

Education in China

China's Missing Potential – Beyond the cities a small revolution is happening in education.

Monday, 03 December 2007

“If you plan for one year, plant rice; if you plan for ten years, plant trees; if you plan for 100 years, educate mankind.”

Chinese Proverb

With the gleam of the 21st Century past our doorstep, China's influence in the world grows year on year. By 2027, China is set to become the world's largest economy¹ and may already have overtaken the US as its second largest exporter.² For a quarter of a century its growth rate has averaged a virtually unheard of 10 percent per annum,³ creating unknown wealth opportunities and strengthening China's position as one of the world's top destinations for foreign investment.⁴

But while all these achievements are amazing, one cannot ignore the other China behind the scenes; the *real* face of development in progress. China's future lies in a strong domestic economy, and yet 60 percent of its population till the land, alongside most of its poor.⁵ Truth be told, 600 million people across the Middle Kingdom live on less than \$2 per day and the real picture of an ancient civilisation lies beyond the glitz of her cities and among the villages and hamlets of her people.

Literacy Rate – 116 million people illiterate, over 69 percent women. (2005)⁶

Girl Children – In rural China only 41 percent of girls were enrolled in lower secondary school and 8.5 percent in senior secondary school. (2001)⁷

Dropout Rate – Over 1.1 million children drop out of primary school every year.⁸ An estimated 40 percent give up on secondary school.⁹

Teachers – In rural areas, 25 percent of primary school teachers have no more than a junior high school education.¹⁰

School Fees – In 2004, fees from local families made up *one fifth* of all local spending on schools, thus laying quality at the feet of the poor.¹¹

Poverty – 26 million people lived on less than \$92 per year in 2004.¹²

Funding – Rural Areas with 60 percent of the population receive just 23 percent of all funds for education. The rest goes to cities. (2004)⁹

PEOPLE'S LITERACY

An Overview

Past the shimmering skyline of China's future, 116 million people labour, unable to read or write, generally poor and living on the edge of a society in hyper transition.⁶ Blistering development has created a huge imbalance of literacy and poverty across China. Although 95 percent of Beijing is literate, almost half the population of Tibet never picked up a book.¹³ Living standards in the East have been said to match Portugal in comparison, whilst those in the West are closer to Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴

China has made undeniable progress since the turmoil of the first half of the 20th century. Over the past 30 years, 500 million people have achieved literacy, giving the country a 91 percent literacy rate. By the turn of the millennium, an equal number of boys and girls were attending primary school¹⁵ and with the latest 11th five year plan underway, China expects to reduce adult illiteracy by another 43 percent by 2015.¹⁶

However development needs depth as well as breadth and the easy gains of the past are proving harder to replicate. Today the frontline of progress lies in China's hardest to reach areas lying traditionally in the far west, where entrenched poverty prevents access to schooling, and low investment keeps things that way. Efforts to provide literacy in these areas are exacerbated by rapidly increasing income equality, placing wealth in the hands of the few and restricting opportunities for everyone else.

A recent push by the Government, hopes to universalise nine year education by the year 2015 and halve adult illiteracy.¹⁷ But the hurdles are high and the Government can't be everywhere at once. Minorities, migrants and women are still the traditional sufferers in rural regions where schools experience high dropouts, bankruptcy and lack of funding. For the first time in 30 years, illiteracy is on the comeback and the task ahead may be a political commitment not even China is able to meet.¹⁸

"Our next goal is to achieve overall modernisation by the mid-21st Century."

– **China National Development Report 2005**

UNIVERSALISING EDUCATION

Cheer on 1988!

What makes China different?

Following the break-up of the Qing Empire in 1912, the first half of the 20th Century in China was distracted by civil war and Japanese invasion.¹⁹ Since the mass literacy campaigns of the 1930s, early Governments realised the importance of education to a modern economy. Over the last 70 years, huge efforts have been made persuading people that literacy was the key to a secure financial future, and to a large extent the Government has succeeded.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the literacy rate jumped from 20 percent to 65.5 percent by 1982.²⁰ No small achievement for a billion people at the time. Yet it was one that depended on the people to succeed and success came about in four important ways:

1. It developed a *greater need* for education throughout society, helping to spread education and give people the knowledge to change their own lives.
2. Placed a heavy emphasis on adult education as the most effective means to boost immediate productivity in China. Whilst productivity didn't increase in China until the mid-eighties, the groundwork was already laid.
3. Built a wide-scale formal school system, which provided the infrastructure on which to expand education in the future.
4. Granted considerable autonomy to local communities in funding their own schools and hiring local teachers, thus ensuring the education net spread wide, (but not necessarily ensuring high quality).

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China already had an educated workforce able to take advantage of the ensuing economic reforms in 1978. The world was agog as land redistribution from 1978 to 1985 freed 125 million people from poverty by allowing them to farm individual plots of land for the first time. A mostly literate population was able to quickly take advantage of modern farming techniques and food production soared.

In 1982, China's third census showed that literacy rates in the country had in fact stagnated since the last census in 1964. National pride was at stake, as the old system was quickly condemned as a champion of quantity over quality and a new system was developed. Educators realised that while they were producing millions of adult literates (*wenhua*) each year, they were failing to prevent new illiterates (*wenmang*) forming in the school system and drastic measures were taken.²¹

In 1986, standard nine year education was made compulsory by law and in 1988, China's famous "two-basics" system was implemented nationwide, i.e. basic universal nine year education for all and basic elimination of adult illiteracy by the year 2000.²² Throughout the nineties, progress essentially followed these two rules. More teachers were hired, classroom space expanded and a new 'learner centred' curriculum was put in place. Emphasis switched from adult education to UPE.

Although omnipotent governments rarely succeed in the long run, China's blend of socialism and capitalist gain for its people has been uniquely placed to ensure action, monitor progress and meet targets. In this case, what progress needs, progress gets and achieving a literacy rate of 91 percent was only possible due to hefty commitment and a population that genuinely believes in the importance of literacy to their future well-being.

Today's challenges are not the same as yesterday's gains and the difficulties China faces now to educate the remaining illiterates are formidable. The fight is proving particularly tough in the nation's far west provinces, where almost 100 million people sit with both feet sunk in illiteracy and poverty.²³ To simply educate and liberate is no longer the answer against centuries of tradition, particularly in minority areas, and

the Chinese are just beginning to realize that it might take longer than they once thought.

Article: A Century of Education in China
http://www.r4e.org/history_of_education_in_china.html

Current Success

The Middle Kingdom has never been able to offer the common man the educational opportunities it does today. From age six, children must legally complete six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school to meet state requirements. If all goes well, senior school then offers three years of either academic or vocational training.

If Government figures are to be believed, by 2002, 87% of China's counties had achieved the 'two basics' in "areas inhabited by 91% of the national population."²⁴ By the turn of the century, youth illiteracy was less than 2% of the population; teachers were becoming qualified in record numbers and classroom space was vastly expanded. In fact by 2005, China sold more newspapers per day than any other country in the world (93.5 million), almost double the United States.²⁵

With more parents educated in the 21st Century, the demand for quality education has never been greater. Net enrollment for children in primary school was at 98 percent in 2002, with an almost equal number of boys and girls enrolling.²⁶ Gross enrollments for junior secondary were at an all time high of 90 percent the same year, and senior secondary enrollments were at 43 percent. Since 1990, secondary figures have increased from 67 and 26 percent respectively,²⁶ meaning that the opportunities for a child's education appear to be rapidly improving over time... or are they?

The problem is that as development races forwards year on year, it's not happening *equitably* in every place at once. China's richer east, with its greater ease of access, traditionally receives more investment than the predominantly poorer rural west – creating the income gap we're always hearing about. The same applies between urban and rural areas across the country where the division of wealth affects the standard of education received.

For couples living in urban areas, children have access to higher living standards, subsidised schooling and greater opportunities than their counterparts in rural parts of the country. Families that wish to move to cities from the countryside are restricted by an entrenched household registration system known as a 'hukou,' which means rural parents have few choices on the school their kids attend or the education they eventually receive (and even if they did, few could afford it).

