. Therefore, in addition to national benchmarks and indicators, the agenda will also include provisions for target setting and indicator development at the provincial level that reflect specific priorities and contexts.

The report concludes and asserts that the past few decades have seen great progress in education reform in the People's Republic of China—progress that has especially benefited students in these four western provinces and Chengdu City. Today's reformers and educators of China can build on that progress only if they pay keen attention to the challenges associated with genuinely improving teaching and learning. If the Chinese policy makers and leaders ignore these challenges, the 21st century skills movement risks becoming another fad that will ultimately change little—or even worse, will set back the cause of creating dramatically more powerful schools for Chinese, especially those who are underserved today.

Drawing inspiration from China's achievements and lessons learnt in EFA, innovative and well-managed use of ICT for learning can herald the transition of Education for All into a brand new era of Learning for All, when all Chinese can truly learn anything at any time and in any place.

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Chapter I

Socio-Economic Background

Introduction



The 2015 deadline for the achievement of the EFA goals focuses the attention of the People's Republic of China on what progress has been achieved, how it has been achieved, what remains to be done, and what lessons can be learnt from the efforts made since EFA Dakar International

Conference 15 years ago. Assessments of this kind will inform the proposed new set of post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals with a likely horizon of 2030.

In this spirit, Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan, and Yunnan undertook an EFA progress review in 2014 to assess their own progress towards the EFA goals, to draw lessons from their experience, and to consider the nature and scale of the educational challenges they will continue to face in the future. This Synthesis Report thus examines and compares progress in EFA in these five provinces, presents a selection of successful strategies, and discusses the major challenges for the future. The Synthesis Report is based on the five exhaustive reviews of EFA progress undertaken by the municipality and the provincial governments as shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Location of Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan Provinces



Source: <http://dl.vmall.com/c0v1bhyht0>, Chengdu Education: Toward Equity and Quality (EFA Monitoring Report 2000-2015).

Separate EFA progress reviews, prepared under the same terms of reference, present an overview of the development of EFA and assess the role and impact on progress towards EFA, with a set of key questions on shaping the future of EFA in these four provinces and Chengdu City.

The regional EFA review reports present data on all the key indicators to assess progress towards the six EFA goals, with much sub-regional data that could not be included in this concise Synthesis Report. In addition, the reviews contain many tables and graphs which render the information easily accessible and informative. All the reviews are frank about the remaining challenges, recognising contextual and circumstantial factors in the broader development of four provinces and Chengdu City under consideration.

In this Synthesis Report, the data cited in the narrative text on the progress and examples in each four provinces and Chengdu City are taken from the corresponding EFA review reports, unless otherwise indicated. Other data sources are shown where necessary. In some cases, the municipality and provincial governments supplied updated data specifically for this Synthesis Report as part of their feedback on the draft version – these data have been inserted as representing the most recent, nationally validated data. Where there are large discrepancies between sources, they are signalled under discussion of the relevant EFA goal.

While assessing the EFA progress in these provinces, it should be borne in mind that China is a vast and diverse country, so the context of pursuing the EFA goals manifests different parameters in each province. Additionally, the regional and sub-regional contexts have changed since Dakar EFA 2000 International Conference, as have the dynamics of national economic development. Since 2000, the provinces focused on the common features of their high population and the large numbers of out-of-school children and adult non-literates within their borders.

This Synthesis Report is presented not in the spirit of comparison, but of rich regional experience with respect to progress made in terms of achievement of EFA goals. The common factor is that all four provinces and Chengdu City are fully committed to meeting the

six EFA goals, and the progress made is a function of the particular measures taken in each, very different context. Readers are cautioned that in view of the great diversity among administrative provinces of China and in the light of the different data sources, a direct comparison among them is not appropriate.

Demographic and Economic Background

With a population of over 1.35 billion in 2010 and with an estimated average annual growth rate of 0.61% (1.27 billion in 2000), the People's Republic of China is very concerned about its population growth and its regional distribution. The Government has attempted with mixed results to implement a strict family planning policy. The Government's goal is to stabilize the population and population growth early in the 21st century, although some current projections estimate a population of anywhere ranging from 1.4 billion to 1.6 billion by 2025 (UN Population Division – Population Estimates). Table 1.1 compares the size of population and its average annual growth rate with the national population. Multi-regional assessments require regionally detailed scenarios. A key component of such scenarios is the evolution of the population in the different regions.

Table 1.1: Population in the City/Provinces (2000 & 2010)

City/Province	Population (Million)	
	2000	2010
Chengdu City	10.13	11.49
Gansu	25.12	25.58
Guizhou	35.25	34.75
Henan	92.56	94.02
Yunnan	42.88	45.97
CHINA	1,242.61	1,370.54

Source: 2000 and 2010 National census, National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China.

China is a growing economy, with growth rates averaging 10% over the past 30 years (Table 1.2). It is now a global hub for manufacturing and second largest importer of goods.

Table 1.2: GDP: China (2014)

GDP (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US \$ 10.355 trillion (nominal; 2014 estimated). • US \$ 17.632 trillion (PPP; 2014 estimated).
GDP rank (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd (nominal) and 1st (Purchasing Power Parity 2014).
GDP growth rate (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.5% (nominal; 2013), 7.4% (real; 2014).
GDP per capita (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US \$ 7,647 (nominal - 2014). • US \$ 12,965 (PPP - 2014).
GDP by sector (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture: 9.2%, • Industry: 42.6%, • Services: 48.2% (2014)

Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But these national averages hide striking regional disparities (See Table 1.3). Thus given the size and the regional diversity of China, any sensible analysis must

consider the regional differences in climate, soil and water resource endowments, population density, and social and economic development.

Table 1.3: GDP in 2000-2014 and Growth Rate (%)

City/Province	GDP		GDP Per Capita		Growth Rates	
	(Billion Yuan)				(2000-2013)	
					(%)	
	2000	2013	2000	2013	GDP	GDP per capita
Chengdu City	115.7	910.9	11,415.5	76,674.8	6.87	5.72
Gansu	1,052.88	6,300	4,129	16,113	4.98	2.90
Guizhou*	103	680.22	2,759	13,119	5.60	3.75
Henan	513,766	3,215.6	5,414.9	2,301.9	5.26	-0.57
Yunnan	201,119	1,172.09	4,769	26,158	4.83	4.49
CHINA	9,921.46	56,884.52	7,858	41,907.59	4.73	4.33

*Data of Guizhou province are 2012.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China, 2000, 2014, Chengdu Bureau of Statistics 2000.

Chengdu City

Chengdu is the provincial capital of Sichuan province in Southwest China, as well as a major city in Western China. It has a total area of 12121.3 km², which covers nine districts, four cities and six counties under its direct administrative jurisdiction. It holds sub-provincial administrative status.

According to the 2010 census, Chengdu is the fifth most populous city in China. In recent years, with the accelerating urbanization in Chengdu, the city has witnessed noticeable demographic changes. According to the 2010 Chengdu Statistics, Chengdu's resident population increased from 11.0 million in 2000 to 14.0 million in 2010 – an average annual growth rate of 2.44%. In 2010, the population living in urban areas accounted for 44.6% of the total while the population living in counties (county-level cities) accounted for 53.4%. Compared with 2000, the proportion of urban population increased by 8.8 percentage points during the period under consideration. Demographic changes had a great impact on the size of school-age population and its distribution between urban and rural areas.

As far as Chengdu's economy is concerned, Chengdu City is one of the most important economic, finance, commerce, culture, transportation, and communication centers in Western China. Chengdu was chosen as one of the top ten cities to invest in out of a total of 280 urban centers in China. Its GDP and GDP per capita in 2014 accounted for Yuan 1.0 trillion (US \$ 163.7 billion) and Yuan 71,590 (US \$ 11,650) respectively.

According to the Report published by the State Information Center in 2010 (Li Yining), Chengdu has become an "engine" of the Western Development programme, a benchmark city for investment environment in inland China, and a major leader in new urbanization.

The main industries in Chengdu-including machinery, automobile, medicine, food, and information technology-are supported by numerous large-scale enterprises. In addition, an increasing number of high-tech enterprises from outside Chengdu have also settled down there.

Gansu

Gansu, a province of China, is located in the northwest of the country. It lies between the Tibetan and Huangtu plateaus, and borders Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia to the north, Xinjiang and Qinghai to the west, Sichuan to the south, and Shaanxi to the east. The Yellow River passes through the southern part of the province. The province covers an area of 425,800 km². The capital is Lanzhou, located in the southeast part of the province. Gansu is divided into fourteen prefecture-level divisions: twelve prefecture-level cities and two autonomous prefectures.

The total population of Gansu increased from 25.1 million in 2000 to 25.6 million in 2010 – at an average annual growth rate of 0.01%. Most of the population (73%) is rural and consists of 92% Han. The south - western corner of Gansu is home to a large ethnic Tibetan population.

Most of Gansu's economy is based on mining and the extraction of minerals, especially rare earth elements. The province has significant deposits of strategic importance such as antimony, chromium, coal, cobalt, copper, fluorite, gypsum, iron, lead, limestone, mercury, nickel, crude oil, platinum, tungsten, and zinc among others.

Despite recent growth in Gansu and the booming economy in the rest of China, Gansu is still considered to be one of the poorest provinces in China. Its nominal GDP for 2011 was about Yuan 502.0 billion (US \$ 79.69 billion) and per capita income of Yuan 12,836 (US \$ 1,879).

As stipulated in the country's 12th Five Year Plan, the local government of Gansu hopes to grow the provinces GDP by 10% annually by focusing investments on five pillar industries: renewable energy, coal, chemicals, nonferrous metals, pharmaceuticals and services.

Guizhou

Guizhou adjoins Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality to the north, Yunnan Province to the west, Guangxi Province to the south and Hunan Province to the east. Overall, Guizhou is a mountainous province. The province covers an area of over 176,167 km² and

has population of 34.8 million in 2010 as compared to 35.3 million in 2000. Most rural areas of Guizhou are drought-prone areas.

Guiyang is the capital city of the province. Guizhou is divided into nine prefecture-level divisions: six prefecture-level cities and three autonomous prefectures.

Guizhou is a relatively poor and economically undeveloped province, but rich in natural, cultural and environmental resources. Its nominal GDP for 2012 was Yuan 680.22 billion (US \$ 107.8 billion). Its GDP per capita of Yuan 19,566 (US \$ 3,100) ranks last in all of the People's Republic of China.

Its natural industry includes timber and forestry. Guizhou is also the third largest producer of tobacco in China, and home to the well-known brand Guizhou Tobacco. Other important industries in the province include energy (electricity generation).

Guizhou abounds in mineral resources, such as mercury, phosphate, aluminium, coal, iron, antimony, lead, zinc and other rare metals. It has the largest mercury deposits in the nation. Its main grain crops are rice and corn. Such cash crops as flue cured tobacco; rapeseed, tea and hemp are also grown in Guizhou. Guizhou abounds in timber resources and is China's leading grower of China fir.

Henan

Henan province of the People's Republic of China is located in the central part of the country. Approximately a quarter of the province lies north of the Yellow River.

With an area of 167,000 km², Henan covers a large part of the fertile and densely populated North China Plain. Its neighbouring provinces are Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, and Hubei. Henan is China's third most populous province with a population of over 94 million in 2010 as compared to 91.2 million in 2000 – an average annual increase of 0.3%. The population is highly homogeneous with 98.8% of the population being Han. Small populations of Mongols and Manchus exist in scattered rural communities as well as in major urban centres.

Henan has seen rapid development in its economy over the past two decades. Its economy has expanded at an even faster rate than the national average of 10%. This rapid growth has transformed Henan from one of the poorest provinces to one that matches other central provinces, though still relatively impoverished on a national scale. In 2011, Henan's nominal GDP was Yuan 3.20 trillion (US\$427 billion), making it the fifth largest economy in China, although it ranks nineteenth in terms of GDP per capita (Yuan 37,130 equivalent to US\$ 6,044 in 2010).

Henan is a semi-industrialized economy with an underdeveloped service sector. In 2009, Henan's primary, secondary, and tertiary industries were worth Yuan 277 billion, Yuan 1.1 trillion and Yuan 563 billion respectively. Agriculture has traditionally been a pillar of its economy, with the nation's highest wheat and sesame output and second highest rice output, earning its reputation as the breadbasket of China. Henan is also an important producer of beef, cotton, maize, pork, animal oil, and corn.

Yunnan

Yunnan is the most south-western province in China, with the Tropic of Cancer running through its southern part. The province has an area of 394,100 km², 4.1% of the nation's total. The northern part of the province forms part of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. The province borders Guangxi and Guizhou in the east, Sichuan in the north, and the Tibet Autonomous Region in the north-west. It shares a border of 4,060 kilometres with Myanmar in the west, Laos in the south and Vietnam in the south-east. The capital of the province is Kunming. Of 16 prefecture-level divisions, Yunnan has 129 county-level divisions, and 1,455 township-level divisions.

The population of the Yunnan Province increased from 42.4 million in 2000 to 46.0 million in 2010 – an average annual growth rate of 0.8%. Most of the population lives in the eastern part of the province. Yunnan is noted for a very high level of ethnic diversity. It has the second highest number of ethnic groups among the provinces and autonomous regions in China. Some 38% of the province's population are members of minorities.

Yunnan is one of China's relatively undeveloped provinces with more poverty-stricken counties than the other provinces. In 1994, about 7 million people lived below the poverty line of less than an annual average per capita income of Yuan 300. With the current GDP (2013) of the order of Yuan 1.72 trillion and GNP per capita of Yuan 25,500, the absolutely poor rural population in the province has been reduced from 4.05 million in 2000 to 2.86 million in 2013.

The poverty alleviation plan of the province includes five large projects aimed at improving infrastructure facilities. They involve planned attempts at soil improvement, water conservation, electric power, roads, and "green belt" building. Upon the completion of the projects, the province hopes this will alleviate the shortages of grain, water, electric power and roads.

Impact of Population Growth

The tremendous size of population and the population growth in these provinces coupled with complex and diverse natural conditions have produced an uneven distribution of population. Population density varies strikingly, with the greatest contrast occurring between the eastern half of China and the lands of the west and the northwest. The isolated, extensive western region, which is much larger than any European country, is sparsely populated.

Almost all the provinces have experienced dramatic declines in birth and death rates with the implementation of the government revolutionary policies to improve health and slow population growth. Fewer children, later marriage, and longer life expectancy have affected family structures and created new challenges.

The growing proportion of elderly is beginning to strain both provincial and family resources. Lower fertility means that fewer children-and sometimes only one child-will be available to care for elderly family members. Movement toward a market economy and opening to international trade in the 1990s has brought enormous economic growth, but it has also increased income and health inequalities, encouraged mass labour migration, and exacerbated environmental damage in these provinces.

With the huge size of school age children in these provinces, obviously more teachers are needed to teach the increasing number of children. This has placed a strain on an already constrained public spending on education. Many teachers are moving to different professions for the monetary increase, while those who stay are overburdened with the ever-increasing number of students. These problems are becoming more pronounced when dealing with students who have to stay after school and come in early due to parental work obligations.

