

Worksheet on “Development and Achievements of Basic Education Since the Establishment of the People’s Republic of China”

A. Worksheet Overview

Topic	Development and achievements of basic education since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)
Relevant themes, topics and learning focus	Theme 1: Hong Kong under “One Country, Two Systems” Topic: Situation of the country and sense of national identity Learning focus: Achievements of the country in different areas in recent years (culture and education, poverty eradication)
	Theme 2: Our country since reform and opening-up Topic: Change in people’s life and overall national strength Learning focus: Changes and enhancement of people’s quality of life (educational level)
Overall design rationale	<p>This worksheet makes use of texts, video clips and statistics as learning materials, and uses case studies as learning and teaching strategy to help students understand the development and achievements of basic education (primary and junior secondary levels) since the establishment of the PRC, and learn how the country has alleviated poverty in poverty-stricken areas. As such, students’ understanding about the country’s situation could be further enhanced. Sense of national identity could also be strengthened.</p> <p>This worksheet also involves the perspective of social mobility. Students will understand how the country has been dedicated to the improvement of education in poverty-stricken area and how one’s accessibility of education is closely related to social mobility through case studies. Students are encouraged to study diligently and prepare for their study and career in the future.</p>
Learning and teaching strategies	<p>Knowledge :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the development and achievements of basic education (primary and junior secondary levels) since the establishment of the PRC • Relationship between educational opportunities and boosting social mobility
	<p>Skills :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use different types of data to explore the topic (texts, video clip, statistics) • Verbal and written communication skills
	<p>Values and attitudes :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an attitude towards concerning national development and people’s welfare • Appreciate and recognise the country’s achievements in basic education and to enhance national identity • Reflect and do not take the existing learning environment for granted, be grateful for what they have and study diligently

<p>Suggested lesson time</p>	<p>This worksheet comprises three learning and teaching procedures which are estimated to be completed in 35-40 minutes. Teachers are advised to allocate appropriate time for the lessons and for all the learning and teaching procedures in light of the school context.</p>
<p>Points to note when using the worksheet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select topics with sufficient and reliable information and appropriate examples which are of relevance to the curriculum, and are commensurate with the cognitive development of students. • Use various learning and teaching strategies (e.g. understanding students' prior knowledge, questioning and feedback, group discussion) to enrich students' knowledge base and learning skills to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. • Use precise and diversified materials (texts, video clips, pictures, and statistics) to explore the topic and provide appropriate guidance. • Teachers should make use of different opportunities to guide students to recognise the challenges faced by the country and room for improvement from the perspective of development. Hence, students can develop concern about the national development and people's welfare, and appreciate and recognise the country's achievements in basic education and enhance national identity.

B. Learning and Teaching Procedures and Activities

Step 1: Teachers guide students to read materials and watch video clips

If time allows and if there are students who have experience in school exchange activities in the Mainland, they can be invited to share their experience and views on the educational development in the Mainland to arouse learning motivation.

- Distribute **Appendix 1** to students as reading materials before group discussion so that they have a basic understanding of the development and achievements of basic education since the establishment of the PRC as well as the meaning of social mobility. Appendix 1 consists of one video clip, four pieces of texts and statistics. Teachers should first play the video clip and give time for students to read through the materials.
- In accordance with students' ability in understanding different forms of data and their prior knowledge of the educational development in the Mainland, teachers can decide what kind of guidance to be provided to students or even give a brief lecture before distributing the reading materials, with an aim to help students understand various materials in Appendix 1. Suggested guidance and key teaching points are as follows:
 - Highlights of each source in Appendix 1:
 - Sources A and B are about the educational development and achievements since the establishment of the PRC which are not limited to basic education. They give an overview to students before focusing the scope of learning on basic education.
 - Sources C and D focus on the development and achievements of basic education/ nine-year compulsory education (primary and junior secondary levels) which is the core learning focus of this worksheet. Teachers can point out that the overall scope of educational development is considerably broad (e.g. senior secondary level, tertiary level, overseas education, vocational education), and the foundation of education lies in primary and secondary levels (see Source C). Thus, this worksheet focuses on the development of basic education.
 - Source E touches on the meaning of social mobility. In particular, teachers can hint students that social mobility is closely related to one's accessibility of education (the part underlined in Source E).
 - Draw students' attention to the following questions while viewing the video clips and reading the materials, and point out that these questions are related to the subsequent group discussion (Appendix 2). Thus, Appendixes 1 and 2 can be used together for further discussion with group members.
 - How is the development of basic education related to the enhancement of people's quality of life?
 - How does the basic education in city differ from that in the poverty-stricken areas?
 - How does the overall development, including improving education in poverty-stricken areas, help promote students' social mobility in the Mainland?