The further away from the coast one travels, the greater inequality becomes. China's coastal cities and provinces have the highest GDP in the country while its western regions have the worst. In real China, most of the country is still catching up to the gains of the last thirty years, and no more so than in the country's rural west.²⁷

“Statistics suggest as much as 77 per cent of the country's education funding went to cities in 2002, while rural areas, with 60 per cent of China's total population, received just 23 per cent of the funds”

– China Daily (March 2005)

Rural Dreams

An open map of China is a world removed from the vaulted skylines of the East Coast. Most of the interior is a blend of mountains, plateaus and desert with only 13.5 percent actually cultivable and even less ‘open for business.’²⁸ Very little of China’s surging boom has made it into the nation’s heartland and the income gap between urban heartland and rural backcountry now stands at a Gini Co-efficient of 0.45, which international experience has shown to cause internal dissent.²⁹

Tougher conditions in rural areas mean that people can expect to live over 5 years longer in the city than in the village.³⁰ Whilst life for the average farmer has improved over the last 30 years, (with more food on the table and clothes on his back), it hasn’t been enough to remove the day to day insecurities that plague most rural residents.

With only 3 million receiving pensions, the twin evils of illness induced poverty and exorbitant school fees are daily worries for farmers’ eking a living off the land.³¹ For most, their health and the education of their offspring are the only insurance they have, and disaster to either is enough to wipe out a lifetime’s savings and destroy the dreams they’d once hoped to have.

However rural education offers a familiar story. For schools on the extremities of China: threats of dropouts, migration, traditions, parental son preference and under-funding are all daily obstacles. Although, teachers are becoming more qualified, many are still not and providing a quality education on a shoe string is a challenge for most. On average, labourers in rural areas can expect to receive 3 years less schooling than their equivalents in urban regions.³² Literacy rates are roughly 10.5 percent less outside the city than in it, and the proportion of residents with an education above high school is often no greater than 8.5 percent.³³

In 2002, 372 of 2863 counties in China could not guarantee nine year compulsory education for lack of funds – of which 40 couldn’t even ensure an elementary one. Unsurprising the vast majority of these lie in the country’s far west, where nine year education only covers 77 percent of the population,³⁴ and 85 percent of the country’s 100 million poor presently live.

Beijing’s quest for universal education now lies beyond the traditional reach of earlier efforts and new approaches are now needed. The Government is having some success with schemes such as the humungous ‘Go West’ project and free textbook to children programmes, but critics argues such gains are limited, and that broader reforms such as eliminating schools fees are needed, (which Beijing is said to be doing by the end of 2007).

“Total revenue is less than \$2 million a year in a county with half a million people and 408 schools. Just to pay the county's 5,000 teachers requires more than \$3 million annually - and that does not begin to address costs like classroom supplies and upkeep.”

. – NY Times 1999 – Many rural girls are out of school.

OFF TO SCHOOL WITH YOU!

For the people and by the people

Until the mid-1980s, rural communities had basic autonomy over how their schools were funded and managed. Income came from the Government, and farmers made up any shortfalls in funding through shared responsibility schemes – including money, labour, materials and even mass rebuilding drives.³⁵ But literacy gains were low and quality was suspect and in the early nineties the Government initiated its nine year compulsory education plan across the country.

From the start the government took a much more direct role in local Government by setting targets for progress and devolving responsibilities for funding and managing to county and town councils at ground level. This allowed Beijing to set policy from above and monitor targets, while giving the guys on the ground a free hand at management and funding schools through local taxes.

In short, the new system has proven a success but few counties have been able to afford it. Although counties now have greater powers to collect and spend taxes, they (still) don't have an administration system capable of handling the load, resulting in delayed wages to teachers, illegal school fees to students and a raised bar to education that many Chinese families could do without, especially in the poorest areas.³⁶

But as the old Chinese saying goes, “the sky is high and the Government [Emperor] is far away.” Despite a statutory right to free tuition, students are feeling the squeeze as councils pressure schools to make every cent count in the push to meet state literacy targets. Nowadays, students are being charged everything from text-book fees to management fees and even ‘coal’ fees in winter.³⁷

Many students are also unable to afford exorbitant exam fees, particularly at junior and senior level. For those that have studied their entire lives to make dreams into reality, life slaps them in the face and tells them to rethink things through. Schools that are unable to collect fees due to local poverty, are now hitting bankruptcy with debts totalling up to US \$2 million and some counties are shutting schools down.³⁸

Of all China's schools, 86 percent of primary schools and 59 percent of junior secondary schools are located in rural areas along with the majority of the population and the bulk of the nation's poor, so the Government knows how important it is to succeed here.³⁹ A recent survey by the World Bank is rumoured to have re-calculated

China's poor at 300 million and many analysts say this explains Beijing's recent push to eradicate poverty in remote areas. Although there are inconsistencies in reports.⁴⁰

China is a huge country, and even minor gains mean improvement to the lives of millions of people. The number of schools has been surprisingly *decreasing* for the past 30 years – by up to two thirds for primary schools.⁴¹ Student enrollments are falling as well presumably due to a terminal decline in China's fertility rate.⁴² Looking ahead to the future, both of these facts seem anathema today in the rest of the developing world, where schools are still being built and populations are rapidly increasing.

But one of the main reasons for closing schools has been the simple economics of keeping so many open in remote, outlying areas of the country. One solution to remote access has been the creation of boarding schools throughout the countryside, but the added cost of boarding fees can often be too much for rural families to bear. Conditions in such schools are often extreme. Students spend six days a week in zonal village schools creating local 'student towns' and Sundays home with the family. In Tibet, nomadic families have been unwilling to send their child to board due to the high costs. Only 30 percent of children were estimated to complete nine years education in Tibet in 2001.⁴³

“Over 32 percent of the teachers think quality education should be carried out by specially arranged teachers, and have no idea that they should play their own part in the drive.”

– **China Daily (August, 2001)**

Go forth and teach

Since the days of Chairman Mao, the village has educated its own. State coffers were low, so the most educated person from the community also became its teacher, known as *minban* (lit. community teacher). China's 'barefoot teachers' were essential to educating the masses but with quality always an issue, Beijing has been phasing them out with Government trained teachers since the early nineties.⁴⁴

However, finding qualified teachers willing to live in China's backwaters is proving a difficult challenge and as always, it's the students that are losing out. Local governments are feeling the heat in Beijing's push to increase standards and hire more teachers. Late payments, large class sizes and sub-standard facilities are a liability, many a qualified teacher would rather avoid, especially when better paid, cushier jobs lie in the nearest town.

According to the Human Development Report for China 2005, 57 percent of primary school teachers in urban areas had attended junior college or above vs. just 25 percent in rural parts of the country. The disparity at junior secondary school was even worse. While 43 percent of teachers in urban areas received a college education, only 11 percent had done so in rural parts (2004 data).⁴⁵

Curbing the ‘quality’ trend has been a major incentive of the Government for many years and since 2000, all *minban* should have been phased out.⁴⁶ From 1994 to 1998, 1.2 million barefoot teachers achieved fully qualified status.⁴⁷ In areas where most ‘peasants’ earn under 882 RMB (US\$115) per year,⁴⁸ qualified teachers can receive up to 1100 RMB (US\$150) per month – though often only in urban areas.⁴⁹ Training usually takes two years of distance education, weekend workshops and summer schools to name a few and higher social status is a welcome reward on graduation.⁵⁰

However, with qualified teacher numbers still low in the countryside, Beijing has rolled out vast schemes to attract teachers from urban areas. Rich county to poor county assistance programs, improved pay, teacher training, travel allowances and even the creation of a ‘Teachers day’ have all been tried, but the problem still persists.⁵¹

A current crisis in teacher numbers has forced many ‘defiant’ county governments to hire substitute teachers (*daike*) who lack formal training and hardly boost quality.⁵² Minban teachers are also finding it hard to attain teacher status as *gongban*. Many complain of extra fees in travel costs, exam charges and local corruption which promotes only the people with connections or money to buy jobs.⁵³

This is partly where the Government’s problem lies. In making it difficult for local people to qualify, they are driving the few who do qualify, away to local country seats where there is better pay and living standards – causing in some cases undesirable effects. In Shaanxi province, higher standards in towns have persuaded hundreds of children to transfer from nearby villages schools wherever possible, creating class sizes of up to 80-100 students and social disorder.

By 2010, Government policy aims to see all teachers employed with a minimum high school education and two years training, but progress is still sketchy. In a 2004 survey in Gansu province, 40 percent of teachers had second jobs as farmers, 42 percent stated late payment and only 84 percent were fully qualified.⁵⁴ Qualified Teachers *are* increasing, only not fast enough and for many students in poor regions of China, the bigger problem may be simply just getting to school in the first place.

