



CHINA (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF)¹

OVERVIEW

The Chinese Education system is divided into four levels: pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education. Compulsory education in China is nine-years.

Students usually start their primary education at 6 years old. After 6 years studying, they will study for 3 years in junior secondary schools, and then study for another 3 years in senior secondary schools.² Higher education for academic qualifications includes diploma programmes (i.e. *zhuan ke* in Chinese, namely specialized course studies), bachelor degree programmes (i.e. *ben ke* in Chinese) and postgraduate programmes. The basic length of schooling for diploma level programmes is from two to three years; for bachelors degree it is from four to five years; for postgraduate masters degrees it is from two to three years, and for doctorate degrees it is from three to four years.

School-based vocational education includes three levels: primary, secondary and higher. Primary vocational education is provided by junior secondary vocational schools, and secondary vocational education by senior secondary vocational schools, respectively. Higher level of vocational education shall, in accordance with the actual needs and conditions, be undertaken by separately established vocational colleges or by general institutions of higher learning. Other schools or colleges may, in accordance with overall planning by local education administrative departments, provide vocational education at their corresponding levels.

The aim of education in P. R. China is to develop educational undertakings, improve the quality of the whole nationality, and accelerate the construction of the socialist material and spiritual civilization.

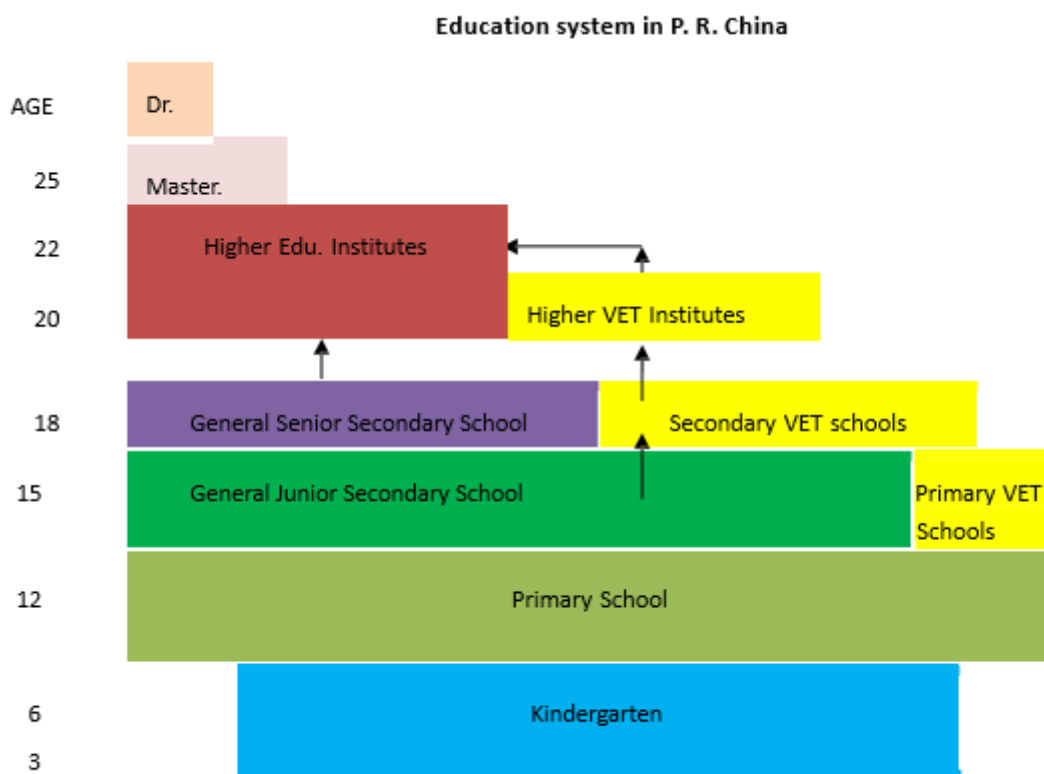
The development of education is based on the following legislative documents:

- Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China (1986)
- Teachers Law of People's Republic of China (1993)
- Education Law of People's Republic of China (1995)
- Vocational Education Law of People's Republic of China (1996)
- Higher Education Law of People's Republic of China (1998)
- Law on Promotion of Non-public Schools of People's Republic of China (2002)