All school buildings are built with a specific number of occupants in mind. In schools that are experiencing an increase of population, this number is exceeding. This has caused serious overcrowding which is causing negative feelings among the students. This means the district needs to build more and bigger schools. This costs money that most school districts do not have, resulting in having to take out loans and the community having to assist in the building of a new school or extension of student-places in existing schools.



Negative attitudes about schooling can carry on through a student's life, resulting in a lower chance for that student to attend college or other extended education. This lowers the earning potential of the student, resulting in a possible poverty situation. Correcting the issues of population growth in the educational system is necessary to prevent dropouts and to encourage continued learning.

As far as the impact of population on economic development in these provinces is concerned, the economic reforms started in the late 1970s have unleashed a tidal wave of both rural-to-urban and west-to-east migration. This has further exacerbated

the country's uneven population distribution, bringing enormous influxes to the urban areas of the eastern provinces and further depleting the population in the western regions.

In short, the economies of these provinces have been in a state of transition since the late 1970s. Agriculture has been de-collectivized, the non-agricultural private sector has grown rapidly, and provincial governments' priorities have shifted toward light and high technology, rather

than heavy, industries. Nevertheless, key bottlenecks have continued to constrain growth in these provinces. These include insufficient availability of energy, inadequate transport system, and shortage of skilled workers. The labour force and the pricing system are still areas of concern. Underemployment is common in both urban and rural areas, and there is a strong fear of the disruptive effects that widespread unemployment could cause.

Development of Basic Education

China's basic education involves pre-school, nine-year compulsory education from elementary to junior high school, general senior high school education, and special education for disabled children, and education for illiterate people.

China has over 200 million elementary and high school students, who, together with pre-school children, account for one sixth of the total population. For this reason the Central Government has prioritized basic education as a key field of infrastructure construction and educational development.

The government has established a special fund to improve conditions in China's elementary and high schools, for new construction, expansion and the re-building of run-down structures. Per-capita educational expenditure for elementary and high school students has grown greatly, teaching and research equipment, books and documents being updated and renewed every year.

Government's aim for the development of China's basic education system is to approach or attain the level of moderately developed countries by 2010.

China has made steady and laudable progress towards achieving Education for All goals, but some regions and sub-regions are still lagging behind. According to the recently published five EFA Progress Reports of Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan, the EFA goals are not likely to be achieved by 2015 in these provinces.



Global figures, though indicative of substantial progress, tend to mask disparities in basic education development, with notable imbalances in the availability of educational services between the economically advanced and underdeveloped regions. Generally, urban and coast areas have achieved the goal of nine-year basic education, but many poor, sparsely-populated and remote areas of these four provinces and Chengdu City have not achieved primary education targets. Schooling in poor counties of these provinces is marked by poor attendance and high repetition and dropout rates. Regional disparities are even more conspicuous in completion rates, i.e., proportion of children entering first grade who eventually graduate from primary school. Among the deprived sections of the population, minorities and girls and women continue to be more disadvantaged. Facilities for basic education are equally available for both boys and girls, yet there is a significantly lower level of utilization for facilities by girls. Since the mid-1980s, China has made substantial

progress in the reform of the financing of education. However, China spends less than 3 percent of GDP on education, meaning that it is trying to educate one quarter of the world's students with one percent of the world's education budget. In compulsory education the challenges are substantial; i.e., the financial difficulties of poor and rural areas as well as the large and widening disparities in per-student spending across areas.

China demonstrates the power of education, yet the available evidence suggests that for education to have its full impact on the Chinese population, it has to be delivered with equity. Access to education is unequally distributed within the provinces of China. If China were to have a similar distribution of education in these four provinces and Chengdu City as other provinces, it has to accord a special priority for the provision of quality education in these provinces.

Bringing more children in schools in these provinces is not enough. These provinces are facing a “learning crisis” where the quality of education is low and students’ learning achievements are dismal. The disadvantaged populations are most likely to be affected because of the lack of trained teachers, inappropriate infrastructure and insufficient teaching and learning materials.

How can the provincial governments overcome the learning crisis in these provinces? The 2013/2014 EFA Global Monitoring Report (EFA/GMR) focuses on teaching and learning, which are keys to quality education. Since the quality of an education system is only as good as the quality of its teachers, ensuring a good teaching force that is supported by well-managed education systems, is one of the keys to solving the learning crisis in these provinces. However, the teacher shortage is a persisting challenge. The teacher shortage is only one of the many challenges education systems in these provinces face. Uneven distribution of teachers, lack of incentives to attract and retain the best teachers, and dysfunctional governance systems are some of the issues that compromise the quality of education.

The evidence laid out by the five provincial EFA Review reports also demonstrates that the learning crisis will have a lasting negative impact on generations to come. Thus, education should be centrally and provincially secured in the post-2015 development framework and the policy-makers need to commit to taking urgent actions to make quality education a priority especially for these underprivileged and deprived provinces.

These and some more challenges facing the provinces have been discussed in more details in Chapter 2 which presents a brief account of the achievements of Six EFA Dakar goals in these provinces.

Chapter II

The Dakar Goals: Monitoring Progress

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of progress made by Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan provinces toward the six EFA goals. The chapter builds

on the five EFA reports on the findings of the regional EFA assessment (2014-2015), which examined EFA progress and gaps at the end of 2014.

Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

While assessing the progress of ECCE in these provinces, it is important to keep in mind that pre-school education programmes in China are very diverse. Some amount too little more than baby-sitting, while others are university-run programmes with high-quality curricula and trained teachers. Some are very resource rich, while others have very limited resources. Staff qualifications and their beliefs about pre-school education are also highly diverse.

Chengdu City

Chengdu has set its goals to develop pre-school education in line with the National Education Plan. The city aims to coordinate rural-urban pre-school education, build pre-school public service system with a reasonable layout and a complete coverage, reshape the rural-

urban kindergartens towards attaining the prescribed standards, popularize non-profit pre-school education, and enhance the quality of care and education in kindergartens.

In 2013, there were 1,874 kindergartens in Chengdu, among which 9.29% were sponsored by the relevant government departments.

Since 2000, the enrolment of young children of 3-5 years old has been increasing. It stood at 98.47% of the relevant age group in 2013 – 14.17% higher than that of 2000, attaining in advance the target prescribed in the Twelfth Five-year Education Development Plan of Chengdu and getting closer to the final goal of 100%.

Gansu

Gansu has established a new kindergarten network system. The network assigns a dominant role to be played by public kindergartens by transforming the existing kindergartens into models of excellence at par with international standards, and the rural kindergartens as the basis of ECCE supplemented by the private kindergartens. Classes for early childhood education rose from 15,342 in 2004 to 20,309 in 2013 and enrolment from 350,749 in 2004 to 549,800 in 2013. The gross enrolment ratio in ECCE now stands at 98%. Overall, enrolment of girls in kindergartens rose gradually.

Gansu adopted various measures to carry out teacher training to improve pre-school teachers' quality. Nearly 521 kindergarten heads participated in the in-service training programmes and more than 3,000 teachers in distance training on the Internet.

To promote the development of pre-school education and realize the EFA goal, Gansu has drafted its Five-year Development Plan for Pre-school Education (2011-2015), which puts forward the objectives of building and expanding another 2,000 kindergartens by 2015.

Guizhou

Guizhou has been fostering two types of pre-school education: 3-year pre-school class and 1-year pre-school class. The prime focus here is to target children mainly from rural areas.

In rural Guizhou parents are often ambitious for their children to do well in life. What often lets them down, right from the start, are the out-dated and ineffective teaching methods used in pre-school education. This is due to a lack of knowledge amongst staff about teaching methods that are both appropriate and constructive for children of this age.

Since 2000, Guizhou has been facing critical challenges to implement reforms in teaching-learning methods. Pre-school education in the rural areas often simply replicates the kind of primary education given to older children. This, in addition to high pupil-teacher ratios, often means that very young children are often receiving schooling that is unsuited to them.

Henan

Henan has been practicing diverse methods for the provision of pre-school education facilities in the province since 2000. There were 14,485 Kindergartens with a total enrolment of 34.4 million pupils in 2013.

Henan has a huge pre-school age population. Teachers, however, are scarce at this level of education thus resulting in relatively high pupil-teacher ratios and overcrowded classes, especially in rural areas.

Yunnan

Private pre-schools, play a key role in maintaining sustainable growth of pre-school education in the province. They shared 58.1% of pre-school enrolment in 2012.

Since the implementation of the provincial "Preschool Education 3-Year Action Plan of Yunnan Province (2011-2013)", several reforms have been introduced in the system for easing the access of children at this level of education. During the period 2011-2013, the province received Yuan 2.879 billion from Central Government's special fund and provincial government for the construction of 287 kindergartens.

Summary

In urban areas of these four provinces and Chengdu City, pre-school education is mainly kindergartens of 1-3 years, which could be full-time, part-time, boarding or hour-reckoned. In rural areas, pre-school education is mainly nursery classes and seasonal kindergartens in addition. In minority, remote and poor areas, besides the normal pre-school education, there is irregular education with various forms such as children activity centres, game groups, etc.

Following each provincial policy of providing pre-school education, all four provinces and Chengdu City have made noticeable progress. Pre-school education has been almost universalized in big and middle-sized cities. However, rural, hard-to-reach and disadvantaged areas are still lagging far behind in realizing this goal. In some cases, disparities between boys and girls in enrolments continue to persist.

A salient feature of ECCE is that kindergartens combine childcare with teaching as a means for developing physical, moral, intellectual and aesthetical qualities in children so as to prepare them for their formal schooling. The educational activities conducted in kindergartens constitute a systematic, purposeful and multi-faceted process of education conducive to lively, invigorating and sound development of children.

To enhance the management and guidance of kindergartens, all five provincial Departments of

Education have formulated their own regulations in line with the national “Regulations on the Management of Kindergartens” and the “Regulation of Kindergarten Work” placing the management of kindergartens on scientifically sound and institutionalised basis. Each province also formulated its own assessment mechanism of performance. The normal schools for the training of kindergarten teachers have made noticeable strides and the training of pre-school teachers at considerable scale has taken shape in each province.

Goal 2: Universal Primary Education

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

In China, over 80 per cent of primary schools and 64 per cent of lower secondary schools are in rural areas. The poor are concentrated in rural areas because of the gap between rural and urban development. The Government focused on universalizing nine-year compulsory education to eliminate illiteracy among

youth and adults and to upgrade the rural population’s quality of life. These trends are well pronounced in these four provinces and Chengdu City under consideration.

Table 2.1 highlights net enrolment ratios (NER) at Primary education between 2002, 2010 and 2013.

Table 2.1 Net enrolment ratios (NER) at Primary education between 2002, 2010 and 2013

Region	2002		2010		2013	
	NER(%)	NER(%) Girls	NER(%)	NER(%) Girls	NER(%)	NER(%) Girls
Chengdu City	100	100	99.97	100	100	100
Gansu	98.55	98.42	99.46	99.37	95.75	95.74
Guizhou	98.22	97.88	97.89	98.64	99.29	99.79
Henan	99.87	99.87	99.94	99.94	99.87	99.88
Yunnan	99.58	99.6	99.71	99.71	99.57	99.46
CHINA	98.6	98.53	99.7	99.73	99.71	99.72

Source: <http://www.edu.cn>, Statistics of NER by province 2002 Jan 10, 2010; <http://www.moe.edu.cn>, Educational Statistics of 2013; Chengdu Educational Statistics 2000, 2013.

Chengdu City

In 2013, there were 513 primary schools in Chengdu with a total enrolment of 707,000 pupils. More than 95.0 per cent are public schools, 4.6 per cent private schools and the remaining 0.4 per cent schools are sponsored by other sectors. In addition, the city also has 373 junior high schools of which 79.62 per cent are public schools with a total enrolment of 385,542 students. The participation of girls at both levels of education is at par with boys. Repetition and dropout rates are almost negligible. The government earmarked Yuan 10.07 billion in 2010 representing 11.3% of its total budget for this level of education.

Chengdu City has made various efforts in allocating public funding and for organizing teacher training and their professional development for the provision of quality education. A monitoring committee was set up to oversee and ensure the implementation of 9-year compulsory education. Details about the school year, enrolment plan and procedures are open to the public. Students' transfer from one school to another adheres strictly to the household registration policy. The school management is transparent to the public and the community participation is encouraged for ensuring the equality of education. Measures such as these have facilitated the healthy development of Chengdu's compulsory education.

In 2013, the Department of Education enforced a regulation for the provision of free textbooks and notebooks in public primary schools in urban areas and to those private schools. Furthermore, students from disadvantaged family backgrounds attending boarding schools also receive government subsidies.

The government accords top priority to the e-management of primary and middle school students' records; optimization of certificate system for compulsory education; the establishment of a absentees' report system; and the prevention of students from leaving schools prematurely.

Gansu

Since 2000, Gansu implemented a series of measures (Gansu Basic Education Joint Project - World Bank, EU and DFID) for the promotion of sustainable development of 9-year compulsory education. As a result the

province achieved the goal of universalization of 9-year compulsory education in 2010. Retention rates were 90% and 96% in 2009 respectively.

Almost all teachers are qualified teachers. Gansu carried out several large-scale teacher training projects for improving teachers' quality and professional standards. By 2013, more than 130,000 rural teachers participated in various teacher training programmes.

Special education is an indispensable part of compulsory education of Gansu. By the end of 2013, there were 260 classes with total enrolment of 8,936 children and 692 full-time teachers.

The Gansu Basic Education Joint Project has supported the current steps of the provincial administration to upgrade the teaching skills to raise the overall quality of education and school facilities in Gansu. The impact of the project has been dramatic. Nearly 103,550 scholarships distributed over the duration of the project to poor pupils, girls and pupils from minority groups and the poorest counties; 90,000 new and existing teachers trained in rural areas; 686 Teacher Learning Resource Centres built and equipped with computers and Internet facilities providing an effective means towards teachers' self-development.

Guizhou

Guizhou attained the goal of universal 9-year compulsory education as early as in 2000. However, some disparities still continue to prevail among and between counties of this province. Girls' net enrolment ratio (99.8%) is at par with boys. The dropout rate for girls in junior high schools is much lower (2.8%) than boys (3.5%). By the end of 2013, the combined gross enrolment rates of primary and secondary schools in the province reached a record of 99% and 100.5% respectively. In 2012, Guizhou allocated national and provincial capital of Yuan 1.38 billion and completed 930,000m² student dormitory area particularly for migrant children.

In September of 2012, the "Chunlei Girl Scholarship Programme Sponsored by Sinopec" was launched in Guizhou. It supported 7,500 girl students of grades 4-6 of primary schools in 9 counties.

In 2003, government of Guizhou started implementing its programme for the exemption of tuition and textbook fees for rural poor students and subsidies for poor boarding students.

A significant feature of 9-year compulsory education of Guizhou is its enrolment in Grade I of primary education which comprised 84% new entrants having completed pre-school education in 2012. Likewise the rate of transition from primary to secondary level education is 96% reflecting a continuity of students to further education.