“Not very long ago, it was not uncommon for around 60 students to crowd in a small classroom either in primary schools or junior high schools.”

– China Daily (Dec 2004)

Dropping out of School

If a senior high school graduate is an educated person in China, then for many the biggest obstacle is simply getting that far. Reports estimate that 1.1 million children drop out from primary school in China⁵⁵ and 3 million girls never attend.⁵⁶ Whilst most complete primary school, over 2 million students never carry on to junior high⁵⁷ and 40 percent (9 million) may drop out over the next three years.⁵⁸

This is a scene typical in much of Western China, where the majority of the nation's poor live and income hovers just above the poverty line. In provinces like Tibet and Gansu, 1 in 5 children drop out of class before Grade 5 is even over.⁵⁹ As always, the worst sufferers are girls, minorities and the remote rural poor for whom an education is a luxury only the rich can afford. In China's poorest villages, schools can often be seen sitting idle, with not even a single child enrolled.⁶⁰

The Chinese Government ploughs only 2 percent of its rural investment budget into education, leaving poor counties low on cash and local families to pick up the tab.⁶¹ Nine years of education is supposed to be free for students, but many counties lack the tax revenue to support one, thus charging local families so called 'illegal' school fees that increase with age.⁶¹ Most parents would love to send their offspring to school, but even for the enlightened ones, bellies come first and brains come second.

China's national Human Development Report 2005, states that 52 percent of parents pulled their offspring from school "because of poverty or a shortage of manpower at home." The nation's rising boom is also having an effect. Of the students dropping out from middle school, 48 percent chose to work as farmers, whilst 16.7 percent migrated to the cities in search of work. But where cost is one reason for dropping out, quality is quite another.

Web: Xiao Li goes to School

<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/246>

The Cost of Quality

By almost every measure we can compare rural schools against urban ones as high quality over low quality, black against white. The challenge of the nation's vast hinterland is that the funding required is too great to ensure an equal education, so cities are prioritised in the hope that rural areas will eventually catch up.

Government funding contributed only 11 percent of China's total expenditure to education in 2004, leaving poorer counties and provinces to pick up the rest.⁶² A 1999 law passed by Beijing, scrapped agricultural taxes for farmers but instantly deprived rural counties of a valuable source of income, crippling funding to local services like education and health.⁶³ In 2004, fees from local families made up *one fifth* of all local spending on schools, thus laying quality at the feet of the poor.⁶²

For most people in China, quality is the preserve of those who can afford it. Where education is free for city folk, it is often a rural family's biggest expenditure after food and housing.⁶⁴ Although the average disposable income of rural areas was 3254 RMB (approx. \$465) in 2005, a recent survey has shown that families annually spend around 800 RMB (US\$100) on nine year education (other reports claim this to be much higher) – and these are the relatively wealthy.⁶⁵ Most of China's poor living on less than a dollar a day never get a chance.

Under such a tenuous budget, rural Chinese schools are unable to provide the quality education students need in a modern economy. Quality takes a nose dive as 90

percent of county education budgets pay for teacher's wages, leaving little to improve facilities or build new schools. Approximately 1 in 20 schools nationwide are in danger of collapse.⁶⁶ Schools often lack working labs, libraries or running water and decent teaching aids.⁶⁷ Many schools even run their own businesses to help generate funds (though this has generated reports of abused child labour in recent years).⁶⁸

There is even more disturbing news. A recent report by China Labour Bulletin (Hong Kong), quoted results from a survey in China that stated, "58 percent of rural schools have no money to repair or shore up buildings in danger of collapse, 40 percent of the primary schools are still using buildings in danger of collapse, chalk is in limited supply in over 30 percent of the rural primary schools, and 40 percent of primary schools don't turn on the lights because they are unable to pay their electricity bills."⁶⁹

China's curriculum also deserves mentioning for its irrelevance to the lives of the students it guides. In a recent survey, 90 percent of children complained that they had little free time and classes were only focused on exams.⁷⁰ Their comments are hardly surprising given a local official's recent remark that education in rural areas was the chance to "improve the quality of farmers as a whole," rather than to develop the abilities of a child for self-survival in a modernising world.

Web: Village Schools empty as Urban Schools overflow

http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2007/10/rural_schools_closing_down_with_dramatic_enrollment_drop.php

Thus a rural student's world is usually one of: overbearing text books, poor school facilities and repeat-after-me teaching styles more designed to produce automatons than free thinking adults. With class sizes averaging between 40-65 students at middle school and low qualified teachers, it's hardly surprising rural schools are a breeding ground for dropouts.⁷¹ As the cities advance, the villages stagnate and the growing difference in quality reflects the growing divide in income that threatens the security of the nation's future.

Strides *are* being made to placate the problem. In perhaps China's biggest funding push to date, Beijing has committed to invest US \$15.6 billion by 2010, to reduce adult illiteracy to less than 5 percent (15 +) and youth illiteracy to less than 2 percent (15 - 24) of the population.⁷² By 2007, compulsory nine years of education shall be provided completely free to poor children in designated counties and extended nationwide to all students by 2008. Poor children are also to receive free textbooks and pay zero school fees, under a "two exemptions, one subsidy" policy. Some will also receive allowance towards boarding fees where applicable.⁷³

And yet, in a country of 1.3 billion people, co-ordinating such a massive campaign needs 100 percent participation and with low national incomes, corruption is still a problem. China's national audit office levelled charges worth \$34 billion dollars at officials in 2004.⁷⁴ Mishandling of local accounts can also frequently divert funds away from education and into infrastructure projects under pressure to meet national targets.

Whatever the Government does, it needs to take action fast. Past history shows that Beijing has a preference for individual projects with short-term results rather than baseline funding to longer term reforms. Mega poverty alleviation projects may produce quick results, but without better quality schools, teacher training and rural education funding, the benefits may only be short-lived as the basic causes still stand unaddressed.

“What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing”

– Aristotle

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

China has made undeniable progress in reaching out to almost every person within her borders, yet in a country of 1.3 billion people, obstacles still remain.

Opportunities for Girls

Educating girls is seen by many as the ‘magic bullet’ of any literacy campaign. Not only does it empower women and prevent abuse, it unleashes the economic potential of half a population, improves family health and ensures better education for children. The untold truth of any country is that women are the silent pillars holding up every society, yet in almost every case they are amongst the first to suffer.

On the face of things, China has made mesmerising progress. Since 1990, female illiteracy had been slashed from 31 percent to 13 percent by 2000.⁷⁵ By 2002, both boys and girls attended primary school in equal numbers for the first time.⁷⁶ Today, Chinese women can aspire to 22 percent seats of National Congress or become part of 45 percent of the working population.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, there are two sides to every story.

Across China, 80 million women cannot read or write, 69 percent of the nation’s illiterate total and a population greater than the United Kingdom. Nationwide, female illiteracy figures sit in double digits between 2 and 3 times greater than for men.⁷⁸ Province to province, numbers vary from 60 percent in Tibet to 8 percent in Beijing.⁷⁸ Nearly all live in poor provinces and, as always, nearly all live in the country’s mountainous far west.

There are 2.7 times as many illiterate girls as boys in China. Throughout the nation’s vast rural hinterland, poverty, location and tradition affect the lives of almost every girl, illiterate or otherwise. Compared to 8 years for boys, girls receive only 7 years schooling in rural China. Those fortunate to live in the city can expect an extra three years!⁷⁹ Back in the village, a girl’s greatest challenge to literacy is usually the poverty that surrounds her.

Its not that a poor farmer cannot see the value in a female education in modern China, it’s more likely he can’t see the value of an educated girl in *his* China. For many families in remote villages, life hasn’t changed much in the last 30 years and it’s still harsh. Boys are traditionally responsible in the Middle Kingdom for looking after

their parents in old age, whilst girls leave the home to live with their new husband's family. In the absence of a viable pension scheme for 'peasants,' farmers face tough choices when schools levy fees, and many cannot afford to put their daughters through school.