¹ This overview expands on that provided by China for the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework project managed by Australia Commonwealth Government 2012. Original drafters of this overview were FAN Wei, Director of Division of Higher VET, MOE, P. R. China and LIU Yufeng, Research Professor of CIVTE, MOE, P. R. China. This note was updated in January 2015 by Yinan Zhang and Andrea Bateman with contributions from the World Bank through a Korea Trust Funded program, "Promoting Skills Development and Job Creation in East Asia." Mr. Wenjun Chen of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and Ms. Jing Xu of the Central Institute of Technical and Vocational Education provided further inputs.

² In some regions, such as Shanghai and Shandong province, primary education lasts five years and junior secondary school lasts four years.

- Regulation on Academic Degrees of People’s Republic of China (1980, 2004)



NATIONAL/TVET QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

At current, China does not have a national qualifications framework. The qualification system is mainly composed of two systems: educational qualification system and occupational qualification system.

In June 2014, The Modern Vocational Education System Construction Plan (2014-2020) (hereinafter referred to as the Plan) was released to develop a comprehensive vocational education system in China. The key creators of the Plan include the Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Agriculture, and the Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development under the State Council. The Plan sets out a vocational education structure that ensures a smooth transition between secondary and higher levels within the vocational education system, and between vocational and academic tracks into the labor market.

Specifically, Chinese government has put lifelong learning as an important strategy in its education development agenda. The National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) states that academic continuing education, professional training, and community-based education are three key areas for developing continuing education and establishing a comprehensive lifelong learning framework. Several municipalities (including Beijing and Shanghai) and provinces have undertaken pilot projects in constructing open universities and building an “academic credits bank” system. For example, the Beijing Open University project involves setting up a distance self-learning support platform and collaborating with foreign universities to provide digital education resources for local citizens. Shanghai has created an implementation plan for establishing Academic Credits Bank, which

allows residents to apply for pre-approved adult higher education courses and vocational certificate programs and to establish individual learning files for accumulating credits. Such credits are recognized by several educational institutions for their selected programs.

Purpose

Regulation on Academic Degrees of the People’s Republic of China is one of the key regulations of the current educational qualifications system. Its purpose is to promote the growth of scientific and specialised personnel and to increase the academic levels of all branches of academic disciplines and the development of education and science undertakings in China, so as to meet the needs of modernizing the socialist construction of China.

The purpose of developing an occupational standards system is to implement the strategy of reinvigorating the nation by making use of science and education, fully developing and utilizing its abundant human resources, improving the overall quality of laborers of all kinds, the rates of employment and levels of social and economic development.

Architecture



Governance

In China, the Ministry of Education is in charge of the educational qualifications system, and the Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security is in charge of the occupational qualifications system.

There are several important documents on the qualifications system in China which include:

- *Labor Law of People’s Republic of China (1994)*: Article 69 stipulates that *Occupations should be categorized. Occupational standards should be developed for certain occupations and the occupational qualification certificate system should be implemented.*
- *Occupational Classification Code of People’s Republic of China (1999)*: In this document occupations in Chinese society are categorized into eight groups and 1,915 sub-groups. It

presents a detailed definition and description of activities and functions of occupations covered in this Code.

- *Regulation on Academic Degrees of People's Republic of China (1980, 2004)*: This document stipulates levels of academic degrees, the eligible requirements for learners to obtain particular degrees and relevant bodies in charge of awarding particular academic degrees.
- *Vocational Education Law of People's Republic of China (1996)*: Its Article 8 stipulates that *vocational education and training shall, according to particular individuals' needs and national standards in terms of occupational classification and grades, be certified by academic qualifications, training certificates, and vocational qualifications.*
- *Regulations on Occupational Skills Testing (1993)*: It stipulates the connotations and varieties of occupational skills testing, particularly organisations in charge of delivering the testing, eligible requirements for qualifying such organizations and their employed assessors, and applicant fees for skills testing.