Henan

The goals of universal primary and junior secondary school education were achieved in Henan as early as 1990 and 1999 respectively. The net enrolment ratio and graduation rate (or completion rate) reached 100% in 2000.

Despite a net enrolment of 100% in the 9-year compulsory education, low attendance rates in primary and secondary levels of education remain a matter of serious concern for the policy makers. So is the case with dropout rates in rural schools are as high as 14%. This clearly demonstrates inadequate provision of schooling facilities as well as the low quality education in rural areas of the province.

In urban schools, the problem of overcrowded classes remains a serious threat to the provision of quality education. The abnormal class size not only affects adversely the teaching-learning quality and interaction but also the workload of teachers. There are many factors leading to the big-class. The main factors responsible for this are the increasing of migrant workers in the city and towns and the improper distribution of classes in the primary and secondary schools.

Henan Department of Education has accomplished a number of improvements in rural education, including standardising rural school policies and benchmarks, implementing a remote education project, implementing a plan for special positions for rural teachers, establishing a subsidy system for rural teachers and implementing an innovative rural school feeding and dining room programme. A significant and persistent gap exists between the performance among urban and rural students in Henan. Rural students perform more

poorly during their early years of education and the gap increases as they progress.

To address this problem, the Central Government has been investing heavily in the National Rural Teacher Training Programme (NRTTP). Between 2010 and 2013, the Central Government spent US \$ 700 million, of which Henan received US \$ 68 million. The provincial authorities invested more than US \$ 90 million during this period. More than 380,000 teachers have received either short-term (10-15 days) or long-term (90 days) training.

Yunnan

Like other western provinces, Yunnan also realised the goal of universal 9-year compulsory education as early as 2000. However, the dropout rates particularly in rural schools are increasing. The number of primary school graduates entering lower secondary school education is declining in recent years.

The provincial government has put in place a very stringent mechanism to control dropout rates and transition from primary to lower secondary level education. The critical measures, among others, include enactment of local rules and regulations, financial penalties for parents who fail to send their children to school; funding for impoverished students, etc.

The Provincial Plan of Education accords priority for the improvement and consolidation of 9-year compulsory education, plan implementation strategies, administrative and financial management, improvement in both efficiency and quality, reduction in gender disparities and systematic monitoring of learning achievement.

Summary

Overall, all the four provinces and Chengdu City have made remarkable progress in achieving, maintaining and sustaining the achievements of the past. Economic growth has enabled the governments to increase investments in education. The provinces compare favourably with national education indicators, but reaching the last five per cent of the school-age population has been the most difficult and costly task. The high average enrolment ratios masked inequality in access and quality, particularly among girls and ethnic minorities in rural areas of these provinces.

The challenge is to attack the root causes of these inequalities and to allow all of the population to take

advantage of the economic and social opportunities increasingly present in modern China.

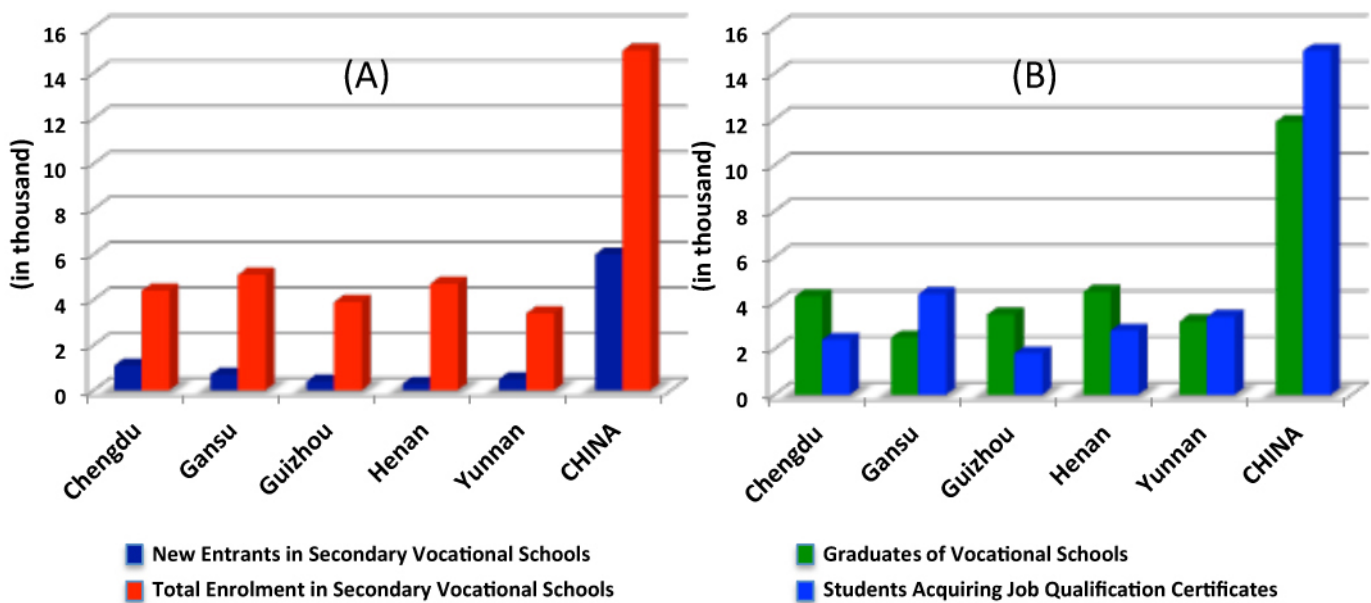
Goal 3: Skills for Youth and Adults

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.



The framework of EFA Goal 3 emphasizes the crucial importance of foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy, which are essential for meeting daily needs, succeeding in the world of work and acquiring transferable skills and technical and vocational skills. While there are other pathways young people can take to acquire foundation skills, the most effective is lower secondary schooling. Figures 2.1 A and B show enrolment and graduates of secondary vocational education.

Figure 2.1: Enrolment and Graduates in Secondary Vocational Education



Source: EFA Monitoring Report 2014 (Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan, Yunnan).

Chengdu City

Chengdu's efforts in developing vocational education and providing systematic and diverse training to new workforce enhanced competence of the labour force and better social and economic development.

In 2013, Chengdu City had 211 high schools (including general high schools and secondary vocational schools), enrolling 446,600 students. There were 86 schools for secondary vocational education. The province also provides 3-year free secondary vocational education for students in the Tibetan-inhabited areas.

Skill training schools have been set up in the countryside and a training network linking counties, county-level cities and villages has taken shape. In 2013, Chengdu had 116 such training schools in the countryside with 1007 classes and provided training to about 100,000 registered farmers. By 2013, nearly 126,000 farmers have graduated from these schools and the schools have become the major providers of skill training in rural areas.

Within the framework of "Measures on Secondary Vocational Education Vouchers", Chengdu spent Yuan 84.5 million in 2011.

Gansu

In Gansu province in 2010, there were 40 colleges, 21 vocational technical colleges, 131 technical secondary schools, 78 technician training schools, 9 adult higher education schools, 452 senior middle schools, one adult high school, 30 technical secondary schools for adults and 109 vocational high schools.

For improving the quality of teachers of vocational education, Gansu has set up several teacher training centres, introduced teachers' professional development courses and carried out various forms of training.

Guizhou

In 2010, Guizhou completed 19 higher vocational colleges, and established 10 ordinary universities offering vocational education. The number of higher vocational education students reached 130,000; there were 313 secondary vocational schools, and

the number of students reached 422,000; there were 11, 800 vocational training institutions, with an annual output of more than 200 people in skill training.

For financing the vocational education and training, the provincial government has set up a special fund. The fund is meant primarily to (i) construct a county vocational education centre; (ii) establish a vocational education and training base; (iii) construct exemplary vocational colleges; and (iv) improve teachers' quality in vocational colleges. The financial contributions of the central and provincial governments were Yuan 500 million and 930 million respectively.

During the "12th Five-Year Plan" period, Guizhou's prime goals are to promote and develop vocational college parks; reforms to introduce innovative strategy of Enterprise School Cooperation; and build and strengthen cooperation with private entrepreneurs.

Henan

The development of vocational education in Henan started in earnest in 2008 when several measures were taken by the Government to streamline the provincial network of vocational education. As a result the enrolment in vocational education increased remarkably from 2.0 million in 2008 to 2.6 million in 2011.

In addition to develop vocational secondary education, the Education Department started one-year vocational training programme for the graduates of junior secondary schools for skills development for the world of work.

Yunnan

The Reform and Development Planning Outline of Yunnan (2010-2020) strives to attain high quality standards for vocational education and training for meeting the dual objectives of the needs of its industrial sector and for realizing employment of graduates of vocational education.

In 2013, Yunnan had a total of 10,465 vocational education and technical training institutes, of which – 22 were secondary vocational technical training schools (institutions), 10,276 rural adult culture and technology training schools (institutions), and 167 other training

institutions (including social training institutions). Total enrolment accounted for 4.3 million students whereas 3,940 full-time teachers were deployed by the system during the same year.

In 2008, Yunnan implemented the vocational education rejuvenation action plan for rural children in poor areas which do not have vocational education opportunities.

Summary

All four provinces and Chengdu City offer a wide range of vocational and technical education for both youth and adults. The most popular courses at secondary level are manufacturing, information technology, retail and hospitality, and civil engineering. In addition, courses have also been developed to offer training to rural-to-urban migrants in non-agricultural skills.

The TVET systems of these provinces have obvious strengths, including a large number of excellent schools that are able to adjust to new demands. Moreover, a large proportion of the teachers and trainers in these provinces have shown themselves to be capable of

preparing growing number of students for a role in pulling off the “economic miracle” and in keeping it going.

There are also severe weaknesses, raising concerns about the TVET system’s ability to produce an increasing number of competent and highly skilled workers year after year. The question is whether to expand the system by continuing to do “more of the same”; or whether the time is ripe for systemic change.

There is a perceived poor quality of the TVET system. Most graduates are unable to find jobs or to matriculate from secondary-level technical and vocational to post-secondary education. A weak relationship exists between TVET programmes and labour market demand. Coordination across the system is infrequent. Occupational offerings are too few and are not driven by labour market demands. Curricula are often obsolete and provide for insufficient practical experience. There are no uniform qualification standards by which employers can judge whether the programme has adequately prepared students for gainful employment.

Goal 4: Adult Literacy

Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

By 2011, China realized the twin goals of universal 9-year compulsory education and eliminating the youth and mid-aged (15-50 years) illiteracy in all the counties including outlying poverty-stricken counties. The adult literacy rate (15+ years) increased from 90.0% in 2000 to 95.1% in 2010. Despite the remarkable progress made in eliminating the illiteracy pandemic from the country, there are yet 52 million adult illiterates in the country that deserve special attention.

Chengdu City

Chengdu City has made laudable progress in eliminating totally the scourge of adult illiteracy. It has realised the goal of universal literacy for the population 15+ years old in 2010. However, there are still half a million illiterates in 2010.

Gansu

Despite the concerted efforts made by the Gansu Government to eliminate adult illiteracy, it could achieve only 91% adult literacy rate by 2010. There were still 1.45 million adult illiterates in the province in 2010.

Guizhou

In 2000, the adult literacy rates for males and females in Guizhou were 90% and 85% respectively. By 2003, Guizhou still had over a million adult illiterates mainly in remote mountainous ethnic minority villages, women accounting for nearly two-thirds of total adult illiterates. In June of 2004, Education Department and the Supervision Office issued the guidance note entitled “On

Further Strengthening and Reform the Literacy Work” for the systematic planning and management of literacy programme in the province.

Henan

The absolute number of adult illiterates in Henan province declined from 416,200 in 1990 to 51,200 in 2013. Post-literacy programmes have been introduced for further education and for controlling neo-literates relapsing to illiteracy. The province has been implementing successfully the functional literacy programmes particularly for women and adults in remote rural areas.

Yunnan

According to the 6th national demographic census, there were 2.8 million adult illiterates in 2010 in the province. The adult literacy rate stood at 94 per cent in the same year.

The literacy rates of population aged 15-24 in border areas of three categories in Yunnan Province are almost 100%.

The Department of Education has revised literacy readers, distributed them free of charge, organised rural practical technology training workshops, and put more emphasis on functional literacy. A cadre of professional literacy teachers and facilitators has been put in place.

Goal 5: Gender Parity and Equality

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Ensuring an equal enrolment ratio of girls and boys is the first step towards the fifth EFA goal. The full goal of gender parity demands a schooling environment that is free of discrimination and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to realize their potential. It also includes making sure the school environment is safe, improving facilities to provide, for example, separate latrines for girls and boys, training teachers in gender sensitivity, achieving gender balance among teachers and rewriting curricula and textbooks to remove gender stereotypes.

Summary

The attempts and achievements of all four provinces and Chengdu City in reducing middle-aged and adult illiteracy have been the result of a well articulated and planned strategy that includes strong public support for education; provincial policies that emphasize cooperation across various sectors of society; enhanced monitoring and assessment with attention to local incentives; flexible policies and programmes for adult education; and the near universalization of primary education and attention to post-literacy education. Rapid economic growth and rising per capita incomes have also enhanced the overall literacy environment in these provinces.

Yet stubborn barriers to literacy for all remain. These include both the absolute number and location of remaining illiterates; provincial policies and international aid agreements that leave the poorest communities with little financial support; substandard facilities and continuing problems of literacy teacher/facilitator quality, training, and pay; household conditions of poverty and poor health; complex social patterns slightly privileging male literacy; poor fiscal management of literacy programmes; inadequate education for life-long learning, and the lack of a sound campaigning of national literacy programme in these provinces.

Chengdu City

Chengdu City achieved gender parity in primary enrolment in 2011. The gap of the average year of schooling between females and males has been narrowed. Almost all pre-school teachers are females; whereas in primary and lower secondary levels of education, female teachers account for 63% and 47% of total teachers.

Gansu

In Gansu in 2010, girls shared 47% and 48% of total enrolment at primary and lower secondary levels of education, female teachers account for 44.0% and 37% of total teachers of primary and secondary education.

Guizhou

The girl enrolment rate in Guizhou primary schools was higher than that of boys, however, the dropout rate was low. Meanwhile, the girl dropout rate in Guizhou junior high schools was much lower compared to boys.

Henan

During the period year 2000-2013, girls in Henan primary and secondary schools share 45% and 46% of total enrolment respectively. The right for school-age girls to education is guaranteed. However, relatively high dropout rate of girls in primary education continues to pose a serious problem. More than 99% of girls in primary schools and 98% in junior secondary schools complete their education. Female teachers share in total stock of teachers ranged from as high as 98% in pre-school education to as low as 47% in primary schools.

Yunnan

The Yunnan province attempts to promote gender parity by implementing the “Spring Buds Programme” of Women Federation and Teenagers Foundation by controlling girls’ dropout in primary schools. Following this programme, the province has achieved gender parity in both primary and lower secondary schools.