It's been estimated that more than 3 million girls fail to complete primary school, many from ethnic minorities, and the numbers only become worse at higher levels.⁸⁰ In rural China, only 41 percent of girls were enrolled in junior secondary school and just over 8.5 percent received a senior secondary education in a 2001 survey.⁸¹ For that little girl who dreams of becoming a teacher, there are two main problems in China: first will she ever get qualified? And second, will she ever get born?

One Child, One Boy

'One is best, two at most, but never a third' are the words that dominate the future of most girls in rural China, as for one thing, they'll likely decide if she'll ever get born. China's one child policy came into being in the early eighties in an effort to stem its soaring population growth. While the world has condemned it from the start, China claims it has prevented 400 million births since its inception. Its proponents argue otherwise.⁸²

'One-child' means urban residents can have one kid, rural parents can have two, (if the first is a girl) and minorities can have three. However, the policy has had unintended consequences. The 2000 census showed that there were 117 boys to every 100 girls, (world average is 105) in China, creating a huge gender imbalance. Like many Asian countries, many Chinese couples see boys as a more bankable investment than girls and abortions have soared.⁸³

There are 7 million abortions each year in China of which 70 percent are female.⁸³ By the end of the decade, estimates suggest there will be 40-60 million grooms without brides across the nation and Beijing is worried.⁸⁴ The Government recently banned the use of ultrasound to tell the sex of a child, but with the cost at \$5 per scan, doctors are easily bribed (In some areas, reports have been filed of babies being sold to human traffickers, who rear girls in special homes to sell on to brideless farmers later).⁸⁵

On Hainan Island, the provincial government resorted to extreme measures when the sex ratio reached 135:100 boys to girls.⁸⁶ Hainan now guarantees a pension to couples who have a baby girl as well as family planning services formed with help from the UN. There are few people in the world who haven't heard about China's one child policy, and still even fewer who know how it will turn out.

"Any language ever created and used by human beings, is a commonwealth of humankind and needs to be saved"

People's Daily – 06 Feb 2002

Minorities: The Quest for Identity

If a nation is a sense of common culture or community, then being a nation within a nation is harder to define. Aside from Han Chinese, there are 55 minorities ('nationalities') in China, forming 9 percent of the population and a total of 108 million people.⁸⁷ Although 120 languages are officially recognised, ninety percent of minorities speak just 15 tongues, including Tibetan, Mongol and Uyghur.⁸⁸

But being part of a minority in China is to have the odds of a good education stacked against you from day one. Living on the extreme edges of the country, minorities form 40 percent of China's absolute poor and live in 75 percent of its poorest counties in the North and South West. As in any country, proficiency in the national language is key to success. The problem in China is which language to teach its minorities.

Since the 1950s, China has taught minority languages alongside *putonghua* (common language – Mandarin) in its schools.⁸⁹ Many groups live in so-called 'autonomous regions' where their script is officially promoted. The dilemma for the government has been how to teach both languages effectively and encourage assimilation with the rest of the country at the same time.⁹⁰ Recent laws since the mid-nineties have focused on the latter.

In urban areas, minority parents today have two choices. Either send their children to a Chinese school teaching only in Mandarin and thus giving them the best grounding for the future or secondly, pack them off to a local school where kids are taught in the local language, offering few lessons in Chinese, but maintaining local culture. Rural schools usually teach local languages without Chinese.

Chances are, for rural students from minority areas, any hopes of a bright future are crippled from day one. Rural primary schools that fail to teach Chinese also debilitate their students from advancing onto secondary schools (and future jobs) that require it. Most school curriculums tend to be overly biased toward Han Chinese culture and offer little relevance to minority lives causing many to dropout.

Girls in particular face stiff obstacles to progress in areas where tradition and early marriage, see more value in the home than in the school. In poor areas, school fees, low quality facilities and under-qualified teachers all act as barriers to progress. Schools themselves may be inaccessible among the vast open expanses of 'minority China,' and many parents may be unable to afford stiff boarding fees or the travel costs to reach them.

With few opportunities to practice Chinese in minority villages, millions are literate only in their own language and without a solid education, many minorities simply end up in an endless cycle of manual labour and farm work with little hope for advancement in modern China.

Web: Uncle, I want to go home!

<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/943>

An Unspoken Truth

After the Shaanxi brick kiln slavery scandal that shocked the nation in June 2007, China's growing child labour problem has increasingly been in the spotlight.⁹¹ An article in the LA Times recently estimated that there are as many as 10 million school-age children working in China, approximately 70 percent girls.⁹² Most are aged between 13-16 years and the majority are dropouts from lower middle school, working either locally or in the cramped 'battery-farm' factories of China's South-East.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) classifies any child below the age of 15 as a child worker, whilst in China it's below the age of 16. Although it is illegal, millions of families cannot ignore the job opportunities that a modernising China brings and with rising school fees and living standards, it's a simple matter of economics for most.⁹³

Whilst the majority of dropouts work at home in family run businesses, a substantial number take on regular and casual jobs in mines, construction yards or as farm labour. More worryingly, are the untold masses drifting by their thousands from poor rural regions to the industrialised east in search of factory work. Children as young as 13 work up to 16 hours a day (excluding overtime) for as little as 300 RMB (US \$40) a month.⁹³ Most are paid once a year at the request of parents anxious to prevent children spending their hard-earned cash.⁹⁴

The problem doesn't end there. Faced with financial and educational pressures of their own, schools often ask non-performing students to drop-out of school early (usually in the second year) and return at the end of year 3 to collect their graduation certificate. The better a school's graduation results the higher the reward.⁹⁵ Some schools have been even known to *reward* teachers who fail their students (though these could be isolated incidents).

What is further shocking is the number of schools purported to contract out their pupils to local/national factories in order to pay off their school fees. Officially the practice of 'work-study programs') is endorsed by the Government as a means of vocational training and it may have practical value. But the system has become hopelessly abused in recent years. Media reports include stories of students picking tea in Henan, plucking cotton in Xinjiang or working an assembly line 14 hours a day at a factory in Guangdong province.⁹⁶

In a China where poverty rules over sentiment, children are a paid investment, and non-performing ones are quickly packed off to the factory. The penalties for companies caught employing child labour can result in their license revoked, but the punishments are not severe and with a shortage of 1-2 million labourers every year along China's east coast, the practice is likely to get worst before it gets better.

"The Beigaozhuang centre works in partnership with Tao Yuan school in north Beijing, one of the few schools for migrant children to exact its own high standards. It is well known for its high pass rates amongst pupils, and is popular with parents and pupils alike."

– ActionAid China

In Search of School

The city is calling and the people are moving, but how will they educate their young?

According to the Inter census 2005, 147 million people are on the move in China⁹⁷ and the figures are swelling by up to one percent of the population each year.⁹⁸ By 2010, the Government predicts that half of the population will be living in urban areas for the first time.⁹⁹ City life promises higher wages, better education, healthcare and a promise to get ahead in a country that leaves behind those who can't keep up.

But as urban areas groan under the weight of migrant families, children are finding that a right to education isn't always theirs to claim. With new arrivals flooding into cities, urban schools are refusing to enroll children without an urban *hukou*, or household registration, which guarantees local residents the right to benefits like free education, healthcare and employment support.¹⁰⁰

For migrant parents with *guanxi* (connections), some may be able to secure a place at a local public school, but only at the cost of miscellaneous fees or a 'voluntary' donation. Such payments lie way beyond the normal wage of a manual labourer and are designed to discourage.¹⁰⁰ In Beijing, public schools can charge up to 20,000 RMB (\$2700) per year for a migrant child, way beyond the pocket of a rural migrant who typically makes between 500-1000 RMB per month (\$70-140).¹⁰¹

However, the old social order is changing and migrant populations are rising fast, with 20 million migrant children now on the move or living parentless.¹⁰² An amendment to the compulsory education law recently made it illegal for public schools to turn away migrant children or pay arbitrary fees.¹⁰³ However urban schools contend that they have their own problems to deal with.