Step 2: Group discussion

- Ask students to form groups and distribute case study materials and relevant discussion questions of **Appendix 2**. This appendix covers a story of a primary

student from a poor rural area and how he went back to school (Source F), how his life was changed in terms of livelihood and study in three years (Source G), and the poverty alleviation measures provided by the country to the county where the student lived (Source H).

- Teachers can briefly introduce the background of the case (the introduction of Appendix 2) and point out that the experience of the primary student in the case has drawn much public attention. Thus, it is chosen as an example to illustrate the country's efforts in improving basic education in poverty-stricken areas.
- Play the two video clips (Sources F and G) and remind students to take notes on the content related to discussion questions. After that, ask students to read the remaining materials (Source H) and then start group discussion.
- Invite students to share their discussion results. Teachers can comment and supplement students' sharing with their own knowledge and draw reference from the hint in the worksheet. It is suggested that teachers can draw students' attention to the following for conclusion:
 - The Chinese Central and local governments attach high importance to children's education of poverty-stricken areas not because of the concern over the "Snowflake Boy". Related poverty alleviation and education improvement policies have been underway. Teachers should avoid the misconception that the country ignores the educational needs of students in poor areas.
 - The country is vast and differences in regional development are unavoidable. Students should be able to grasp the whole picture to understand that the educational development in villages still lags behind cities. However, as shown in the materials provided in the worksheet, the country's overall educational development has been improving. The country has also implemented various targeted poverty alleviation measures and allocated more resources on rural education to gradually narrowed the gap between the educational development of villages and cities, and ultimately improved the quality of the people in terms of education.
- Teachers should provide a comprehensive learning experience for students and foster positive values in students through the integration of cognition, affection and action. For example, teachers can guide students to learn the current situation of the country from the perspective of development to draw students' attention to and recognise the country's achievement in poverty alleviation through education. Besides, teachers can encourage students to take part in the Mainland exchange activities or exchange with students from the Mainland sister schools through various means to understand the education development of the country.

Step 3: Summary and arrangement of after-class reading

- Distribute the concluding materials of Appendix 3, then play the video clip in the Appendix (Source I) and ask students to read the remaining material (Source J). After students finish reading, teachers can draw the conclusion:
 - Point out the country's achievements in advancing educational development and relevant poverty alleviation work, and stress that these achievements are also of great significance in the global context.
 - Summarise Sources I and J and highlight that the educational development in China assures "quality" while boosting "quantity" (number of people

receiving education). This is the “quality education” mentioned in Source J which can promote the formation of a learning society (the underlined parts in Source J). People will be able to realise personal dreams as they can have access to education, and realise the saying “knowledge reshapes destiny”.

- Encourage students to cherish their learning opportunities, study diligently and equip themselves well at school.
- Ask students to read the following article (Teachers can change or provide additional articles based on their understanding on educational development in China) to enrich their knowledge and consolidate their learning:
 - 劉復興〈1949-2019：教育跨越式發展的 70 年〉，今日中國網頁，2019 年 7 月 3 日。
http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/zw2018/bktg/201907/t20190703_800172670.html
 - 周珊珊〈人民日報人民時評：教育扶貧守護農村發展希望〉，人民網，2020 年 8 月 7 日。
<http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0817/c1003-31823983.html>



Appendix 1: Pre-discussion reading materials

Source A: Educational development in China in 70 years (1949-2019)

Video clip: “From illiteracy to 80% of universal higher education”
(Video Length: 1 minute and 15 seconds, Putonghua voice-over with Chinese subtitles)



Website: http://m.xinhuanet.com/2019-09/07/c_1124971807.htm

Source B: Data of educational development at all levels since the establishment of the PRC (1949-2020)

Index/ year	1949	1978	2000	2020
Gross enrollment rate* in preschool education	0.4% (1950)	10.6%	46.1%	85.2%
Net enrollment rate# in primary education	20.0%	94.0%	99.1%	99.96%
Gross enrollment rate in junior secondary education	3.1%	66.4%	88.6%	102.5%
Gross enrollment rate in senior secondary education	1.1%	35.1%	42.8%	91.2%
Gross enrollment rate in higher education	0.26%	2.7%	12.5%	54.4%

* Gross enrollment rate refers to the percentage of schooled population of a particular level of education regardless of their age in the total population of the age group specified by the country for that level of education. Since this include students from non-standard age group (younger or older), gross enrollment rate might exceed 100%.