Summary

Each province has taken seriously its provincial policy of narrowing the gender gap and boosting the gender equality as an important social development goal. However, in the past, influenced by the economic and social development level and the traditional outlook, girls and women did not receive an equal treatment. In 2000, among the total students in general senior middle schools, secondary polytechnic schools and vocational senior middle schools, girls accounted for 46.8 per cent, while in general under-graduate and junior college students, girls’ share was 41 per cent. Female adult illiteracy rate was still 9.5% (average of four provinces

and Chengdu City) lower than male illiteracy rate and the average education years of males were still 1.3 year higher than those of female.

Therefore, the gender equality in EFA is still needed to much extensively paid attention to, so as to gradually enhance the rate of female who receive all levels and types of education, fully enhance the quality of female labours and actively train various female professionals. Four key research questions need to be analysed and addressed by the provincial educational planners and policy makers. They are: (i) the current state of educational inequality in the province and how has it changed over time; (ii) The determinants of overall inequality in schooling; (iii) the main causes of educational inequality; and (iv) the strategies to be adopted by the governments in order to promote equality and equity in education.

A major cause of disparity is the decentralized system of financing, which places a large burden on the county governments with low levels of fiscal revenues; the resultant funding gap was supplemented by “extra budgetary” resources, and poor parents’ inability to pay directly affected their children’s’ enrolment and completion of schooling.

The education departments of these provinces and Chengdu City will have to design strategies for improving educational opportunities for poor children and ethnic minorities so that they would be better prepared to take advantage of economic and social opportunities. The governments will have to provide adequate funding to complement and improve the effectiveness of good government policies and programmes. In particular, the strategies should focus on:

- Improving school facilities through construction and providing teaching equipment and library books;
- Strengthening management and administration; and
- Implementing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Goal 6: Quality Education

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Throughout China, most provinces, counties, towns and municipalities have made remarkable gains in expanding access to basic education. However, there is little evidence on such widespread progress when it comes to improving the quality of the education provided, particularly in terms of student learning and related teaching and learning conditions.

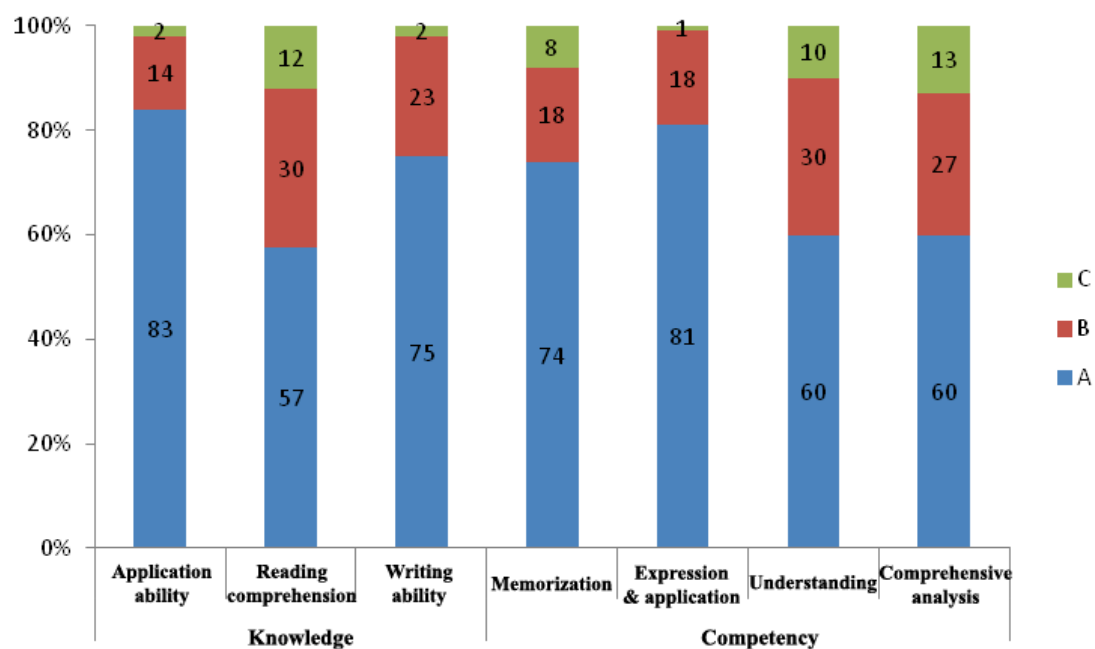
China comprises some of the country's top-performing provincial education systems (Shanghai) and some (western provinces) that continue to struggle to provide basic education to all children. Disparities between and within provinces are apparent in both access to and quality of learning, suggesting that the factors of marginalization of certain groups have not only been mitigated through education but may in fact have been reinforced.

Chengdu City

Chengdu City carried out an assessment of students' competence in the science subject for fourth-grade students. The students under assessment were chosen randomly in different districts and areas, as well as on-the-spot sampling. A total of 13,248 fourth-graders from 131 schools in 21 districts, county-level cities and counties were assessed on their learning competence of science subject.

Figure 2.2 below is an example of the results of students' learning assessment in Chinese language undertaken by the Chengdu City. It indicates that students are relatively less competent in reading comprehension while learning Chinese. And in learning ability of Chinese, students were relatively less able in comprehension and analysis. This is in consistent with feedback opinions from Chinese academic circle on the shortcomings of Chinese teaching in schools.

Figure 2.2: An Example of the Assessment of Students' Learning Achievement in Chinese Language in Chengdu City



A: score 80 and above; B: score 60-79; C: score 60 and below

Source: Chengdu EFA Monitoring Report 2014.

The assessment revealed apparent gaps in some of the important building blocks of quality education across the city. Generally, statutory requirements for instructional time for primary and secondary schools are at par with national benchmarks, while actual learning time remains well below the national regulations and benchmarks. The allocation of instructional time between grades is not optimum. Also, instructional time 'leaks' occur because of systemic and school level weaknesses, such as unofficial school closures and wasted time 'on task'. Learning time is also curtailed by unforeseen circumstances and due to student absenteeism. The severity of instructional time lost is significant, suggesting a critical need to address a range of issues associated with weak schools and the system, such as school management, teacher management and governance.

Gansu

Gansu increased investment in education to improve schooling conditions. In recent years, the province made great efforts to improve teachers' quality. The province enlarged its teaching staff, strengthened teacher training and improved teachers' reward and living conditions. While implementing curriculum reform, educational departments in different prefectures organized teacher training to improve their theoretical knowledge and instruct them to apply notions of the reform to their teaching. Schools took an active part in curriculum reform, tried their best to explore effective strategies to improve teaching-learning conditions.

In Gansu, a shortage of availability of textbooks, their delayed distribution to remote areas and general poor quality of instructional materials are common issues. The available information shows that textbooks are often error-laden, misaligned with curricular objectives and instructional time, not available in minority languages and not conducive to child-centred teaching and learning. Not surprising, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are influenced the most by such gaps in textbook supply and quality.

Also, while the development of quality textbooks and their timely distribution is dependent on strong monitoring and evaluation and rigorous research, such processes are often inadequate, thereby limiting the capacity to develop materials that are relevant and

responsive to a local context. Weak capacity and a poor policy environment for working with the private sector also hamper Gansu's ability to leverage the competitive strengths of the private sector towards timely production and distribution of textbooks.

Guizhou

Guizhou's efforts to provide quality education are mainly geared toward improving the quality of teachers. Several projects have been implemented in consolidating both pre- and in-service teacher training programme. What teachers know and practise is widely recognized as central to the quality of education, and teacher quality is considered one of the strongest determinants of student achievement levels.

However, the available data underscore that teachers' pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge are generally limited, despite vast improvements in upgrading the proportion of teachers meeting standard qualifications for teaching. Guizhou requires dedicated induction phases to assist in the transition of new teachers, which is a critical way of improving teacher retention in their initial years of service. There is limited information to measure the levels of teacher motivation – another important factor of their performance – although the high levels of teacher absenteeism in some counties suggest room for improvement. Increasing emphasis on the measure of improved teacher quality is encouraging. The issues that need to be addressed include the demand for more and better teachers, weak and fragmented training systems, poor working conditions and weak school leadership.

Henan

The strategy followed by Henan province to ensure quality education is more and more investment in ICT in primary and lower secondary schools. The provincial education authorities consider this as a lever for improving the quality of education across the province.

The available evidence reveals that the assessment system, including large-scale and classroom assessments and exams, is not considered as an essential means to measure and improve the quality of education. Visible improvements have not been made in the province and very few attempts have been

made to diagnose system performance and areas for improvements. Nonetheless, considerable gaps remain in measuring learning beyond the traditional, cognitive domains, including around the social and emotional dimensions of learning. The reliability and validity of assessments also need to be strengthened, especially those administered in classrooms by teachers who are not adequately equipped to administer tests. Overall, the systematic capacity to plan, design and implement assessments and exams and then use the results to improve the performance of teachers, schools and the broader system need special attention.

Yunnan

In recent years, Yunnan province vigorously promoted and implemented “Rural Compulsory Education Weak School Reconstruction Project”, built 11,436 sets of multi-media remote teaching equipment, and promoted quality resources application in teaching; built digital resources share system, brought in basic resources such as national digital education resources, and feature resources based on local demands, organized delivery of quality resources to rural and remote schools; book resources share system, high level of electronic resources and service functions, libraries, set up a provincial resource centre for teaching and scientific research in Yunnan colleges, and provided information support and consultation services for them. Diverse trainings and network scientific research, etc. have been formed for improving teachers competence in the application of resources to improve teachers' quality; organized and developed network synchronous classrooms, special delivery classroom, etc. to share quality digital education resources.

Despite these bold measures, the evidence of progress made on the quality of education, and in particular student learning, is limited. High rates of repetition and low survival rates to the last grade of primary are far too common, suggesting poor efficiency in education. Data on learning achievement – what is available – show that while Shanghai-China is home to some of the world's best-performing education systems, average student learning in Yunnan province is alarmingly low. Many years of schooling fail to yield even basic literacy and numeracy skills. That students' time spent in schools is not resulting in increased knowledge and skills, both cognitive and non-cognitive, is a strong indication

of the perilous state of education quality. The visible patterns of disparities between and within counties of Yunnan province suggest that disadvantages indicative of marginalized groups are being reproduced, or even increased, through education.

Table 2.2 The Changes of Pupil/Teacher Ratio at Primary Level between 2002-2013 by Provinces

	2002	2010	2013
Chengdu	21	18	17.92
Henan	22.26	21.83	19.01
Guizhou	27.22	21.9	18.43
Yunnan	20.23	18.32	17.03
Gansu	26.04	16.89	13.3
CHINA	21.04	17.7	16.76

Source: Chengdu Education Statistics 2002, 2010, 2013; <http://www.moe.edu.cn> Educational statistics 2002-2013.

Table 2.3 The Changes of Pupil/Teacher Ratio at Junior Secondary Level between 2002-2013 by Provinces

	2002	2010	2013
Chengdu	16.22	15.06	12.88
Henan	20.94	16.97	13.75
Guizhou	22.28	19.51	18.23
Yunnan	19.03	17.32	15.38
Gansu	19.65	16.64	12.28
CHINA	19.25	14.98	12.76

Source: Chengdu Education Statistics 2002, 2010, 2013; <http://www.moe.edu.cn> Educational statistics 2002-2013.

Summary

Information on what students are learning, who is being left behind and by how much is relatively limited. Nonetheless, evidence reveals mixed and limited progress in ensuring learning, with average students performing near or below basic competency levels. In particular, the reading levels in the early grades are alarmingly low in many counties, a worrying signal that learning opportunities in subsequent years will be in serious jeopardy.

Although the issues and challenges relevant to the quality of education are unique and sensitive to the local context of these provinces and Chengdu City, four common areas of priorities emerged through the review.

First, a renewed focus on learning outcomes is needed, augmented by a clear definition of the goals and objectives of education, improved information systems on learning, appropriate and relevant assessment systems and investment in research and development on what matters for learning.

Second, teaching and learning processes in the classroom need to be better supported by ensuring the improved skills of teachers and school leaders through adequate training and development opportunities. Priority investments should be made towards ensuring quality textbook development and distribution that reaches all children and towards improving teachers' working conditions so that they are conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Third, school management improvements, including performance standards and monitoring, improved professional autonomy of teachers and principals, better use of information and strengthened school leadership, are critically needed.

Finally, the complex set of barriers that the most disadvantaged children encounter requires targeted and comprehensive policies within and beyond the education sector so that no child is denied the fundamental right to a quality education.

Chapter III

Towards the Equitable and Quality Education For All: Reforms for Improving the Governance in Basic Education



INTRODUCTION

China is not often thought of in the EFA context but its education sector over the past 20 years provides many lessons for countries that are approaching Universal Primary Education (UPE). The most important lesson may be that the need for educational reform does not diminish as countries approach UPE. The first challenge is to expand education opportunities. As coverage expands, however, new challenges inevitably emerge that require constant attention and frequent updates to education policy and financing mechanisms.

Despite the massive expansion in primary enrolment, equity, quality and inclusiveness in education continue to pose daunting challenges till date. To address these critical challenges, the Chinese Government released in 2010 its "National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)".

The reform envisages, among others, that 9-year compulsory education should be basically universalized, be improved and consolidated fully by 2020. The reform also sets the goal of eliminating illiteracy among young and middle-aged people by the end of the decade 2020. Further, the government commits itself for undertaking every effort for providing equal compulsory education opportunities for children of migrant workers in cities.

The outline vows to spare no efforts to "run every school well and bring quality education to every student. The plan emphatically states: "no child shall be allowed to drop out due to family financial difficulties." To prevent quality education resources unfairly going to key schools and parents trying to send their children to such schools, the outline asserts that by 2020, the quality of compulsory education should be at par with the national norms and standard in all regions. Finally, an Education Financing Oversight Framework should be put in place in a bid to prevent school from financial risks.

In a nutshell, the China's Education Plan (2010-2020) gives special attention to the following priorities: enabling all children to have access to schools and complete quality 9-year compulsory schooling; significantly reduce the gender disparities in the enrolment ratios at primary and lower secondary levels as an important step toward educational equality; giving high priority to the development of education in rural areas, in western and poverty-stricken areas and in areas catering for ethnic minorities; strengthening special education and early childhood care and education; making further efforts to eradicate illiteracy among adults, especially females, and to meet the basic learning needs of all young people and adults.

worthwhile to review the major reforms implemented in this area and subsequently to assess these reform and their impact on 9-year compulsory education separately in Chengdu City and in Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan provinces.

Figure 3.1 shows per pupil public expenditure in 9-year compulsory education across the city/provinces and figure 3.2 compares these expenditure with the national average. It is encouraging to note there was a significant increasing both at primary and junior secondary level since 2004.