Over 85 percent of migrant kids never attended kindergarten and the low quality of rural primary schools mean that most perform poorly and may lower school "test scores."¹⁰⁴ Such students may face substantial hardship from discrimination, a different curriculum and a rapid influx of new enrollments that has seen urban class sizes grow rapidly from 30 to 38 pupils – placing enormous strain on the system.¹⁰⁵

For rural parents unable to afford public school prices, thousands of 'Migrant Schools' have sprung-up across the country. Out of 400,000 migrant worker children living in Beijing, a quarter attend more than 200 such schools scattered in migrant enclaves throughout the city.¹⁰⁶ Typical enrollment fees are only 50 RMB (US\$6) each semester and seem to have strong support among the local public.¹⁰⁰

Web: Why can't migrant children go to school?

http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200411/04/eng20041104_162754.html

However where life is transient, so is schooling and most schools have had to move locations 3 to 4 times in their short life-spans as leases expire and debts add-up.¹⁰⁷

Many are built in condemned buildings with poor facilities to educate young minds. A recent study of 114 Beijing migrant schools found that 65 percent of teachers had no experience, having been “street hawkers, vegetable sellers and cleaners.”¹⁰⁸

Under such adversity, half of all migrant children below 18 never attend school in cities and the dropout rates stands at 10 percent.¹⁰⁰ There’s also a case to be made for the estimated 20 million children or so left behind by parents who leave the village to support their education back home. These “left-behind” children regularly perform badly in school, where only 1 percent pass their middle school exam and a substantial number lapsing into trouble with the law.¹⁰⁹

Ultimately, the responsibility for these children lies with local Governments who until now have maintained a mainly hands-off approach. In Beijing, few licences have been awarded to upgrade migrant schools and many more have been disbanded by the Government in a drive to push migrant children into reluctant public schools instead. But the system is under strain and principles complain that there is no quotas set for how many migrant children to enroll.

Talk has been made about building migrant-only schools but no action has been taken. The Government’s dilly dallying on the issue is reaching danger point as the flood of migrants continues. The easy solution lies in upgrading existing Migrant Schools and working with local NGOs to increase the quality of education and with the situation quickly reaching breaking point, the Government may no longer have a choice.

Article: On the Horizon – Challenges in store for 21st Century China
http://www.r4e.org/on_the_horizon.html

CONCLUSION:

As China pushed off from the shore of the 21st Century, she sought a new direction to catch the sails of 1.3 billion people. This has been called Xiaokang.

According to the China Human Development Report 2005, Xiaokang Society means a stage or stepping stone on a path from basic needs to country-wide prosperity. In lieu of growing tensions in 2003, the Communist Party adopted Xiaokang as a more people centred approach to national development, aimed at reducing the gap between urban and rural areas whilst advancing the country economically.

In many ways the concept is remarkably similar to the Millennium Goals in principle. With words such as ‘harmonious society’ and ‘scientific development,’ China aims to quadruple GDP per head by 2020¹¹⁰ in order to pay for a raft of measures designed to achieve basic industrialisation, solve the 6 social goals,¹¹¹ ensure equitable development nationwide and establish a socialist democracy through the rule of law by the same date.¹¹²

However, laudable as this new rhetoric is, the Government’s latest development plans may have bitten off too much. In its pursuit to develop the country’s western regions, Beijing intends to invest US\$1.5 trillion on energy and transport alone from 2006-

2020,¹¹³ including \$193 billion on railways in the next five years.¹¹⁴ Mega infrastructure projects are renowned for their ability to soak up budgets and as the World Bank says,

“While local leaders’ announcements fall in line with these national goals, local growth targets remain high. To achieve these high growth rates, local spending is likely to continue to be directed at investment rather than at the social services needed for a harmonious society and a more balanced economy.”¹¹⁵

Still, Xiaokang also marks a progressive benchmark that the world will expect China to meet. China has made amazing progress so far, through an indoctrinated need for education among the people and stupendous achievements in poverty reduction and illiteracy eradication. Over the past 50 years, the Middle Kingdom has maintained a functional commitment to both adult and universal education that has resulted in few young illiterates and an educated workforce able to attract investors. But now quality education must take a central role.

Like the Millennium Development Goals (which China is mostly set to meet by 2015), universal education underscores the basis of a Xiaokang society, yet it remains sorely underinvested in many parts of the country resulting in much of the nation’s income disparity. Since 1985, the state has repeatedly failed to increase education spending to 4 percent of GDP and quality in rural areas has suffered.¹¹⁶

Today, China’s greatest education challenges lie in:

- Ensuring that a quality education is a national right and not an urban privilege.
- Providing a free and quality education to all children to encourage discrimination.
- Upgrading village schools to provide the facilities and learning environment necessary to give kids a competitive advantage in life wherever they may be.
- Increasing teacher training at the local level to increase quality and benefit the local skill bank.
- Reforming minority curriculums to make study more relevant and to prevent increasing dropouts.
- Enforcing the rights of children tricked into slave labour and increase punishments to those breaking the law.
- Providing schools for migrant children in urban areas and lowering out-dated restrictions on national travel that prevent rural residents securing urban jobs.
- Increasing the emphasis on adult education and vocational centres in rural areas.

By enforcing rural residents’ rights to a quality education, China can begin to grow its most valuable asset: its domestic market. A richer more stable countryside will mean China can rely less on exports and more on its own population to spur growth. A greater qualified rural workforce is a much greater incentive to attract investment than simply roads alone.

There is still far to go. The completion rate for 9 year education, was only 75 percent in 2001, meaning an estimated 5 million drop out from middle school every year, particularly in rural areas.¹¹⁷ Over a third of rural schools cannot afford even teaching materials and high fees levied by cash-strapped local governments, make *any* kind of education a dream for many families.¹¹⁶ The Asian Development Bank recently re-

estimated that China may have as many as 300 million people living in abject poverty.¹¹⁸

By 2020, the state plans to increase per person average years of schooling from 8 to 11 years and reduce illiteracy to less than 3 percent nationwide.¹¹⁹ By the same year, 40 percent of the population may enter the middle class.¹²⁰ With rising labour costs now a reality in Eastern China, the days of the unskilled migrant worker may be coming to an end and the Government must invest in education now, if it is to build the competitive and educated workforce on which a Xiaokang society can truly prosper.¹²¹

An ancient Chinese proverb goes that “*behind every able man, there are always able men.*” But in modern China, for every able man, there is always someone more able and more likely to earn more money.

Unless Chinese companies can come up with their own core technologies and product standards, they will never outgrow their present status as low-cost subcontractors for global firms.

Japan Centre for Economic Research (JCER) - 2007

SOURCES:

Given the Chinese Government’s tendency to report everything as positive in China, official statistics used in this piece air on the conservative side. Think tank figures, off-beat media assessments and internationally respected data sources have been used wherever possible. Choosing from a minefield of sources isn’t easy and where several sources are referenced, you’ll find alternatives given in the references.

Almost all data available on China’s progress today is upbeat in a Government attempt to keep the populace placated and foreign investment inflowing. Both census data and media reports are only a Government mouthpiece for what they’d like the world to know, so discerning a clear picture of events has been tricky as the data doesn’t reflect the poverty or the natural state that most of the country lives in.

International data sources such as the United Nations rely on Beijing’s data sets to perform analyses that only reflect what’s given them. Missing data on China in UIS tables for example is absurd given China’s advanced statistical reporting on its people, (e.g. missing data on school completion rates, drop-out rates, net enrollment rates for secondary school or any data that may cast a pall over China’s development).

Another problem is variance of Government data and the way it’s interpreted. For example, in 2003 the Ministry of Education declared dropout rates at 0.34 percent for primary schools,¹²² whilst state media declared 2.45 percent in 2004.¹²³ State media also reported in 2005 on a recent survey that had estimated dropouts from junior secondary school at *40 percent* as opposed to the officially stated 3.91 percent.¹²⁴ National pupil to teacher ratios (on average) are stated in the 2000 census at pupil to

teacher ratio at less than twenty based on census figures, yet state media report average class sizes from 30-65.¹²⁵

There are also concerns that China's population figures may be under-reported by as many as 30 million girls. On the occasion that the first child is a girl, many parents are likely to try again for a boy and simply not report a female in order to avoid large fines under Beijing's One Child policy. Chinese society prefers sons over daughters as traditionally, sons are responsible for looking parents in their old age.

As with all reports, the data used in this one should be read with caution and used only as a guide to approximate state of the country at the time. The country is changing extremely quickly and unlike Europe, nothing stays stable for long.

HOW YOUR DONATION MATTERS?

I'm setting out to raise £100,000 which will help ActionAid China combat illiteracy in China. ActionAid's China programme is only a young one, but their expanding influence and international experience is already changing hundreds of lives through education and training.