Net enrollment rate in primary education refers to the percentage of schooled population of primary students in the total population of the age group specified by the country for primary education. The percentage is calculated separately based on the school age and schooling system of different regions.

Source: Extracted from the white paper “China’s Epic Journey from Poverty to Prosperity”, 28 September 2021, website of the PRC.

http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202109/28/content_WS61528550c6d0df57f98e0ffa.htm
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Source C: Overview of basic educational development in China since the establishment of the PRC

The foundation of national rejuvenation lies in education, and the foundation of the whole education lies in primary and secondary education. A 70-year history of basic educational development in China also reveals the rise of China from lagging behind to achieving revitalisation.

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China announced in 1982 put forward the idea of “universal and compulsory primary education”. This was the first time for the PRC to define universal and compulsory primary education in its Constitution which has become a widespread fundament of universal and compulsory primary education.

In 1985, the “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Education System” proposed for the first time “the implementation of a systematic nine-year compulsory education system”. The country leveraged local governments’ initiative in developing basic education while local governments leveraged people to put the policy in practice. This system reform promoted the rapid popularisation of compulsory education in the Mainland.

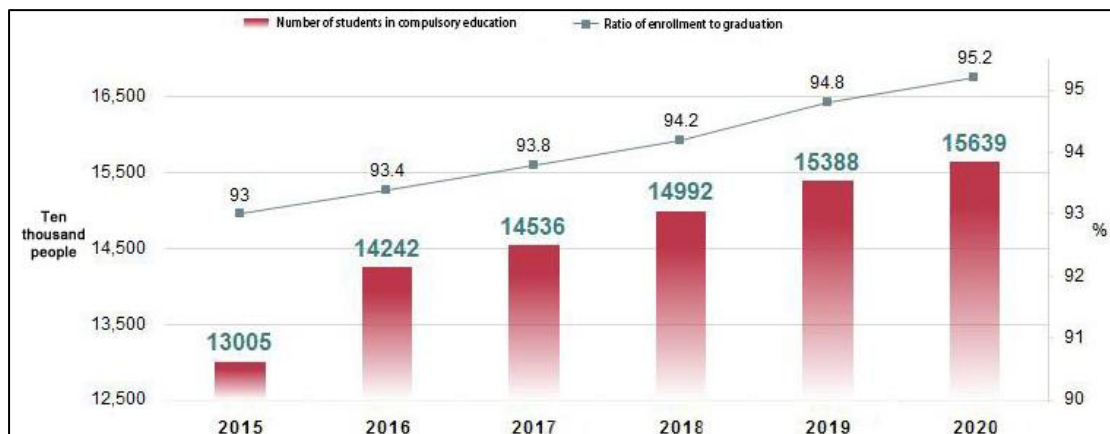
In 1986, a free nine-year compulsory education was included as part of the newly announced Compulsory Education Law which defines the legal protection of universal and compulsory education. China embarked on its legalisation of basic education.

In 2006, the newly revised “Compulsory Education Law” clarified the principle of free compulsory education through legal means. With the abolition of agricultural tax, students under compulsory education from rural areas in the western regions have been exempted from tuition and miscellaneous fees since the beginning of spring term in 2006. In spring 2007, this was extended to all rural areas across the country. In autumn 2008, it was further extended to the whole country. Since then, compulsory education has been “entirely free”.

According to UNESCO, China plays a conducive role in boosting the enrollment rate of children from 80% to 84% in the world. From 1990 to 2005, the number of illiterate people in the world decreased by 100 million, among which 90 million was from China. This illustrates that China has been a prominent driving force for the development of ‘education for all’ in the world. When the PRC was first established, the average number of years of education per capita was only 1.6 years. By 2018, the figure was boosted to 10.6 years. China has made world-renowned achievements in education.