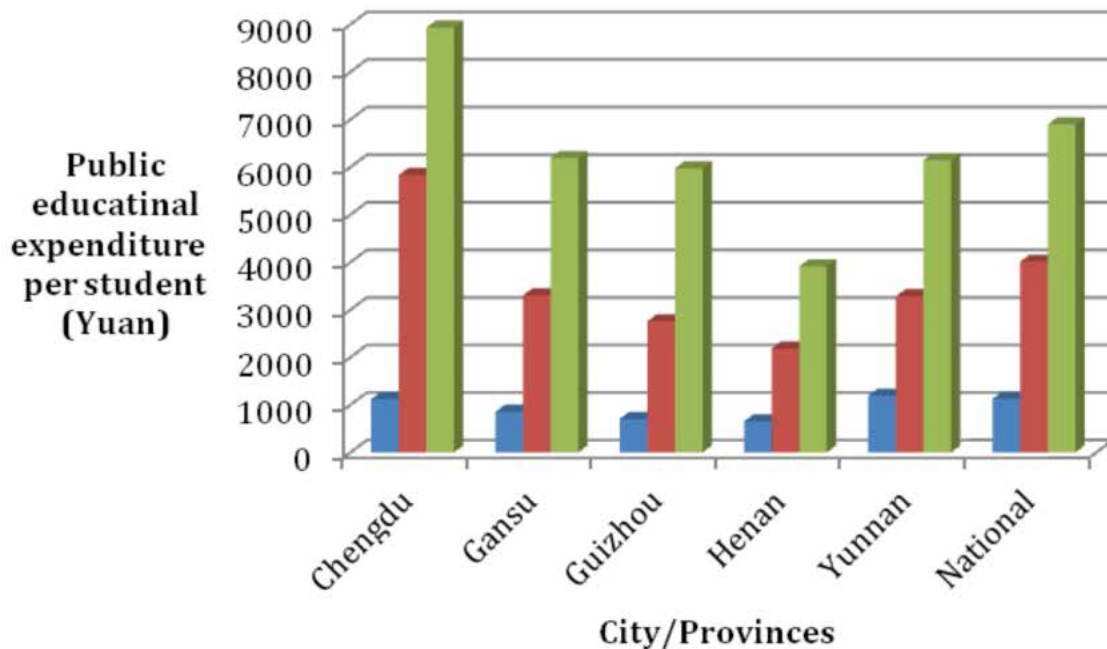
This chapter reviews and analyses the efforts so far made in this direction in recent times. It assesses the impact of such reforms on improving and consolidating basic education provisions, particularly in terms of equity, quality and governance.

Financing Compulsory Education

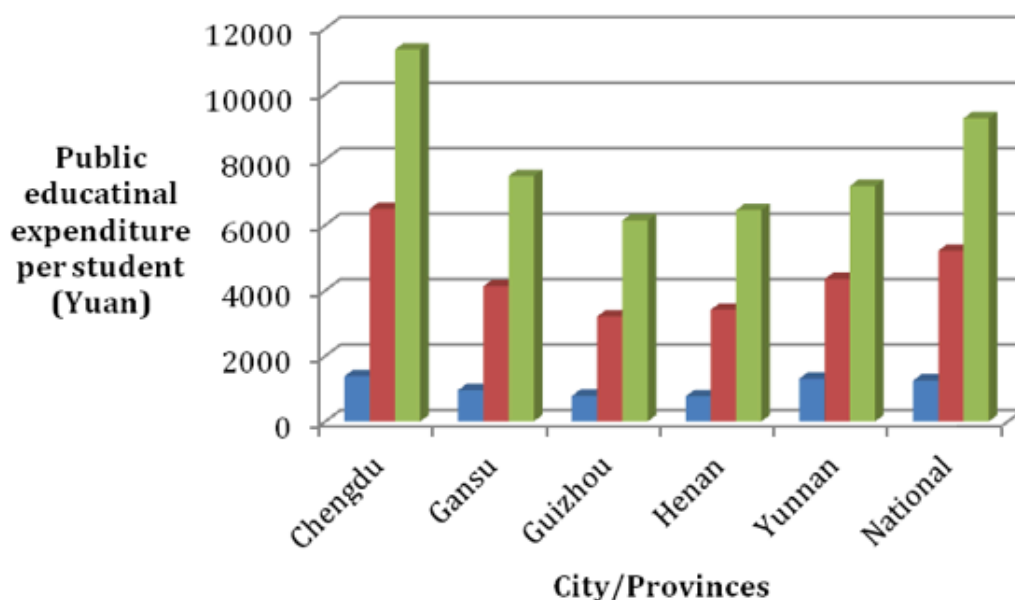
Since financing of education at all levels is the prime responsibility of the Central Government of China, it is



Figure 3.1 Per Pupil Public Educational Expenditure at Primary Level (2004, 2010 and 2013)



Source: The annual educational financial statistics report, Ministry of Education, 2004 -2013. <http://www.China Education and Research Network>.

Figure 3.2 Per Pupil Public Educational Expenditure at Junior Secondary Level (2004, 2010 and 2013)

Source: The annual educational financial statistics report, Ministry of Education, 2004 -2013. <http://www.China Education and Research Network>.

Lacking guidance of general equilibrium (GE) theories in public economics and the corresponding proper mechanisms, China has not surprisingly witnessed an inequality in educational expenditures across regions as well as insufficiency of funds for education in poor areas. It is wrongly thought that what happens is due to the decentralized financing system of basic education. The available evidence demonstrates that such a decentralized system is capable of encouraging local governments to improve the quality and efficiency of basic education. This is possible if the Central Government is involved in designing specific countervailing policies to reduce the negative impact of unequal access to education. This has particular significance for growth in a country that has a massive labour-intensive sector.

China is one of the fastest developing countries in the world. Between 1978 and 2008, its economy grew nearly 10% per annum, compared to 4% for all developing countries, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita grew from US \$ 890 in 2001 to US \$ 6,700 in 2013. China's policy to universalize 9-year compulsory education (comprising six years of primary education

and three years of junior secondary education) has laid the foundation for its economic and social development. At the same time, economic growth has enabled the government to increase investment in education to achieve developmental objectives. Public spending on education rose from 2.9% of GDP in 2001 to over 3.5% in 2010. An increase in the percentage share of public education expenditure in a growing economy has resulted in a rise in public spending in the aggregate and in per student terms, even after adjusting for inflation.

The impetus to perform came with the 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010). The Plan began the reform of rural compulsory education finance, which abolished schools' miscellaneous and textbook fees, and provided living subsidies to boarding students on a need-basis. This is known as "Two Exemptions and One Subsidy" (or TEOS in short). Central fiscal transfer to the provinces was used to offset the loss of revenue due to abolition of school fees. With the resources there came a strong focus on universalization of compulsory education. All of these gave a strong impetus to the provincial governments to perform and reach their development objectives.

In China, the county governments are responsible for provision and financing of compulsory education in rural areas. As the fiscal capacity varies across counties, so do resources to fund basic education. For instance, in 2005, budgetary expenditures accounted for only 55% of the total resources for basic education, and the funding gap was supplemented by extra-budgetary sources, such as educational surcharge and student fees, which included miscellaneous fees, and fees on books, uniform, notebooks, boarding, food, and so forth. Poor parents' inability to pay affected their children's enrolment and completion of compulsory schooling. Also, insufficient budgetary educational expenditure led to hiring of less qualified teachers (known as substitute teachers) at lower cost, thereby affecting the quality of education.

Limited public funding has led to a shift of fiscal responsibilities to principals and then to parents. The EFA reviews in four provinces and Chengdu City highlight that 25-50 per cent of operational expenses are raised at the school level. According to official data, budgeted funding in education as a percentage of GDP in these provinces ranges on an average between 3.1% -3.4% in 2010. During the same period, however, extra-budgetary funding, including contributions from parents and society, increased significantly from 0.31 per cent of GDP to 1.05 per cent. Since the 2000s, special funds from Central Government have been allocated to these western provinces and poor areas, but inadequate funds remain a major obstacle for compulsory education.

In urban areas of the provinces and Chengdu City, good quality schools, known as "key schools", manage to generate funds by recruiting students from outside school districts and charging fees for their attendance. Although charging fees for 9-year compulsory education is forbidden by the national law, they are often disguised as "education donation and assistance" or "joint construction fees." The "donations" often range from Yuan 20,000 to 50,000 for each student for the duration of the middle school years. In rural areas, however, most public schools have neither the demand nor the reputation to generate additional funds and as a consequence, there is a huge disparity in student expenditures between urban and rural areas and between provinces. In 2010, per student expenditure in Gansu, Yunnan and Henan, the economically

impoverished and disadvantaged provinces, varied from Yuan 2,887 for urban areas to Yuan 1,631 in rural areas. In Chengdu, an economically better off City, per student expenditure in urban areas was Yuan 4,006 and rural per student expenditure was Yuan 2,605.

As a result, the implementation of recent reforms of the 9-year compulsory education in the four underprivileged western provinces and Chengdu City has become a study of China's efforts to overcome the pre-existing inequality to improve opportunities for poor boys and girls and ethnic minorities to enable them to take advantage of economic and social opportunities.

For instance, during the last 10 years, Chengdu City has been successful in promoting the standardization of primary and junior high schools in urban and rural areas. There have been phenomenal increases in fiscal input to ensure the steady growth of educational expenditure per student, per teacher and for financial appropriation of education. The education department has formulated a strategic plan for promoting standardization of primary and junior high schools for narrowing the vast inter-scholastic gaps in quality, equipment and standard for financial support among primary and junior secondary schools.

Chengdu City earmarked Yuan 10.1 billion (11.3% of the City's total budget) in 2010 for the development of basic education. Furthermore, Yuan 4 billion were earmarked to standardize students' admission mechanism in teacher training colleges and institutions, improving the teaching-learning quality and provision of pedagogic inputs. Although this ratio still needs to be improved, the government investment in education is growing steadily.

The Great Wenchuan Earthquake of May 12, 2008, originated in Sichuan, devastated not only the province, but also affected neighbouring Gansu and Yunnan. A large number of school structures in these two provinces were affected and some totally flattened. Almost all school buildings in Gansu and Yunnan needed repair and reinforcement. The equipment, furniture and books in these damaged schools were destroyed. The efforts of the provincial governments since then have been translated into major shifts in financial resources allocated to 9-year compulsory education. The governments of these two provinces

implemented in stages free schooling, free textbooks for students of poor families, and subsidies for boarders. Based on standards in per student costs, the two governments ensured adequate financial resources for 9-year compulsory education.

According to the Gansu Provincial Education Plan (2010-2020), it is anticipated that by 2015, resource-deficient schools and large-classes schools would be strengthened and balanced development of education would be realized in 30 counties by 2020.

The provincial government of Yunnan accords priority for the construction and refurbishing of rural boarding schools. A sum of Yuan 1 billion from national and provincial levels has been earmarked for the purpose. The provincial policies on “Two Exemptions and One Subsidy” and the “Rural Compulsory Education Fund Guarantee Mechanism” have been implemented successfully. The state has also implemented “Special Position Teachers Programme” in “two-basic” task-tackling areas and supplemented salaries of over 7,000 high performance teachers in selected provinces.

From 2001 to 2006, Guizhou implemented the second phase of the “National Poor Region Compulsory Education Programme”. The Central Government granted Yuan 521 million special fund to Guizhou for this programme. Provincial and local governments also provided counterpart grants of the order of Yuan 245 million and Yuan 433 million respectively for the programme, particularly for improving the school-running conditions in 60 counties (including 55 counties which had not yet universalized “nine-year compulsory education” in 2001). The special funds were also used to construct and repair 676 junior high schools, 379 primary schools; complete the 1.8675-million-square-meter space in school buildings for teaching and teaching assistance, train 15,500 headmasters and teachers, and equip junior high schools with 4.417 million copies of books, and teaching instruments, and desks and chairs according to the national standards.

Since 2005, Henan has started “Two Exemptions and One Subsidy” (Free of tuition fee, free of textbook and supplement of living subsidies in boarding schools) policy for the 9-year compulsory education from rural poor family. In 2005-2007, the total amount of funds

allocated to compulsory education amounted to Yuan 6.38 billion. Starting from the school year 2008, all rural and urban pupils benefit from this policy (free tuition fees). In 2007, Henan government issued a decree stating that all rural students enrolled in the non-government schools shall enjoy all the benefits of “Two Exemptions and One Subsidy” policy.

Summary

China’s experience in the financing of education, in particular EFA, are remarkable. The decentralization policy since the early 1980s in China profoundly changed the structure of education administration and financing, when villages became primarily responsible for financing primary schools, township governments for junior secondary schools, and county governments for secondary schools. The Central Government devolved financial responsibilities to the provincial governments in the form of fiscal contracts. In return, the provincial governments were granted the right to retain most of the revenues. The provincial governments followed a similar pattern and the same process was replicated down the administrative hierarchy at sub-provincial levels that included prefectures, counties, townships and villages.

Governments at decentralized levels levied educational surcharges in order to generate counterpart funding for education. There are three types of educational surcharges currently in vogue. The first is the urban educational surcharge, levied on products, businesses and value added tax (VAT). The second is the rural educational surcharge, levied on farming household, and township and village enterprises. The third one – the local educational surcharge – is collected by some local governments from leisure activities such as tourism and restaurants. In some cases, local governments are also financially dependent on farming households for funding basic education. They overcharge educational surcharges and tuition fees, which has become a significant source of “peasant burden” and social grievances.

However, several weaknesses regarding the scale and distribution of public expenditure on 9-year compulsory education have limited the extent of progress. First, relative to the size of China’s economy and the size

of the overall government budget, expenditure on education remains low by international standards. Second, the structure of government expenditure in these sectors is tilted towards higher level institutions at the expense of the primary level education providing basic learning services at county, township and village levels. Third, expenditure is inequitably distributed both regionally and between urban and rural areas due to the high degree of decentralization in the financing of education and the large differences in local levels of economic development and tax revenues, which are insufficiently offset by inter-governmental transfer payments. Fourth, government resources account for a relatively low share of total education sector expenditure, leaving individual households to assume much of the responsibility for paying for services, through fees and user charges, and this has placed a heavy burden on the poor, particularly in the rural areas and among migrants in the cities.

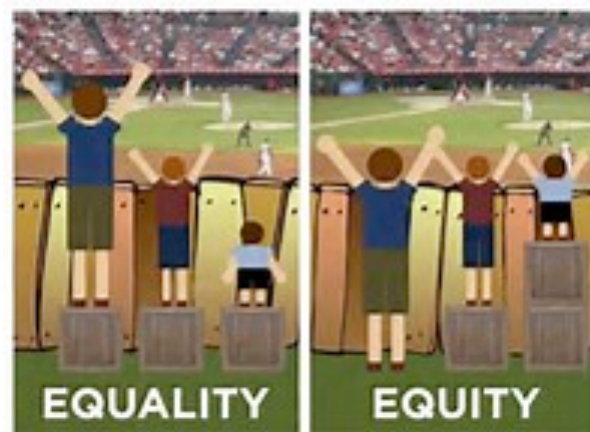
The following four issues deserve the attention of the national policy makers and educational planners:

- The ratio of public education expenditure to GDP in China remains very low, only 3.2% in 2010, compared with a world average of almost 5% (and the government's own goal of 4%), and education's share in total government expenditure has been declining since the mid-1990s (from 13.6% in 1994 to 10.6% in 2003). Since 2003, there has been only marginal increases in its share in the total national budget.
- There are noticeable imbalance in the distribution of government expenditure between education levels. The priority given by the government to achieving universal 9-year compulsory education is not adequately reflected in the structure of expenditure.
- Equity implications of the rising share of private expenditure deserve special attention. The share of private spending in national education expenditure has been rising, while that of government has been almost stagnant, creating financial difficulties for poor families and delaying the achievement of universal 9-year compulsory education in some of the poorest counties, which the government has begun to redress through the progressive extension of its policy of 'Two Exemptions and One Subsidy' in rural areas. In the urban areas, migrant children have higher dropout rate than resident children, mainly because of families'

financial difficulties, which are exacerbated by extra school fees levied on migrant pupils.