Your donation will help ActionAid China to:

- a) Operate education centres for migrant children in Beijing, enable some of the poorest parents in China to be educated and jam the door wide open to a new world of opportunities available to them.
- b) Educate minority children in provinces like Guizhou in Southern China, where extreme mountains, bitter winters and rural poverty prevent millions of children having access to an education
- c) Improve the lives of thousands of people in eight Development Areas in poverty stricken counties of China, where ActionAid is educating adults through its award winning REFLECT scheme, helping farmers grow more crops and helping poor people make their voice heard.
- d) Establish partnerships with local community organisations to expand their abilities to reduce poverty and spread public awareness about the needs of the poor.

See ActionAid China website for more needs. <http://www3.actionaid.org/china>

"This county is rich in natural resources, but how can we develop them?" said Gao Zuohuo, the deputy head of Luotian County. "The best way is to educate the people and make them more knowledgeable."

– NY Times, Dec 1990 – In Rural China, road to school is all uphill

Further Action:

People who have an education have the means to mobilise resources, innovate and avoid the traps of extreme poverty. So please use your resources to mobilise now and help in the battle to make poverty history (link to Stand Up Against Poverty).

<http://www.standagainstopoverty.org/>

Stand Up Against Poverty and join a global campaign to eradicate hunger and want amongst the world's poor and keep international commitments to Education for All and the Millennium Goals alive.

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself

Chinese Proverb

Final thought:

The world is full of education mishap, but the occasional work of a few organisations and individuals continue to give us hope and help define the road to success. These are a few of my favourites.

<http://www.r4e.org/success-in-education.htm>

Compulsory Viewing on the subject

Films regarding education in China are few and far between but the award for compulsory viewing on the subject must go to 'Not one Less' (ye ge dou bu neng shau) by acclaimed director Zhang Yimou (1999). Winner of the 1999 Venice Film Festival, its trailer can be viewed online below.

http://www.trailerfan.com/movie/yi_ge_dou_bu_neng_shao/trailer .

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0209189/plotsummary> (Online reviews)

SOME QUOTES FROM THE WORLD MEDIA:

. "By strengthening land rights in the countryside, Beijing could replicate the amazing transformations that occurred in rural Japan, South Korea and Taiwan."

South China Morning Post – November 2007

"There's not enough land," a Gushi county mushroom grower complained. "Only if you go out and work can you make any money."

Asia Times – March 2007

"This is a society in transition," said Hans van de Glind of the ILO's office in Beijing, who is working with the Chinese government on a pilot project to prevent trafficking of girls for labor exploitation. "The intention is there to make progress."

LA Times – May 2005

"Lack of funding has been a grave challenge for China's rural education for decades. Now, as the government budget increases, people are starting to see the light at the end of tunnel."

China Development Brief – Oct 2006

"...language policies in the last 50 years have alternated from forced assimilation to accommodation of national minority interests, and are a function of not only state building but of nation-building among minority nationalities."

China Country Study – Ross 2005

"Education is the key to developing the country, but those words seem empty to us," said Zhu Xingsheng, 19. "You can't keep talented people here under these conditions."

New York Times – December 1995

The top 10 percent of Chinese now hold 40 percent of all assets; the bottom 10 percent have just 2 percent of assets, according to a study by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Chicago Tribune – July 2007

"The program covered 7,651 schools in 953 counties in western provinces, of which three were built 5,000 m above sea level, and 152 built 4,000 m above sea level," Tian said.

China Economic Net – [Updated] November 2007

"The county government has sold the farmland in my village and the developer will soon pull down my house. It was built only four years ago and we have not paid off the loan we took to build it," said a man who called himself "Countryside Intellectual" in Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region at www.sina.com.

China Daily – [Updated] March 2006

"Growth of about 9% per annum since the late 1970s has helped to lift several hundred million people out of absolute poverty, with the result that China alone accounted for over 75% of poverty reduction in the developing world over the last 20 years. – World Bank

World Bank Overview – [Updated] March 2005

"Many of the new professional teachers are not even as good as us," Wang said. "Some are shoe sellers from the market. Some are butchers. One is even mute. He doesn't teach, but collects the salary and pays a cheap substitute to teach in his place. His father is a township government official." (on corruption in China)

Washington Post – December 2006

"Unless Chinese companies can come up with their own core technologies and product standards, they will never outgrow their present status as low-cost subcontractors for global firms."

Haruo Ozaki, Japan Centre for Economic Research

“China's GDP grew by 11.5 percent in the first three quarters of 2007 from the same period last year, decreasing from 11.9 percent in the second quarter but higher than 11.1 percent in the first quarter.”

China Daily – 17 November 2007

“The government's 1993 Education Reform and Development Programme stated that by 2000, China would eliminate youth illiteracy and ensure all students received nine years of compulsory education. By 2002, these goals had been realized in areas inhabited by 91 percent of the national population, and in 87 percent of all counties.”

National China Development Report 2005

"In education there should be no class distinction"

Confucius on education

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34. In typical utopian fashion, huge fundraising drives in the late eighties involved millions of rural families raking in billions of US \$ for their local schools and Government. According to national statistics, from 1981-91, the physical contributions of people alone reduce the nationwide percentage of dilapidated schools from 17 percent to under 2 percent.
<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/reducingpoverty/docs/newpdfs/case-sum-China-%209YearCompulsoryEducation.pdf>
35. UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, p35 (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>

36. Source: Universalizing Nine-Year Compulsory Education for Poverty Reduction in Rural China – Zhang et al (May, 2004)
<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/reducingpoverty/docs/FullCases/China%20PDF/China%20Rural%20Ed-%209Year.pdf>
37. China: Many Rural Girls Left Out Of School – WIN News (Wntr, 2000)
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2872/is_1_26/ai_62795146/pg_1
38. Leading State Advisor offers frank assessment of rural challenges - China Development Brief (June 2006)
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/684>
39. Majority primary schools (86%), junior schools (58.8%) in rural areas; senior schools (86.5%) in urban areas.
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
40. Halving Global Poverty by 2015 – A Stocktaking, (World Bank 2007)
<http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?contentMDK=21256704&menuPK=3413296&theSitePK=3413261&pagePK=64218950&piPK=64218883>
41. According to the China Statistical Yearbook 2006, and for the period 1978-2005, primary schools have fallen by two thirds, junior secondary schools by almost half, senior secondary schools by 70 percent and schools overall by just over half.
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
42. The international population replacement level for a population is 2.1 children per woman of reproductive age.
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/pop850.doc.htm>
43. Boarding schools: The decrease in school seems likely one of pure economics as non-performing schools are closed down and successful ones expanded. Boarding schooling in China is not a subject widely covered, but a phenomena that seems to be rapidly expanding in rural areas. It's hard to know why the number of schools is decreasing so rapidly. Whereas MOE statistics clearly show this, most references in the media refer to new schools being built at primary and secondary level. A statement in 1999 refers to the decline as an "*adjustment of school layout and decrease of school-age population.*" To surmise I would suggest that lower enrollment rates, declining population growth from 12% in 1978 to 5.89% in 2005, rural to urban migration are likely causes.
- Source: China Education and Research Network (CERN) – 1999
http://www.edu.cn/education_1384/20060323/t20060323_4387.shtml
 - Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006 (table 21.3)
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
 - Source: China Ministry of Education: Statistics Report 2003
http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/planning_s.htm
 - Source: China Development Brief - Bring quality down to basics (Oct 2001)
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/176>
44. The 1982 census revealed the deplorable state of illiteracy in rural areas. Since the early nineties, Beijing has finally begun replacing minban with Government approved teachers (*gongban*)
45. Source: UNDP National China Development Report 2005, p47/48
www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2005/NHDR2005_complete.pdf
46. Source: Xiao Li goes to school – China Development Brief, (Sept, 1999)
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/246>

Note:

- It's a sign of how far things have advanced in China, when barefoot teachers are being phased out and India can't get enough of them.