Source: Extracted from “夯實千秋基業 聚力學有所教—新中國 70 年基礎教育改革發展歷程”，《中國教育報》，2019 年 9 月 26 日。中華人民共和國教育部網頁
http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201909/t20190926_401046.html

Source D: Population of national compulsory education (primary to junior secondary) and ratio of enrollment to graduation* (2015-20)



* Ratio of enrollment to graduation refers to percentage of the number of graduates from junior secondary level to the number of students enrolled in Primary 1 of the same cohort.

Source: ‘Major educational achievements in China in 2020’, 1 March 2021, website of the Ministry of Education of the PRC
http://en.moe.gov.cn/features/2021TwoSessions/Reports/202103/t20210323_522026.html

Source E: Meaning of social mobility

Social stratification is a system where people are ranked in a hierarchy according to their wealth, class and power. Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups through this hierarchy. Social mobility is a common phenomenon in societies under an open stratification system, and these societies also provide opportunities for movement and encourage people to pursue greater wealth, reputation and improved social status via various channels. **Among the range of factors that affect social mobility, education is the most important. It is believed that knowledge can change a person’s destiny, and that receiving the best and most complete education can lead to upward mobility.** Social mobility can help build a society of greater equality and openness, allowing the general public to believe they can have a better future and the opportunity to achieve success through hard work.

Source: Extracted and adapted from ‘Social mobility’ of “Liberal Studies Curriculum Resources Booklet Series: Hong Kong Today”, page 32-34.

Appendix 2: Case study – Story of the “Snowflake Boy”

Case background

Wang Fuman, the “Snowflake Boy” born in 2010, is a primary three student from Zhuanshanbao Primary School in Xin Jie Town, Ludian County, Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province. On 9 January 2018, Wang walked 4.5km under -9°C to school. When he arrived school, his hair froze. The school principal took a picture of him and posted it on the Internet (see the photo on the right captured from the video in Source F). The photo caught vast attention from the public and named the boy as the “Snowflake Boy” and was appealing for concern and donation to support students from the rural areas. (See the video clip in Source F for details)



Three years later, the media interviewed Wang Fuman again and found that his livelihood and the way he travelled to school had been considerably improved. (See the video clip in Source G for details)

Source F: The “Snowflake Boy” whose story caught public attention in early 2018

Video clip: “The ‘Snowflake Boy’ goes viral, netizens feel sorrow”, 10 January 2018

(Video Length: 2 minute and 22 seconds, Cantonese voice-over with Chinese subtitles)

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/cablechinadesk/videos/1608079999336480/>



Source G: Interviewing the “Snowflake Boy” after three years

Video clip: “Interviewing the ‘Snowflake Boy’ after three years: My way back to school is no longer limited by weather. Hope I could change the future of my hometown”, 22 January 2021.

(Putonghua voice-over with Chinese subtitles, view the clip at 00:00-03:06)

Website:

<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1WV411q7gU?from=search&seid=14028793072457865722>



Source H: Changes brought by poverty alleviation in Ludian County, Yunnan Province
(Part of this data source is included in the clip of Source G at 03:07-04:57)

Ludian County is one of the 27 counties suffering from extreme poverty in Yunnan Province. Yet, the county has changed drastically in various aspects like education and transport in recent years. Two highways run through the county and connect with nearby transportation networks, making Ludian highly accessible. Deputy director of the education bureau of Ludian County remarked that there were far more than one “Snowflake Boys” in the county; while at the moment, the phenomenon that students had to trek to schools has “basically disappeared”.

The deputy director of Ludian poverty alleviation office expressed that the “Snowflake Boy” Wang Fuman drew public attention to local living conditions. Yet, it did not mean that the local poverty alleviation work was triggered by the tremendous online attention. Long before the “Snowflake Boy” went viral on the internet, local poverty alleviation work had been kicked off. Since then, “progress has been made gradually in accordance with the specific timeline and plans of the project”. For instance, since 2018, Ludian County has practically carried out various works to improve people’s livelihood, driven enindustrial development and infrastructure improvement, provided business support and spiritual poverty alleviation. 15 villages were out of the poverty-stricken pool, 17,857 people from 4,559 households were lifted out of poverty, and the poverty rate dropped by 4.91% as compared with that of the end of 2017.