- Geographical disparities arise from fiscal decentralization and inadequate transfer payments. Government education expenditure is highly decentralized in China, mainly to the county level, with local governments responsible for 80-90% of expenditure. Due to the large disparities in economic development and tax revenue among counties, this high degree of decentralization and the inadequacy of transfer payments result in very large disparities in education expenditure among counties, adversely affecting the quality of education in poorest counties. In 2009, the amount spent per primary school pupil in Shanghai was ten times higher than in Henan.

Equity and Quality Education



The highest performing education systems are those that combine quality with equity. Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness in education) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusive education). In these education systems, the vast majority of students have the opportunity to attain high-level skills, regardless of their own personal and socio-economic circumstances. Shanghai is an example of an education system that has climbed the ladder to the top in both quality and equity indicators.

In China, there is an increasing debate regarding the equity and fairness of compulsory education in terms

of quality and access particularly in the impoverished western provinces. Key schools that are able to attract good students and to charge fees are also able to attract good teachers by paying them more bonuses. In rural areas, teachers are paid much less than their urban counterparts. These differences have contributed to a massive flow of competent teachers from rural to urban schools, resulting in a severe shortage of teachers and a high student dropout rate in rural and poor areas.

Inequality in access to education is related to poverty, geography, gender, socioeconomic background and ethnicity. In particular, in those economically less developed provinces, there is variation in the gender gap in enrolment. In some poor areas, approximately half of the counties have not yet achieved 9-year compulsory education and there are substantial ethnic differences in enrolment among primary and middle school age children, with the rate for boys sometimes as high as double those for girls from certain ethnic groups.

Moreover, inequality in access has become a concern in big cities in recent years as far as the issue of migrant students is concerned. For instance, in 2008, there were an estimated 121 million rural dwellers working in urban areas nationwide. The number of migrant students countrywide is estimated at 15 million. The increased number of migrant students imposes a challenge to the “local responsibility” principle in education. Provision for this group depends on decisions of local governments. In some counties only half of the migrant students are accepted by local public schools, but others must seek out private schooling (min-ban, or people-run) where they must pay “temporary schooling”. Many of these schools are newly built and illegal because their conditions and facilities do not meet the standards for a school set forth by the government. In addition, a large number of migrant children are out of school due to the transient nature of their parents’ work. Currently, the Chinese Government has taken some bold steps in revising its strategy on 9-year compulsory education by aligning policies to changes in society and the education sector.

China has a long tradition of using teaching research system as a quality control mechanism. The system includes “teaching research groups,” where teachers teaching the same subject meet weekly to prepare lessons with “open lessons” held for peer review to identify problems. In addition, principals observe

teachers’ classes, identify problems and provide guidance. All district teaching research offices in the country having subject content experts who are responsible for diagnosing teaching problems and providing guidance in teaching content and methods. When schools encounter unresolved issues in teaching, they turn to the district teaching research officer (TRO) for help. This quality control mechanism has faced a challenge in delivering effectively the curriculum. The curriculum introduces standards for 18 subject areas for compulsory education emphasizing the necessity for change in curriculum to respond to the rapid change in technology and knowledge-based economy. Students are expected to focus on problem solving and ability to learn and to act innovatively and creatively. This is a significant challenge for teachers who are accustomed to ‘teaching to tests.’ This means that TRO members have to update their knowledge and teaching methods and then train teachers in response to the requirement laid out by the curriculum.



To ensure high quality education, China has in place an assessment system but the system is not a well-designed and well-developed assessment system. As global trends have been

shifting the focus toward outcome-based education, there is a growing recognition in China that control of inputs such as resources, teachers, curriculum, facilities and equipment are inadequate indicators for measuring outcomes (Plan 2010-2020). This involves a change of the function of the Ministry of Education and Local Education Bureaus/Departments.

In short, there are several challenges and issues that need to be addressed and resolved. Today, the MOE is tackling three main issues in the poverty-stricken western provinces: These issues include:

- “Left-behind Children”: About 200 million people have migrated from rural to urban areas in the last three decades; this trend will continue in the near future. In 2005, about 55 million children were “left behind” in rural areas, most being raised by their grandparents. Vulnerable to accidents and to developing emotional, behavioural and learning problems, their care requires additional responsibilities from teachers and the

provision of boarding facilities. The MOE plans to pilot, in major labour-exporting provinces, multi-sectoral interventions together with the Ministries of Health and Civil Affairs, the Women's Federation and the Public Security Bureau to create a protective network; an impact evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the strategies.

- Consolidation of schools, and building stronger schools: The decline of the compulsory school-age population (students' enrolment fell from 190 million in 2001 to 159 million in 2008), the trends of rural-to-urban migration, the "left-behind children", the new curriculum with English and computer skills in primary grades, and the Wenchuan earthquake, gave impetus to consolidate schools and to build stronger schools. Boarding will be offered. The provision of teachers, support systems, learning materials and equipment to small, remote, multi-grade schools is not possible, and concentrating children in central boarding schools is more efficient, if adequate resources can ensure proper care and support.
- The continued need to strengthen education of ethnic minorities: In spite of the gains through several projects being implemented currently, minority girls are still more likely to drop out than other sub-groups. They need continuous support and monitoring. There are hard-to-reach and remote rural areas that need support.

With a view to addressing the challenging tasks of inclusiveness, equity and quality in basic education, the Chinese Government has taken concrete reforms contained in its National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) At the provincial level, each government has formulated its renewed strategies and integrated the above three key areas in their own plans. The following section attempts to discuss and analyse a selected number of important strategies in four provinces and Chengdu City.

In Chengdu City, efforts to bridge the education development gap between urban and rural areas and between boys and girls have been accelerated. A blueprint has been put in place for integrating compulsory education in urban and rural areas with the City's development plan and with particular preference to adequate financial allocations for the construction of school buildings and for teachers' salaries in rural areas.

The City administration has been carrying out the standardized rural primary and junior secondary school construction project for improving the management and administration of school-running conditions.

In 2012, the Chengdu government released two strategic policies: "Implementation Plan for Promoting Standardization of Primary and Junior High Schools in Urban and Rural Areas of Chengdu" and "Suggestions of General Office of Chengdu Government on Further Optimizing Balanced Allocation of Public Educational Resource within Districts (county-level cities) and Counties. Since then, the urban-rural and regional disparities in basic education appear to be narrowing down. Also the government has effectively compensated for shortage of instructional equipment and shortfall of public expenditure per student in poverty-stricken districts (county-level cities) and counties.

The prime focus of the basic education reforms in the City is on coordinated educational development in both urban and rural areas by local educational planning; school operation, educational appropriations; enhancement of teachers' comprehensive quality; improvement of education quality; and rules and regulations on educational management and evaluation standards.

Gansu is one of the poorest provinces of China. Particularly in the ethnic minority areas, enrolment rates are lower than in the rest of the country. Girls show higher dropout rates than boys. Schooling facilities are basic and many teachers have not yet received training that would enable them to perform according to the changing syllabus. The current policy of the provincial government is to alleviate rural poverty on a sustainable basis and achieve the goal of universal access to 9-year compulsory education in the 41 state-designated poorest counties; raise the quality and efficiency of the education system; increase access and equity in compulsory education through enhancing teacher skills; and raise the overall quality of education and school facilities.

With the implementation of the "The EU-China Gansu Basic Education Project", the provincial government has so far distributed 103,550 scholarships over the duration of the project to poor pupils, girls and pupils from minority groups and the poorest counties; 90,000 new and existing teachers trained in rural areas; 686 Teacher Learning Resource Centres built and equipped

with computers and internet facilities providing an effective means towards teachers' self-development. As a result, the school attendance rate for 9-year compulsory education increased to 98% of children in most counties of the Gansu Province.

Despite the concerted efforts being made recently by the provincial government of Guizhou to ensure equity and quality in 9-year compulsory education, the administration continues to face serious and daunting challenges as far as quality and equity in basic education are concerned. There is a shortage of books, equipment and building resources in primary and junior secondary schools; each county government has increased the investment in education in recent years, made efforts to construction and refurbishing the dilapidated school buildings; yet, educational facilities are inadequate and sub-standard. Some counties are unable to meet the national "Basic School-running Standard of Compulsory Education Schools".

In Henan province, the achievement level of the great majority of the students does not meet the officially recommended levels. Also, there are large differences of achievement among students of different regions of the country, of different ethnicity, and of different socio-economic status. The students and teachers, and in some cases the school principal provide information on potential explanatory factors for the achievement levels. Using these data and an adequate statistical methodology exploratory research can help provincial planners to correlate the student achievement with the student and school factors and finally to identify the key factors responsible for low learning achievement of students. Several factors, under the control of school and public policies, can be identified and examined as having potential for improving the quality of education. The very few factors that affect the equity of the system act in the direction of increasing the inequalities among students of different ethnicity and of different socio-economic backgrounds. The provincial has to recognise that the quality problem should be faced together with the equity problem, and for that, this latter dimension should be given a more prominent role in school improvement projects.

Summary

Education equity is not an isolated term and it is very closely related to the social, economic and cultural environment. With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, 'efficiency' has received more attention than 'equity'. There are several warning signs in Chinese society that this disparity/inequality would lead China towards a dangerous society like some Latin America countries. Reflecting on the more and more serious social inequality, there are several disadvantaged groups who have not enjoyed or shared much of the benefits of 'reform and opening policy' in China, including education.

There are different kinds of social exclusion, such as exclusion based on ethnicity, language or socio-economic status. Some minorities have populations as low as 10,000 and several minority children speak a minority language that has no written script. Minorities often live in very remote areas where education provision can be very poor. For example, the teacher might not be able to speak the minority language so the children have communication difficulties when they enter school for the first time. All these elements combine together to put these kinds of minority children in a very harsh situation.

The schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students are at greater risk of low performance (low education quality), affecting education systems as a whole in particular of the impoverished western provinces of China. Low performing disadvantaged schools often lack the internal capacity or support to improve, as school leaders and teachers and the environment of schools, classrooms, and neighbourhoods frequently fail to offer a high-quality learning experience for the most disadvantaged. The Chinese Ministry of Education will have to be effective in supporting the improvement of low performing disadvantaged schools by:

- Strengthening and supporting school leadership.
- Stimulating a supportive school climate and environment for learning.
- Attracting, supporting and retaining high quality teachers.

- Ensuring effective classroom learning strategies (school- and classroom-based management).
- Linking schools with parents and communities.

One of the most efficient educational strategies for the western provinces of China will be to invest early and all the way up to upper secondary education. The provincial, county, town and municipality governments can prevent school failure and reduce dropout using two parallel approaches: abolishing education policies and practices that hinder equity; and targeting low performing disadvantaged schools. But education policies need to be aligned with other government policies, such as housing or welfare, to ensure student success.

Governance and Decentralization

China follows a unitary system of government. In this system local governments are often the only sub-national layers of government, thus putting them directly under Central Government oversight.

In general, decentralization process in China began around the late 1980s, and included the reform of the local government system, as well as increased democratization. However, while de jure reforms seem to have been extensive, provincial, county and local governments still work under the close supervision of higher levels of government, and rely on them for a large portion of their budgets. The National Government exercises a strong central control on decentralized governance structures, either through limited functional devolution, constraining fiscal arrangements, or political control.

In terms of devolution of key functions, on paper, China has devolved a large number of functions to local governments, especially urban governments, which have greater technical and financial capacities than their rural counterparts. However, this devolution is often unclear, or inadequate.

In China, for instance, the delivery of basic social services (health care and education) rests with cities. Emergency services and disaster management are also local competencies. The proceeds of some locally collected taxes are shared with higher tiers of

government. Larger cities are fairly independent and well-resourced entities. Yet, central control is exercised through the appointment of handpicked mayors by the Central Government, with unlimited five-year terms.

Even where the hierarchical structures are clear, the cooperation and collaboration required between different entities at local level – local government and line departments, for example, often remains a key challenge. Given the presence of multiple stakeholders, including non-state actors in many contexts, institutional coordination across (rather than only vertically) is extremely important to ensure effective responses.

The challenges faced by the provincial, town, cities and municipal governments include:

- Poor financial situation due to inefficiencies in tax collection, low levels of private investment, as well as limited ability to raise resources through public – private partnerships or municipal bonds.
- Limited technical capacities, including both staff (fewer in number and less qualified) and equipment (hardware and software).
- Poor quality infrastructure, inadequate housing and limited industrial development.
- Lack of knowledge and information on innovative and best practices.

China has recognized these problems and is making concerted efforts to support small and medium-sized towns and cities. Its small town development policies have aimed to absorb excess rural workers by channelling agricultural labourers into new towns and small cities that are close to the countryside.

It should be noted here that while effective responses to plan and manage the national EFA agenda require the adequate institutional and financial clarity, there is at the same time a need to emphasise the demand side of the governance, especially with regard to public participation, transparency and accountability. Without these, responses to meeting the learning needs of children, adolescents and youth may not necessarily be inclusive of different stakeholders' priorities. Furthermore, concerns of equity and quality of basic education are critical national issues having much

debated concerns particularly in the impoverished and disadvantaged western provinces of the country.

EFA Dakar Framework occupies the key position in China's Development Plans. It is one of the major concerns and as such features in the national policy and legislation. The Government has adopted national laws, policies and action plans ensuring equity, quality and financing of basic education disregarding the level of socio-economic development of its provinces, towns and cities.

A key challenge facing China in addressing EFA issues and challenges is the different policy frameworks that sometimes contradict each other. Often, new national policies on EFA, while not explicitly contradicting decentralization legislation and policy, might simply not acknowledge the important role that local governments can play in these processes. Equity and quality basic education, for instance, is a local function, but national policies fail to elaborate on its role in EFA planning, or encourage provincial governments to formulate new types of plans that ensure community participation, resilience and inclusion.

Furthermore, sectoral ministries at the national level, sometimes direct resources for EFA programmes to the line departments without engaging with local government per se, thereby creating a potential for duplication of priorities and resources, or even contradictory efforts. An important factor in this process is that explicit local government responsibilities vis-à-vis EFA and community involvement remain limited to preparation of the EFA plans. The evidence also illustrates that EFA budget allocation and expenditure are driven by sectoral policies, rather than EFA-needs assessment policy per se. Although some of the studies did examine the level of expenditure on EFA at the local level, focused and in-depth analyses at the local level could be useful in demonstrating that building resilience and inclusion are much more the result of "regular" local government activities expenditure, as opposed to specially packaged mitigation and adaptation interventions.