47. In 1985, there were 2.729 million minban teachers 51.3% of the total number.
<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/reducingpoverty/docs/newpdfs/case-sum-China-%209YearCompulsoryEducation.pdf>
48. Source: Communiqué on rural poverty monitoring in China – Chinese Government (2004)
http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents/t20050513_402249491.htm
49. Source: Average salary of Chinese teachers grows 14 times in 20 years – China Daily (Sept 2004) – (Av salary per annum at 13,300 RMB)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200409/07/eng20040907_156221.html
- Note:**
 Often Salaries for rural teachers are very low causing the ambitious to seek better paying urban jobs. See:
- <http://www.klab.caltech.edu/~ma/chinasummary.html>
 - <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/zt/Features/t274370.htm>
 - http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-03/05/content_218710.htm
50. Source: Xiao Li goes to school – China Development Brief, (Sept, 1999)
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/246>
- Note:**
- Distance education courses usually refer to TV and radio programmes in this case, but internet courses are increasing.
51. Source: China inspires urban teachers to work for rural schools – GOV.cn, (March 2006)
- See Also:**
- Nine Year Compulsory Education in China – World Bank (2004)
<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/reducingpoverty/docs/newpdfs/case-sum-China-%209YearCompulsoryEducation.pdf>
 - http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2007/10/rural_schools_closing_down_with_dramatic_enrollment_dro.php
 - <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2003/Oct/76877.htm> (China.org)
52. Source: Xiao Li goes to school – China Development Brief, (Sept, 1999)
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/246>
- Also Note:**
 According to the China Human Development Report 2005, “*Rural primary schools also rely on a large number of substitute and part-time teachers: more than 94 percent of substitute teachers - 450,000 people - teach in rural and township schools.*”
53. Source: Barefoot teachers left behind in China – Washington Post (Dec 2006)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/25/AR2006122500490.html>
54. Source: Educational Resources and Impediments in Rural Gansu, China – World Bank, (May 2007)
http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/07/09/00020953_20070709115919/Rendered/PDF/402510CHA0P0981Rural0Gansu01PUBLIC1.pdf
55. Source: Education void expands wealth gap, China Daily (March 2005)
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/10/content_423421.htm

Note: By dividing the total no. of primary school graduates (2003) into the total number of new enrollments into junior secondary (2004), 7 percent of all primary graduates fail to carry on to secondary school.

56. UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
57. The gross enrollment rate for secondary junior school is 90 percent, thus if 19.52million (2002) attend, then 10 percent is 1.95million. This figure is only an approximation given that a *gross enrollment figure* was used. (See MOE for statistics).
58. Source: China experiences rising dropout rate, China Daily (March 2005 [Updated])
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/04/content_421520.htm
59. Source: UNDP national China Development Report 2005
www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2005/NHDR2005_complete.pdf
60. Official dropout rates for 2004 were 2.45 percent and 3.91 percent for rural primary and junior middle schools respectively. This seems somewhat at odds with another report claiming that 40 percent of children who fail to complete 3 years at middle school. Notably, a further 42 percent of all who complete middle school do not continue onto senior education.

Please See:

- http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200603/05/eng20060305_248042.html
 - <http://china.org.cn/english/2004/Jun/99362.htm>
61. Source: China Strives for Free Compulsory Education for All – China Embassy (Sept 2006)
<http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/zt/Features/t274370.htm>
 - Estimates are around 500 yuan (US \$62.5) to educate a primary school student and 1000 yuan for secondary school annually.
 62. Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006, Table 21-37
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
 63. Source: Spending More in Rural Classrooms, China Daily (Oct 2003)
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2003/Oct/76877.htm>
 64. Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006, Table 10-25
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
 65. Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006, Table 10-22
Note: This is the average net income per household for the nation. This value drifts as low as 2482 RMB (\$355) per household in Xinjiang. Dollar rate calculated at approximate mid-2007 rate of 7 RMB to \$1.
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexeh.htm>
Miscellaneous fees and charges vary around China according to regional wealth and development. Source (a) below puts fees at 80-100 RMB for primary education, and source (b) at 800 RMB.
 - a) China Strives for Free Compulsory Education for All, China UK Embassy (Sept 2006)
<http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/zt/Features/t274370.htm>
 - b) Source: People’s Daily Online (March 2006)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200603/05/eng20060305_248042.html
 - c) China Development Brief calculates education expenditure absorbs 30 percent of rural incomes.
<http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/684>

- d) One report from a village in Anhui Province, places tuition fees at 95.5 percent of annual income!
http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2006/02/high_school_tuition_in_a_poverty_village_is_955_of_inco.php
66. Source: Ministry of Education (MOE) - 2003
http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/planning_s.htm
67. Source: High Dropout rates In rural schools – China Daily (June 2004)
<http://china.org.cn/english/2004/Jun/99362.htm>
68. Source: China: End Child Labour in State Schools – Reuters (Dec 2007)
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/HRW/d77718ef8be91ec5b28764142fd3933a.htm>
69. Source: Small Hands: A Survey Report on Child Labour in China – China Labour Bulletin (Sept 2007)
http://www.china-labour.org.hk/en/fs/view/research-reports/Child_labour_report_final.pdf
 Also See the following report on the condition of schools in China:
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200703/01/eng20070301_353376.html
70. A recent report has stated that Chinese textbooks are the most “difficult in the world.” China daily refers to the staid content and restrictive curriculum of China’s curriculum textbooks.
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200101/19/eng20010119_60917.html
71. China’s MOE claim that average class sizes in 2002 for junior middle school increased to between 55-65 and form 25% of the total and over-65 ‘super-classes’ comprise another 25%. China Daily goes on to report that nationwide, class-sizes are on average around 40 students in middle school and 30 in primary school due to an increased migration of students to urban areas.
http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/planning_s.htm (2002)
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-12/26/content_403418.htm (2004)
72. With the typical aplomb of Chinese announcements comes China’s ‘New Socialist Countryside,’ an investment of US \$27 billion until 2010 at both national and local level – \$15.6 billion nationally and \$11 billion locally. The total cost of EFA in China is said to amount to 65 billion RMB. China’s ‘New Socialist Countryside’ is the name given to the country’s push to develop ‘village, agriculture, farmer’ to reach the status of a Xiaokang society.
http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-03/05/content_218710.htm
Also see:
 – New Socialist Countryside Fact sheet
http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-03/05/content_218920.htm
73. Source: Rural Policy Research Centre under the Ministry of Agriculture – Jiang Zhongyi (2006)
<http://www.ifpri.org/2020Chinaconference/pdf/014JiangZhongyi.pdf>
74. Source: President Hu Jintao calls for Corruption fight – China Daily (Jan 2006)
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/08/content_510280.htm
75. Source: UN Millennium Development Goals Report China 2005 (Ch.3)
 – <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=87&f=C>
 – http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/08/content_510280.htm
76. UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, p5 (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>

Note:

The above report also notes there is a strong possibility China will see secondary gender parity by 2015.

77. Source: UN Millennium Development Goals Report China 2005 (p28)
“Women hold 22 % of the seats in the National People's Congress in 2002.
According to the survey of 2000, women comprised 45 % of the total work force”
 78. Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2002 Table 4-13
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/yearlydata/YB2002e/ml/indexE.htm>
 79. Source: UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, p39-40 (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
 80. Source: UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, p38 (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
 81. Source: UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
Figure 21 – “The Second Nationwide Sampling Survey of Chinese Women’s Social Status, the All China Women’s Federation, the State Statistical Bureau, 2001.9”
 82. Over 1,900 Officials Breach One-child Policy – Xinhua (July 2007)
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/216388.htm>
 83. The Mystery of the Chinese Baby Shortage – NY Times, (Jan 2007)
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/23/opinion/23russell.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1
 84. Source: Fearing Future, China Starts to Give Girls their Due – NY Times (Jan 2005)
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/31/international/asia/31china.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3&oref=slogin
- Also Note:**
South Korea is the first Asian country to lower the preference for boys over girls at birth. <http://go.worldbank.org/BKBYJZDSF0>
85. Source: Lost Girls of China – Weekend Standard (Feb 2005)
<http://www.thestandard.com.hk/stdn/std/Weekend/GB05Jp01.html>
 86. Source: UNFPA: Easing Family Planning Rules Leads to Fewer Abortions and More Baby Girls, Chinese Province Finds (Dec 2005)
<http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=734>
- Note:**
- Recent report from Hainan shows the sex ratio has increased to 136 girls to boys as of 2007.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-08/24/content_6055339.htm
87. There are 8.3 million Uyghur, 5.8 million Mongol and 5.4 million Tibetan (2.5 million in Tibet) in the 2000 national census.
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
 88. Source: UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, p23 (Heidi Ross, 2006)
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>
 89. Seventy percent of minorities can understand Han Chinese, mainly in urban areas.
 90. For example in Xinjiang Province, Uyghur literacy defined as the basic reproduction of the Uyghur alphabet.
 91. The scandal was originally uncovered by a local reporter acting on a tip-off from local parents, who had rescued 40 abducted children from slave labour conditions in illegal brick kilns in Shaanxi province. The story was blown wide open when national media became involved and in a rare operation, 35,000 police officers

helped free 500 forced labourers working in desperate conditions, unable to leave. Parents say that there are still over a 1000 children from neighbouring Henan province missing.