Source: Extracted from the following articles:

- 〈「冰花男孩」和故鄉魯甸 曾經頭頂「冰花」是生活常態 如今「晴通雨阻」早已消失〉, 2021年1月23日, 新華網 http://www.xinhuanet.com/local/202101/23/c_1127015433.htm
- 〈「冰花男孩」: 今年冬天變暖了 搬進新家新宿舍 學校供暖供熱水〉, 《文匯報》, 2019年1月6日。

Discussion questions

1. According to Source F, what do you think about Wang Fuman who trekked to school under extreme cold weather? Based on your knowledge, comparing to cities, what are the shortcomings of rural education in the Mainland? (Hints: geographical conditions, school facilities, teachers' qualifications, family background, personal life experience...)

Hints for teachers

- **Geographical conditions:** Students live far away from schools. Some need to trek to schools.
- **School facilities:** Poorly equipped with simple teaching tools, lack of electronic teaching devices which are commonly used in urban schools.
- **Teachers' qualifications:** lower qualifications, high turnover rate, unbalanced teachers' qualifications
- **Family background:** Parents are less educated with quite a number of them working at cities, leaving their children to their grandparents; this kind of children is known as "left-behind children".
- **Personal life experience:** Students lack learning experience outside of schools. Their horizons are not broad enough.

2. Further to the abovementioned shortcomings and based on the meaning of social mobility mentioned in Source E of Appendix 1, how would it affect the personal growth of children from rural areas and the social development in China if education development in the rural areas is unsatisfactory?

Hints for teachers

- **Children from rural areas lack access to quality education.** Their parents might have to work in cities and leave them to their grandparents. This can easily lead to insufficient parenting and thus children's behavioural problems.
- **Children from rural areas are unlikely to improve their individual strength and family conditions through education.** Upward mobility becomes difficult which would result in generational poverty.
- **The urban-rural gap cannot be narrowed and might possibly be widened.** This is unfavourable to social stability and development.

3. According to Sources F and G, illustrate what changes Wang Fuman has experienced in terms of education and other aspects of quality of life during the past three years.

Hints for teachers

- **Moved from a mud house in mountainous area to a new house closer to the village.**
- **Had to trek for two hours to school previously; one might easily fall on the trails during bad weather.** Asphalt roads are now available and the road conditions have been improved significantly.
- **Boarding at a school in the centre of the town, and thus no need to trek daily to school in extreme cold weather.**
- **School facilities improved with stove and electronic blackboard.**

4. With reference to Sources G and H and your knowledge, explain why the issue of improving education in the rural areas requires a holistic poverty alleviation action plan and related measures to achieve greater results.

Hints for teachers

- The poverty problem in rural area is intertwined. It is a must to drive economic development of rural areas as a whole (e.g. developing transport infrastructure, improving agricultural products, enhancing agriculture technology, strengthening management digitalisation) to drive the modernisation of agriculture. Besides, in line with national educational development, quality and equitable education has to be provided to children in rural areas to realise the impact of poverty alleviation, thus narrowing urban-rural gap, promoting social mobility, and achieving social equality.

Appendix 3: Conclusion

Source I: Video clip

Video clip: “The story of enabling 150 million people read and write”
(Chinese narration and subtitles only)(Watch 00:35-03:00)

Website: <https://chinacurrent.com/story/20339/teaching-how-to-read-and-write>



Source J: Achievement in the development of basic education in China

China has evolved from a populous country where a vast majority of people were illiterate or semi-illiterate, through one with significant education resources and a huge workforce, to one with high-quality education and human resources. It has established the world’s largest education system that spans preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, ranking in the upper-middle category worldwide in terms of modern education... China’s basic education **has tremendously progressed from providing students access to schools and teachers providing education to ensuring the quality of both**, and a good and equitable education for all children is becoming a reality...A system for lifelong learning is under construction, augmented by internet and digital technologies and offering wide personal choices, and as **self-improvement comes to be an everyday and everywhere activity, a learning society for all is taking shape**. Education in China has opened up paths for people to pursue a better life, changed their destiny, turned their dreams into reality, and presented them with more possibilities in life.

Source: Extracted from the white paper “China’s Epic Journey from Poverty to Prosperity”, 28 September 2021, website of the PRC.
http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202109/28/content_WS61528550c6d0df57f98e0ffa.htm

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