There are several issues and challenges that need to be addressed by both national, provincial, city and municipality governments in China in order for the National Government to be able to realise the six EFA Dakar goals nationwide. Some potential options to

address them are presented below:

- Clarify mandates of different actors, vertically, but also across the local level.
- Institutionalise approaches to enable responses that are needs-based, and inclusive of different priorities, particularly those of the most vulnerable.
- Improve knowledge and access to best practices and resources.
- Improve resources base of local governments

Key National Programmes and Strategies for Inclusive, Equitable and Quality 9-Year Compulsory Education

Since 2003, the Chinese government has put more effort into improving education equity to reach a 'balanced development of education' through several national projects. To achieve universal 9-year compulsory education and eliminate adult illiteracy in the population, several programmes and strategies have been implemented under the name of the 'Two Basics Breakthrough Campaign in Western Areas' (MOE: 2009), including:

1. Reforming Central Government's Education Expenditure System to Guarantee the 9-Year Compulsory Education Funds in Rural Areas

The main strategy is that the Central Government is taking a larger share of the finance for compulsory education in poor rural areas. The Central Government significantly increased expenditure in rural education through transfer payments to the western and middle areas in China. With the establishment of a new education finance mechanism, the Central Government has shared the financial input with the provinces according to their economic levels, for example 80% of the funds to cover students' miscellaneous fees is from Central Government in western areas, 60% in middle areas and much less (according to their financial situation) in eastern areas. The non-personnel budget for school operation is also calculated and shared by Central

Government and provincial governments. Step by step, all the expenditures for rural compulsory education will be covered by budget allocations and not by private sources. It is also clearly defined that the county governments are supposed to take main responsibilities for compulsory education instead of townships, villages or parents.

2. Addressing the Cost Barriers of Poor Families in Primary Education

Before 2007, some poor students could get free textbooks, and some scholarships were also provided to poor students. However, the new TEOS policy covered all students in rural western areas from 2007 - that means, all the children in this area should be exempted from tuition charges and miscellaneous fees, and students from poor families had free textbooks. The students in boarding schools also got a boarding subsidy. At least 23 million students have benefited from this policy. It was planned that the Central Government would provide budget allocations to each student in the rural areas with a specified quota around 2009. This would improve the financial situation quite significantly at school level if the plan was fulfilled successfully.

3. Ensuring Physical Access for and Retention of All Children

Many efforts have been being put into building primary and lower secondary schools including boarding schools, such as 'Compulsory Education Projects I and II', 'Rebuilding School in Dangerous Conditions' and 'Rural Boarding Schools Building Programme'. Thousands of schools have been built in a very short time in poor areas to meet the needs of universalizing 9-year compulsory education. Through the Rural Boarding School Building Programme (2003-2007), the Central Government provided Yuan 6 billion to build about 5,000 schools within the first two years.

4. Filling the Gap Between the Urban Education and Rural Education Through Modern Information Technology on Distance Education

Working together with provincial governments, the Central Government required all secondary schools in rural western areas to set up computer labs and satellite receivers and all primary schools in these areas to be equipped with VCD/DVD players. The total investment

was Yuan 10 billion, 50% of which came from central government. It is intended that through distance education, the very remote schools would get the same high quality teaching and learning resources that urban schools get.

5. Providing Educational Opportunities to adolescents and Adults who have Missed out the Basic Education

The central government has put the objective of eliminating illiteracy in the population on an equal level with universalizing 9-year compulsory education and focused on poor areas, minority areas and women. The All China Women Foundation (ACWF) conducted a 'Women's Action on Illiteracy'. ACWF also implemented a DFID funded project to train in life skills the girls aged from 15-18 years old in western poor areas. However, Central Government has not provided much funding for this, mainly relying on local government to promote literacy programme in rural areas.

Teacher Training

Teacher education is an important part of Chinese socialist education system. In the last 50 years' of development since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the governments at different levels have given priorities and great care to teacher education. China has established a teacher education system that meets the needs of basic education of different types and at different levels. This system fits the specific Chinese situation and consists of independent teacher training institutions.

The government has started the Nationwide Programme of Network for Teacher Education to improve the quality of teaching. It aims to modernize teachers' education through educational information, providing support and services for lifelong learning through the teachers education network, TV satellite network, and the internet to greatly improve the teaching quality of elementary and high school faculty through large-scale, high quality and high-efficiency training and continuous education.

The State Council promulgated Regulations on Teachers' Qualification on December 12 1995, in which the standards for recruiting teachers were strictly regulated and certification of teachers became a must have before taking up jobs. Competent persons in the

society and graduates of other specialties could be recruited to teach.

With a view to enhancing the overall quality and professionalism of teachers for 9-year compulsory education (primary and lower secondary education), the Chinese government developed a teacher training plan to train every teacher every five years. From 2011 to 2015, more than 10 million teachers will be trained at least 360 hours in 5 years and another 1 million key teachers will participate in the training programme organized by the Central Government (National Teacher Training Programme).

The National Teacher Training Programme (NTTP) is implemented jointly by the Chinese Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, which is an important measure to improve the overall quality of teachers, especially those from rural primary and secondary schools. NTTP includes Project of Exemplary Teacher Training (PETT) and Project of Rural Key Teacher Training in Central and Western China (PRKTT). The public funds allocated to NTTP in 2010-2011 amounted to Yuan 550 million of which PETT shared Yuan 50 million (9%). A total number of 1.15 million teachers were trained with PRKTT's contribution of 71%. Nearly 11% teachers were trained in formal training institutions whereas 89% through distance training mode.

Teacher training is a shared responsibility of various education administrative organs at different levels: regular normal schools, teacher training institutions of various kinds and at various levels, training agencies, as well as the schools where the teachers work. The education administrative organs formulate policies, provide financial support, define training programmes and methods for management and examination, and sum up and spread good practices in a timely manner. Training institutes collaborate with the organs responsible for education research in organizing training activities and conducting training research. Schools where teachers work are the prime places for training. They should provide time for training and necessary material conditions for systematic, permanent and effective training.

As required by state law, local governments are implementing teacher qualification systems and promoting in-service training for large numbers of

school principals, so as to further improve school management standards. To improve teacher quality, the State Education Commission established full-time and part-time (the latter preferred because it was less costly) in-service training programmes.

Despite the mammoth size of teachers in China, teacher education confronts two major problems, namely, the teacher qualification structure is irrational and the overall quality of teachers is relatively low in the remote areas, especially in the rural areas of Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan. The face-to-face training suffers with an absence of effective and interactive platform to guide the trainees after the training. On the other hand, the distance training does not share high quality training resources among all platforms. In rural schools information technology facilities are not available and in schools where such facilities are available there condition is deplorable.

In order to address these problems and challenges, the Central Government has set up the service pattern of teacher training based on National Union of Networked Teacher Education (NUNTE). It comprises universities launching on modern distance education and other institutions supporting teacher education. Currently, NUNTE comprises 14 universities and institutions of higher learning in the country.

NUNTE takes advantage of teacher education system, satellite TV net and Internet and integrates high quality teacher training resources among teachers from primary schools and supports the task of training for all the teachers every five years. The main features of the service pattern of teacher training based on NUNTE are:

- Application of satellite TV net and internet.
- Use of modern forms and methods in teacher training programmes.
- Integration of government support with market mechanism.
- Stimulating cooperation and encouraging competition
- Integration of the continuing education of teachers with the reform of education and teaching.

- Synergy among government, training institutions and teachers modes of operation.

In brief, the five EFA reports under consideration highlight several critical issues related to teacher training. The reports indicate that teacher training for primary level is not only highly inadequate but at the same time it is not organised systematically and scientifically. The system needs a complete training programme to train teachers, not just for subject knowledge, but also for teaching skills. Teachers in training receive too little practice teaching and too few current textbooks. Also, teaching methods are not considered an important course. The political and social status of teachers in these provinces and in Chengdu City is relatively low, so people did not have much incentive to take up a teaching career. There was little reward for success in teaching.

Monitoring and Supervision

The monitoring and inspection in China is a system whereby governments (at or above the county level) monitor, examine, assess and direct the educational activities as well as the work of schools (mainly primary and lower secondary schools) being administered by the government at the lower level. The State Education Inspectorate is the agency for national education inspection. Local governments have also established similar agencies.

The main responsibilities of the departments of inspection are to monitor and examine the implementation of the state laws, regulations, principles and policies on the part of the government at the lower level, their departments of education and schools; assess and give guidance to educational work as administered by the governments at all levels; give advice and report to governments and their education departments with regard to educational activities.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the highest education policy-making institution. It identifies major issues in basic education and makes policy accordingly. It responds to enquiries and recommendations from the National People's Congress and follows the instructions of the State Council. It is also responsible for monitoring policy implementation mainly through the National

Education Inspection Office and other departments within the Ministry. When a policy is made, the MOE issues a formal notice to the Provincial Education Departments, as it is the responsibility of the provincial governments to provide basic education services.

This is a “top-down” type of management. However, China is such a huge country with so many diversities, as well as huge gaps between the city and countryside, western area and eastern area, and the policies from MOE are often on macro level without much practical guidance on implementation. The advantage of this type of policy is to allow the local government to have more flexibility in implementing the policy to meet local needs. The disadvantage is that one policy could be interpreted in very different ways in different areas, which leads to uneven success of a policy that had good initial intentions.

Any policy on basic education is the result of broad consultation within the education administration system at various levels. At national level, the MOE often calls a group of experts from well-known national universities or research institutions to consult or even draft the policy. In each province, the local experts often become part of the consulting team of the government. However, the MOE rarely consults private or non-government organisations, although they do get feedback from the media on policy issues. One of the weaknesses in policy making is the lack of the voice from stakeholders outside the administration system.

The National Education Inspection Office is an organisation under direct jurisdiction of the State Council but the MOE is in charge of its daily operation. The office is responsible for developing and implementing the inspection policy, regulation and indicators system. The office is in charge of reviewing the performance of the local governments with regard to universalizing 9-year compulsory education. There are also corresponding education inspection offices at provincial, municipal and county level.

However, in practice, inspection is more focused on how the lower-level governments implement education policy according to the requirements of upper-level governments. Until recently, quality issues in education have not received proper recognition and well-structured inspection guidance on quality education

is still in the early stage of development. There were only 90 inspectors (2009) at national level and some of them are retired officials and part-time inspectors. The professionalism of the inspectors needs considerable improvement. Regarding EFA, the inspection office takes the main responsibility for achieving the 'Two Basics' and the results of inspections are fed back into policy making.

The Central Government also puts a high priority on universal basic education and links the results to the performance indicators of the county governors. That is to say, if a county doesn't achieve universal primary or secondary education according to its plan, the governor would be dismissed. Many counties therefore make tremendous effort to achieve the target leading to a 'big jump' in enrolment rate.

Finally, setting up a good Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a challenge in China. Although the MOE has set up a Compulsory Education Monitoring System, there are still many technical problems to be solved. A good data system could provide quality data to review the progress of EFA in a reliable way. Although the current data indicate that the progress of EFA in China has been very good, there are still some controversial elements. Currently, the data on EFA is mainly collected and produced on school basis. It is up to each school to provide data according to the format from MOE. However, there is no individual student profile at school level and it is extremely difficult to monitor and upgrade the quality of data. To produce reliable data, it is quite important to make sure that EMIS is capable of tracking individual students. A student-based data system is also good for school development planning as well as for giving the county education bureau better evidence to plan their EFA within its area.

EFA Policies and Programmes

Given the scope and rich diversity of Chinese Education, and the whole socio-economic and cultural structure in China and the restriction of mass organization/NGOs, government plays a crucial role (sometimes a unique role) in promoting equity.

It is encouraging to note that equity is high on the government's agenda. The projects mentioned above, such as the Rural Education Expenditure System Reform, TEOS policy, Rural Boarding Schools Building Programme, etc. are all focused on compulsory education in rural areas. These key projects conducted by Ministry of Education came one by one in a short period and showed a strong willingness to improve rural education. Although 'equity' is not a new concept before 2003 most of the efforts and resources were very much concentrated in the well-developed areas because of a focus on effectiveness and efficiency. Even in poor counties, limited resources would go to the best schools in the area. The awareness of the growing gap and the political willingness to fill the gap by the current government is a good sign for improved equity in the education sector.

It is also noteworthy that significantly more funds have been coming from central government. This indicates that Central Government does not just pay 'lip-service' but provides real support to poor areas. In the past, parents shouldered the huge burden of 'compulsory education', which made their poverty situation even worse in some areas. Now Central Government has divided the country into three areas: western areas (very poor), middle areas (comparatively poor), and eastern areas (not poor), and provided different percentages of funds to different areas. Billions of Yuan have been invested in western areas through different projects mentioned above. For example, 6 billion Yuan was invested to build boarding schools in rural areas in 2004 and 2005. Alongside the central government's input, provinces in western areas provided 2.76 billion of counterpart funding for implementing TEOS in 2004 and 2005. This reduced the burden of lower-level governments as well as of parents.

The total expenditure on education is increasing every year. But, compared to the rapid growth of GDP, government expenditure in education has failed to meet targets – especially the target of 4% of GDP on education by the Year 2000. The government has also failed to reach this target in the last few years according to the planned timetable (2004) - it was 2.79% in 2004 and 2.82% in 2005. In fact, even 4% is a very low standard. The UN suggests this percentage should be 6%. It does rely on the political willingness of the government to achieve this goal. The National

People's Congress has been more and more proactive in monitoring the progress, but at the same time, the effectiveness and efficiency of using funds needs to be considered.

Most of the funds for compulsory education come from special earmarked funds (mainly through various projects or programmes) instead of the regular budget categories and this has put the sustainability of funding in question. It is very important for the government to keep and increase education expenditure at a reasonable level to sustain the effectiveness of the efforts made up to now. Otherwise, when projects finish, the impact from their efforts will cease or diminish very quickly. For example, Central Government has invested Yuan 5 billion to modernize distance education equipment (computers, satellite receivers etc.). If there are insufficient maintenance fees given to schools, the equipment and facilities will lie idle and the investment will have been wasted.

The government's first priority tends to be investment in "hardware" (buildings, equipment, etc.), but what will have the greatest long-term impact will be investment in "software", such as training and capacity building. Up to now, the majority of the education funds have been used for scholarships, free textbooks, boarding subsidies, buildings, equipment and so on. International experience indicates that although poverty is the main reason for low access to schooling, there are also other barriers, such as long distance to schools, lack of female teachers, huge workload at home and very poor achievement in schools, etc. The equity issue is also very complicated and having more funds is not the only way to tackle the issue. The involvement of the local community, the training of parents, and improvement of schooling quality should also be considered. Therefore, besides investment in 'hardware', more dissemination, training, social activities and different strategies should be involved and budgeted for.

Transparency is a big challenge when implementing projects especially major ones. The use of precious education investments in poorer areas needs to be more closely monitored in term of quality and effectiveness. Several national organisations are involved in monitoring but their actions need to be better coordinated. The Ministry of Education issued several notices on how to improve the monitoring system and

identified the main weaknesses in practice including the fact that education expenditure was being embezzled in some places and the quality of boarding schools was not satisfactory.