A recent report by the media included mention of an explosion in 2001 at a Jiangxi province school that killed 42 children. Most of them in the third and fourth grades and were said to be making fireworks at the time.

- http://zoniaeuropa.com/20070622_1.htm
 - <http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/1152>
 - http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-06/15/content_894802.htm
92. Source: Use of Child Labour emerges out of the shadows – LA Times (May, 2005)
www.laborrights.org/press/childlabor_china_0505.htm
93. Source: Small Hands: A Survey Report on Child Labour in China – Child Labour Bulletin (Hong Kong, September 2007 [Updated])
http://www.china-labour.org.hk/fs/view/research-reports/Child_labour_report_final.pdf
94. Source: Child workers' wages withheld for up to a year – China Labour Bulletin
<http://iso.china-labour.org.hk/public/contents/news?revision%5fid=46997&item%5fid=46878>
95. Source: Small Hands: A Survey Report on Child Labour in China – Child Labour Bulletin, p21 (Hong Kong, September 2007 [Updated])
http://www.china-labour.org.hk/fs/view/research-reports/Child_labour_report_final.pdf
96. Source: China: End Child Labor in State Schools – Reuters (Dec 2007)
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/HRW/d77718ef8be91ec5b28764142fd3933a.htm>
97. Source: China Population Report – China Today (2005)
“The survey shows that China had a mobile population of 147.35 million”
<http://www.chinatoday.com/general/population.htm>
- Note:**
- A recent 2007 article places the number over 200 million
<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/ID11Ad01.html>
98. Source: National Public Radio (NPR) – Nov 2006
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6490334>
99. Source: 50% of Chinese to Live in Urban Areas by 2010 – Xinhua (Nov 2006)
<http://english.cri.cn/2946/2006/11/06/53@159549.htm>
100. Source: Migrant Children stay bottom of Class – China Daily (Nov 2004)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200411/04/eng20041104_162754.html
101. “The State Council Research Office indicated in its April 2006 Survey Report on Rural Migrant Workers in China that about one third of migrant workers earned less than 500 yuan a month. The majority, about 40 per cent, earned between 500 and 800 yuan, with less than a third earning more than 800 yuan a month.”
<http://iso.china-labour.org.hk/public/contents/news?revision%5fid=46997&item%5fid=46878>
102. According to the 2000 census, China had 19.81 million migrant children, either at home, on the road or being schooled away from home.
<http://china.org.cn/english/China/152421.htm>
103. In Beijing, the Government has stipulated that migrant parents should pay the same as local parents, i.e. “a maximum of 267 yuan (US\$32) for each semester at primary school and 355 yuan (US\$42) for junior high school.”

- http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200411/04/eng20041104_162754.html
 - <http://china.org.cn/english/China/152421.htm>
104. Source: 'Nothing Less Than Our Best' – Global Ministries
http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=3563
105. Source: Equal Education for Migrant Children – China Daily (Oct 2004)
<http://china.org.cn/english/China/108838.htm>
- Note:**
Of course without the hukou (or equivalent) system in place, local Government would likely be swamped with migrant families as happened in “Zhengzhou, capital city of Central China's Henan Province” in 2003, where the city government allowed existing migrant residents to bring along their relatives to settle in the city. Within a year 150,000 people had crammed into the system, overloading the education system to breaking point. Class sizes of over 90 students were just one of the side effects and acted as an alarm bell to Beijing. The city has since “reversed the action.”
<http://china.org.cn/english/China/108838.htm>
106. Source: Beijing Finances Migrant Workers' Children's Education - China CSR (Nov 2007)
<http://www.chinacsr.com/2007/11/02/1820-beijing-finance-migrant-workers-childrens-education/>
107. Many private (*'minban'*) schools have to move several times over their lifespans as funds run out or the Government threatens closure.
See:
- http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2007-01/11/content_780628.htm
 - http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/world/asia/25school.html?_r=1&oref=login
108. Source: 'Nothing Less Than Our Best' – Global Ministries
http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=3563
109. Source: Migrant workers 'have 20m' kids back home – China Daily (Jan 2007)
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-01/29/content_794934.htm
110. Source: Hu sets goal of quadrupling GDP – Xinhua (Oct 2007)
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/15/content_6883152.htm
111. The six social goals of China's Xiaokang are “solving the food and clothing problem, solving the housing problem, solving the employment problem in both urban and rural areas, providing universal primary and secondary education and basic social welfare guarantees, and altering people's mental outlook to sharply reduce crime.”
www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2005/NHDR2005_complete.pdf (p91)
112. China's latest 11th year plan 2006-2010 plans “a new five-year program for western development aiming to realize sound and fast economic growth in the region.”
http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-12/09/content_465024.htm
- Also see:**
- Features of the 11th Five Year Plan in China
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/guideline/156529.htm>
 - Constructing the 11th Five Year Plan in China
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Nov/148177.htm>
113. Source: China to invest heavily in bottle-neck industries – China Daily (Jan 2006)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200601/11/eng20060111_234595.html

114. Source: Railway Finance to get a boost – China Daily (May 2007)
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-05/02/content_864930.htm
115. Source: Benign outlook but structural problems remain – World Bank (2005)
<http://www.worldbank.org.cn/english/content/382t63554695.shtml>
116. Source: Gov't urged to meet funding promise – China Daily (March 2007)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200703/01/eng20070301_353376.html
117. Source: China Human Development Report 2005, p94
118. Source: The limits of a smaller, poorer China – FT (Nov 2007)
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4eaba8b0-9255-11dc-8981-0000779fd2ac.html>
119. Source: Overview of Education in China – China.org (Sept 2004)
http://english.china.com/zh_cn/education/educational_system/11020788/20040929/11898517.html
120. Source: Chinese middle class covers 19% by 2003 – China USA Embassy (March 2004)
<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/gyzg/t80880.htm>
121. Source: The Conference Board (July 2004)
http://www.conference-board.org/utilities/pressDetail.cfm?press_ID=2432
122. Source: Major indices of Child Development in China – China.org (2005)
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/130381.htm>
123. Source: China pledges elimination of rural compulsory education charges in two years – Peoples Daily online (March 2006)
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200603/05/eng20060305_248042.html
124. Source: High Dropout Rates in Rural Schools – China.org (June 2004)
<http://china.org.cn/english/2004/Jun/99362.htm>
125. Source: Ministry of Education, Government of China Education Statistics 2002
http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/planning_s.htm

Note:

Although Pupil to teacher ratio is based on an average across the country, rather than an average of class size averages.

GENERAL SOURCES: (including all non-sourced data referred to above):

UNESCO China Country study – Literacy for Life, (Heidi Ross, 2006)**

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146108e.pdf>

UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 - Statistical tables (P211) -

<http://www.efareport.unesco.org/>

UNESCO Country Profile: Education in the Peoples Republic of China

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001145/114531Eo.pdf>

UNESCO Country Education Study 2000: China**

http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/china/rapport_1.html

UNDP China Human Development Report 2005**

www.undp.org.cn/downloads/nhdr2005/NHDR2005_complete.pdf

UN Millennium Development Goals Report China 2005

<http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=87&f=C>

World Bank Case Study – Universalising Nine-Year Compulsory Education for Poverty Reduction in China – Zhang et al. (May 2004)

<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/reducingpoverty/docs/newpdfs/case-summ-China-%209YearCompulsoryEducation.pdf>

Ministry of Education, China Statistical Yearbook data 1996 –

<http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/yearlydata/>

China Labour Bulletin, A Survey Report on Child Labour in China (Sept, 2007)**

http://www.china-labour.org.hk/fs/view/research-reports/Child_labour_report_final.pdf

* Any of the above general sources can be considered as an excellent overview for education in China.

** Recommended reading