Many government projects are more input-based than output-based. As mentioned earlier, there is no comprehensive education management information system, and the evaluation system of projects is also very weak. This makes the impact of government projects very difficult to review. That also means, during implementation, very little data could be collected to inform policy.

Many disadvantaged groups have not been well targeted, or targeted in a very casual way. More effort should be directed to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children. The national data system is not comprehensive enough to provide disaggregated figures for each disadvantaged groups. That leads to difficulties in informing policy making. For example, among the out-of-school children, how many are migrant children in the cities, street children, minority children, girls in rural areas, etc.? Currently NGOs and donors have played a very important role in targeting the most disadvantaged groups - they should be allowed to play a more important role with government support. International donors should provide more technical support including using national and international consultants, or other independent third parties to introduce more effective practices and models for the reference of the government.

The Central Government has been pushing for the development and implementation of the policy on the schooling access for migrant children. The recipient governments of the migrant workers are encouraged to take more responsibility in providing basic education services for the children of migrant workers as local residents. However, the residence licence system has not been changed accordingly yet and this has blocked the effectiveness of the relevant policy and practice by the local governments. In Beijing, as an example, there are about 300 schools specially founded for migrant children (mainly by migrant teachers or parents) but only 58 of them have a government licence. The government tried to close 239 schools which were unregistered and had safety problems. But, the public schools refused to accept the children from these illegal

schools or the parents from the illegal schools could not afford to send the children to public schools because the public schools charged ‘temporary schooling fee’ to non-Beijing residents (Zhao Jing and Wenbin Hu: 2007).

Conclusion

The China experience indicates that when 9-year compulsory education has reached a higher level, the focus shifts to reaching marginal groups and to issues of equity, quality and finance. Disparities among children from poor and wealthier families and children from urban and rural families require increased attention even as governments seek to maintain and stabilize enrolment increases at the primary level.

China’s experience with migrant students illustrates the importance of constant fine-tuning and adjustment to education policy and financing. In China, as in other developing economies, attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) will be one step in what must be an on-going process of education reform.

In all the four provinces and Chengdu City, there are notable concerns about the outcome of learning and the relevance of education to the labour market. To meet such diverse demands, timely and effective delivery of education becomes crucial. In China this challenge has been addressed effectively thanks to the pervasive use of information technologies in the classroom.

In the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), inclusiveness, equity and quality of education have become the major priority areas. The Plan assigns high priority to governance, financial and curriculum reforms, teacher training, teaching methods and textbooks, and the improvement of management capacity from the central level of its education system to the school level. The Plan asserts that through joint programming and increased policy support, MOE can align its programmes more closely with national priorities, reform processes and national development plan.

One of the most efficient educational strategies for governments will be to invest early and all the way up to upper secondary level of education. Governments can prevent school failure and reduce dropout using two

parallel approaches: eliminating system level practices that hinder equity; and targeting low performing disadvantaged schools. But education policies need to be aligned with other government policies, such as housing or welfare, to ensure student success.

The way education systems are designed at sub-national level can exacerbate initial inequities and have a negative impact on student motivation and engagement, eventually leading to dropout. Eliminating system level obstacles to equity will improve equity and benefit disadvantaged students, without hindering other students’ progress.

Available resources and the way they are spent influence students’ learning opportunities. To ensure equity and quality across education systems, funding strategies should: guarantee access to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), especially for disadvantaged families; use funding strategies, such as weighted funding formula, that take into consideration that the instructional costs of disadvantaged students may be higher. In addition it is important to balance decentralisation/local autonomy with resource accountability to ensure support to the most disadvantaged students and schools.

Chapter IV

Conclusions: Food for Thought

Chapters I-III of this Synthesis Report undertook stock of China's progress towards the six Education for All (EFA) goals, understood how achievements were made, and identified the shortfalls, remaining challenges and prospects. The analysis presented in the chapters drew lessons and insights from the many EFA actions taken across China for the purpose of generating further reflections and debates on EFA and the education agenda for the post-2015 era.

The chapters reviewed successive Chinese government and provincial policies and plans related to EFA during 2000-2010 and beyond and the progress made in each of the six EFA goals. Broadly speaking, the analysis revealed that China has either achieved or is on the verge of achieving most - if not all - the EFA goals and targets. This chapter draws major conclusions of China's experiences as well as the experiences of its four western provinces and Chengdu City in setting policies and implementing strategies of particular interest to the education and development field nationally and suggests some policy directions beyond 2015.

While China's policy setting and implementation mechanisms are remarkably unique in many ways, a well-structured contextual examination of the process can bring to light many lessons learnt for its own reflection as well as for interested readers in China and other countries. The former is increasingly pertinent as China's EFA successes are accompanied by still lingering gaps and needs, many of which involve access to and quality of education for disadvantaged population groups and for rural areas.

China's EFA experiences show that social attitude in favour of education and people's readiness to support

and participate in education play a determinant role in achieving EFA goals. A key lesson learnt is that strong government leadership and commitment to active government policy-making, planning, guidance and support to decentralized bodies are essential for advancing the EFA agenda. Education for All can only succeed when there is All for Education. China's decentralization consists of a clear central vision, policy guidance and delegation of authority to enable provincial and local governments to allocate their own budgets and resources and to leverage support and participation from local stakeholders. Spontaneous participation of people, communities, civil society organizations, NGOs and the media in monitoring, supervising, promoting and supporting EFA implementation can be particularly effective in alerting and activating government actions.

Chapter I of this synthesis report described the socio-economic background of Chengdu City, Gansu, Guizhou, Henan and Yunnan provinces with particular reference to Education for ALL (EFA). Chapter II and III summarized progress and identified gaps in the current status of EFA goals in relation to national targets. The chapters also described how EFA as a priority within the national and provincial development agendas was identified and highlighted several interrelated priorities, none of which are surprising or new. Collectively, however, they reflect a more expanded vision of quality education at the heart of the post-2015 education agenda of China. This chapter summarises this vision and identifies several points of convergence as well as a number of strategic issues requiring further deliberation in moving forward. Finally, the chapter focuses on how the Chinese Government could fulfil and practice the post-2015 EFA Agenda.

Orchestrating a Policy Agenda for the Future

China is very close to achieving EFA quantitative targets but the major challenges are inequality, quality and inclusive education. All of these have not come along the way as revealed by the City and Provincial EFA Review Reports. Since these issues are critical as well as vocal, particularly in the impoverished and poor western provinces of the country, the policy imperative for the Chinese Government should be to concentrate mainly on key thematic issues. A driving principle of the post-2015 EFA agenda should be to contribute to the reduction of inequality and poverty through the provision of inclusive quality basic education and learning for all and value the rich cultural diversity of the poverty-stricken provinces of the country.

In developing the National and provincial EFA Beyond 2015 Agenda, the Government will have to address vigorously all forms of **exclusion** and **discrimination**, **disparities** and **inequalities**, in access to and in the completion of education and learning cycles, processes and outcomes, barriers to equal opportunities, and support those children who are disadvantaged or marginalized by developing comprehensive education strategies comprising intercultural, multicultural and multilingual education programmes, and programmes that respond to the diverse education needs (e.g. school feeding programmes). The needs of millions of **migrant children and children with disabilities** also deserve focussed attention at all levels of the education. Beyond numerical parity, China will have to accelerate progress towards **gender equality** by addressing the causes of disparities in **learning achievements** at all levels.

Inter-cultural dimension is an indispensable aspect of quality education. Schools are not the only providers of education. It is important that families, communities, social organizations and the media accept their responsibility in education, with the support of educational institutions.

Achieving **equity** and **inclusion** requires securing the right to education of all children, young people and adults, and their rights within and through education to realize their potential and aspirations. This also requires responding to the **diversity of needs** among all learners

by increasing their participation in learning, and by reducing **exclusion** from and within education.

Indeed, in their quest to meet the right to inclusive quality education for all, the western provinces have made recognizable progress and at the same time have taken stock of the unfinished tasks which will lead to renewed efforts for a more contextualized and expanded vision of EFA and learning that recognizes and values their multicultural and multilingual diversity and their respective provincial development processes towards sustainable development. It demands targeted actions – farsighted actions that look beyond simultaneously.

While orchestrating the EFA Policy Agenda beyond 2015, China must look beyond counting numbers. Getting children to school alone is not sufficient. What is required is to know and learn: What do we do in the school? What should be our focus on the phenomenon of “silent exclusion”? How we can harmonise the national and the provincial EFA initiatives with the changing demands and expectations of the globalised knowledge society? Mere expansion of the system will not serve the purpose. In the process of developing EFA agenda beyond 2015, China will have to pursue a “**Transformative Goal**” rather than mere quantitative expansion of the system.

One of the key transformative goals which Chinese could be to create “**New Generation Schools**” – schools as inclusive spaces – imparting, besides academics, training in creative arts, languages, public speaking, physical education, sports and other subjects; promising student exchange and community service programmes; inviting and encouraging the private, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and other EFA stakeholders to join hands with the school management to provide quality education.

Through a collaborative, state-led process managed by MOE, EFA norms and standards have to be revisited and developed that are rich in content and practice and arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally-benchmarked basic education. The process of developing “learning to learn skills” adaptive to rapidly changing demands of the Chinese work place is an imperative. There is an urgent need to integrate work place skills in the national curriculum. Finally, the

Ministry of Education has to explore ways and means to move towards life-long learning—a new framework for youth literacy and adult education.

The new development agenda must be based on the people's needs, experiences and aspirations, and informed by the achievements and failures of the past decades. The priorities must be formulated in dialogue with civil society and trade unions, giving an opportunity to education unions to share their experiences and expertise, and shape the education agenda.

China's politicians, educators and business leaders should unite around the idea that students need "21st century skills" to be successful today. It is exciting to believe that we live in times that are so revolutionary that they demand new and different abilities. But in fact, the skills that students need in the 21st century are not new. Critical thinking and problem solving, for example, have been components of human progress throughout history. Such skills as information literacy and global awareness are not new.

What is actually new is the extent to which changes in the Chinese economy (and the world) mean that collective and individual success depends on having such skills. If China is to have a more equitable and effective public education system, skills that have been emphasized by the provinces of the few must become universal.

This distinction between "skills that are novel" and "skills that must be taught more intentionally and effectively" ought to lead policymakers to different education reforms than those they are now considering. If these skills were indeed new, then perhaps China would need a radical overhaul of how we think about **content** and **curriculum**.

That effort requires three primary components. First, Chinese educators and policy makers must ensure that the **instructional programme** is complete and that the content is not short-changed for an ephemeral pursuit of skills. Second, provinces, cities, municipalities, counties, school districts, and schools need to revamp how they think about **human capital** in education—in particular how **teachers** are trained. Finally, China needs **new assessments** that can accurately measure richer learning and more complex tasks. For the 21st century skills effort to be effective, these three elements must be implemented in concert. Otherwise, the reform will be superficial and counter-productive.

Because of these challenges, devising a 21st century skills curriculum requires more than paying lip service to content knowledge. Outlining the skills in detail and merely urging that content be taught, too, is a recipe for failure. China must plan to teach skills in the context of particular content knowledge and to treat both as equally important.

In addition, Chinese education leaders must be realistic about which skills are teachable. If the Chinese educators deem that such skills as collaboration and self-direction are essential, they should launch a concerted effort to study how they can be taught effectively rather than blithely assume that mandating their teaching will result in students learning them.

Greater emphasis on skills also has important implications for **teacher training**. Teacher holds the key – invest in improving the quality of the teacher. Chinese resolve to teach these skills to all students will not be enough. The Government must have a plan by which teachers can succeed where previous generations have failed. Shortage of good teachers need focused attention.

Advocates of 21st century skills favour student-centred methods—for example, problem-based learning and project-based learning—that allow students to collaborate, work on authentic problems, and engage with the community. These approaches are widely acclaimed and can be found in any pedagogical methods textbook; teachers know about them and believe they are effective. And yet, most Chinese teachers do not use them.

For change to move beyond administrators' offices and penetrate classrooms, Chinese educators must understand that **professional development** is a massive undertaking. Most teachers do not need to be persuaded that project-based learning is a good idea—they already believe that. What teachers need is much more robust training and support than they receive today, including specific lesson plans (innovative teaching method) that deal with the high cognitive demands and potential **classroom management** problems of using student-centred methods.

There is little point in investing heavily in curriculum and human capital without also investing in **assessments** to evaluate what is or is not being accomplished in the classroom. The potential exists in the current Chinese education system to produce assessments that measure

thinking skills and are also reliable and comparable between students and schools—elements integral to efforts to ensure accountability and equity. But efforts to assess these skills are still in their infancy; the education system faces enormous challenges in developing the ability to deliver these assessments at scale.

None of these assessment challenges are insurmountable, but addressing them will require deliberate attention from policymakers and 21st century skills proponents, as well as a deviation from the path that Chinese policymaking is on today. Such an effort is essential. Why mount a national effort to change education if the Chinese educators have no way of knowing whether the change has been effective?

A Better, But Harder, Way

The point of the above argument is not to say that teaching students how to think, work together better, or use new information more rigorously is not a worthy and attainable goal. Without better curriculum, better teaching, and better tests, the emphasis on "21st century skills" will be a superficial one that will sacrifice long-term gains for the appearance of short-term progress in China.

Curriculum, teacher expertise, and assessment have all been weak links in education reform efforts—a fact that should sober the Chinese educators and today's skills proponents as they survey the task of dramatically improving all three. Efforts to create more formalized common standards would help address some of the challenges by focusing efforts in a common direction. But common standards will not, by themselves, be enough.

The past few decades have seen great progress in education reform in the People's Republic of China—progress that has especially benefited students in these four western provinces and Chengdu City. Today's reformers can build on that progress only if they pay keen attention to the challenges associated with genuinely improving teaching and learning. If the Chinese policy makers and leaders ignore these challenges, the 21st century skills movement risks becoming another fad that ultimately changes little—or even worse, sets back the cause of creating dramatically more powerful schools for Chinese, especially those who are underserved today.

The following points deserve the attention of Chinese educators:

- Return to the drawing board on reforming curriculum and teaching.
- Develop strategies for learning in a more holistic manner than simply as test scores.
- Expand the meaning and scope of girls' education to women empowerment and gender equality - an unfinished agenda that has to be brought to central focus.
- Focus on young women leadership development.
- Revisit the framework of educational planning.
- Replace project-based supply and input orientation with Child Rights and Entitlements Perspective.
- Evolve benchmarks and local norms –strengthen decentralised action –involve the community.
- Craft a dynamic framework for Public–Private Partnership: need to learn new ways of relating – mobilising/investing private resources for public cause; value addition should be the focus – not replacement for public investment.
- Harness the benefits of South-South collaboration - which has remained untapped and rhetorical.
- Build institutional capacities who can envision and strategize action-emphasis on building empirical knowledge base on education.
- Invest in developing “High End Human Resources” who can lead and take on new challenges.

To sum up, drawing inspiration from China's achievements and lessons learnt in EFA, innovative and well-managed **use of ICT** for learning can herald the transition of Education for All into a brand new era of Learning for All, when all people can truly learn anything at any time and in any place.

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