Processes

In 2002, the former Ministry of Labour and Social Security issued *A Suggestion on Further implementation of Vocational Qualifications Certification System in Vocational Schools*. It sets out that Students, from national key vocational schools, and a small number of provincial-level key secondary vocational schools which have high teaching quality, good social reputation, and the main programmes in higher vocational schools accredited jointly by administrative bodies from Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Ministry of Education, having received academic certificates upon passing the examination on theory and operative skills shall be viewed as the equivalent of qualified testing of vocational skills required and hereby shall be awarded expected intermediate levels of Vocational Qualifications accordingly.

Links

Graduates of three-year higher vocational institutions have the option to continue their studies at four-year regular universities if they pass standardized written examinations organized by their provincial agencies. They would be able to receive a Bachelors' degree after two years of study at a four-year university. Ministry of Education in China has signed mutual recognition agreements on educational qualifications with some foreign countries. Occupational Skills Testing Authority (OSTA) from Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security has introduced some international occupational qualifications agencies including Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA).

TVET QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

Accreditation of Qualifications

The National Occupational Testing system consists of the national Occupational Testing Authority (OSTA) and the regional/industrial Occupational Testing Centres.

The Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security is in charge of comprehensive management of the OSTA. OSTA's main responsibilities include developing plans, policies and standards; examining and approving the vocational skill accreditation bodies of related industries; organizing, coordinating and guiding occupational skills' testing; and issuing qualification certificates.

The comprehensive management of the regional/industrial Occupational Skill Testing Centres of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities oversee comprehensive management of occupational skills testing in their own regions, including examination and approval of various occupational skill testing stations. Meanwhile, the management is also in charge of formulating the following rules and methods: 1) the conditions of application and examining procedures; 2) examining methods of specialised knowledge, practical skills.

Occupational skills testing stations implement occupational skills testing.

Occupational skills testing stations should meet the following standards:

- Have space and equipment adapt to the types of work or specialty need to be tested;
- Have testing instruments in line with national standards;
- Have management personnel and assessors working full and part time;
- Have perfect management methods.

Organisations or individuals could apply for occupational testing at local occupational skills testing stations or agencies. The later will issue admission tickets for the applicants. Applicants will sit for the testing at prescribed dates and times, and the testing will be taken according to specified protocols. In 2009, approximately 15 million people participated in the annual occupational skills tests. *The Rules for National Occupational Qualification Examination Management (Tentative)* provides detailed guidelines on executing the occupational qualification testings. Such occupational qualifications awarded to applicants who pass the skills testings are more likely taken seriously by state-own enterprise than by private sectors.

National occupational standards are released by Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security with reference to *Technical Procedures on Formulating National Occupational Standards*. Each set of occupational standards is created by a panel consisting of 5-10 experts who are familiar with the standard establishment methodology and those with theoretical and industry experience. Standards for 'white-collar' and technical skills intensive occupations (such as engineers and accountants) are developed and managed by the Division of Professional and Technical Personnel Management within MHRSS. Standards for 'blue-collar' occupations are developed and managed by the Division of Occupational Capacity Building with MHRSS. There are currently 1,100 occupational standards.

The occupation-specific standards are an important reference for curriculum development, occupational activities, prerequisite training, and recruitment decision-making. Such standards cover four core areas including Overview, Basic Requirements, Job Requirements and Percentage of Gravity:

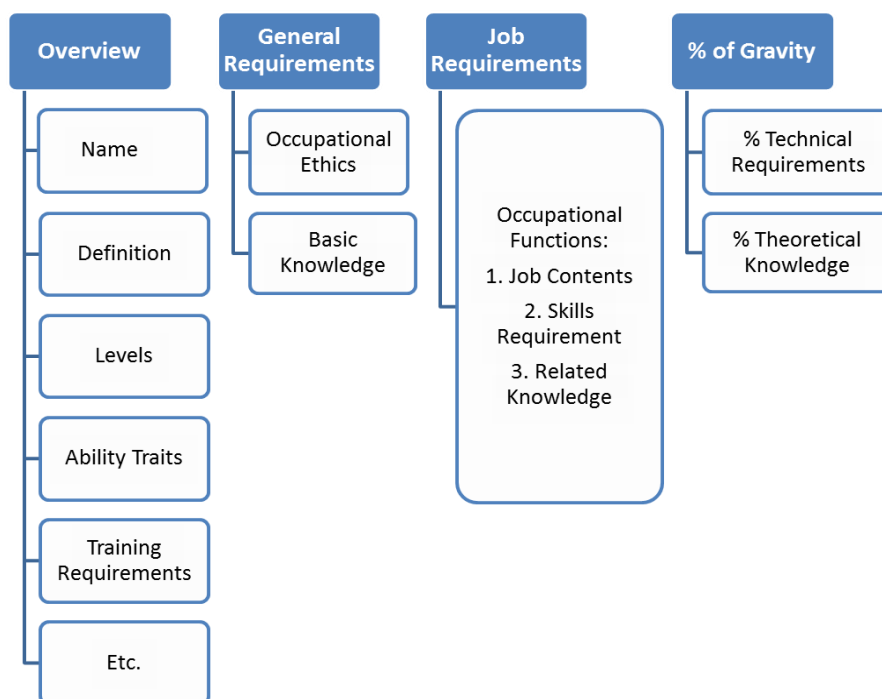
1. The Overview is a basic description of the occupation, including the name, definition, levels, work environment, basic ability traits, and training requirements (both academic and vocational). There are five levels of occupational qualifications, namely skilled workers at primary (level 5), intermediate (level 4), advanced (level 3) levels and technicians (level 2) and advanced technician (level 1). The criteria used to decide different levels of occupational qualifications include the range of occupational activities, the responsibilities and the extent of difficulties involved in undertaking these activities.
2. The General Requirements focus on the occupational ethics and basic knowledge. The occupational ethics refer to the basic moral ethics and attitudes required for being engaged with the occupation, and the basic knowledge applies to all workers under the occupation.
3. The Job Requirements make up the bulk of the standards, specifying three occupational functions: job content, skills requirements, and related knowledge for each level of occupational qualifications. The three occupational functions take the form of modules. The job content specifies the job tasks. Associated with

each job task, skills requirements refer to the technical competencies and related knowledge refers to the knowledge of process, operation guidelines, theories, etc.

- Percentage of gravity includes a table on the percentage composition of technical requirements versus theoretical knowledge for each level of occupational qualification.

National occupational standards are to be updated every 3 to 5 years. Representatives from both industrial sectors and vocational education and training providers are invited to set up a committee in charge of updating such national occupational standards. However, such standards fail to be updated in due periods because of capacity constraints on the side of intelligent contribution. As a result, the ongoing national standards for certain occupations may not reflect the changed demands from the labour market.

Structure of national occupational standards system



Registration of Providers/Awarding Bodies

Any organization that intends to become an education provider, should make an application to local governments, meanwhile, they should meet the following requirements:

- Organized institution and constitution;
- Qualified teachers;
- Teaching and learning establishments, facilities and equipment that meet the prescribed standards (Article 26, *Education Law of People’s Republic of China*);
- Funding necessary for operating the school and a steady source of capital input

The main resources of educational funding include:

- State education budget
 - Budget for education funding
 - Education Expenses Appropriation

- Infrastructure provision
- Funding for scientific research
- Other funding
- Taxes levied for education by different levels of governments
 - Education surtax
 - Local education surcharge
 - Local Education Fund
- Enterprises funding
- School-run industries and social services revenue for education funding
- Funding of social donation
- Institutions income
 - Tuition and miscellaneous fees
- Other income.

Vocational Education and Training Providers

There are two main types of public VET providers in China. One is called ‘vocational schools/colleges’ (*zhi-ye xue-xiao* in Chinese) administered by MOE, and the other is called ‘technical schools (for skilled workers/technicians)’ (*ji-gong/ji-shi xue-xiao* in Chinese) administered by MHRSS. Vocational schools consist of three sub-groups, namely ‘regular secondary specialized schools’ (*pu-tong zhong-zhuan* in Chinese), ‘secondary specialized schools for adults’ (*cheng-ren zhong-zhuan* in Chinese), and ‘vocational upper secondary schools’ (*zhi-ye gao-zhong* in Chinese). In 2013, the total number of public providers in delivering vocational and technical education and training at the upper secondary level was 12,262, among which there were 2,882 technical schools for skilled workers/technicians, and 3,577 for regular secondary specialized schools, 1,536 for secondary specialized schools for adults, and 4,267 for vocational upper secondary schools.³

Not only do the vocational schools offer training to students, they provide services to the general public. In addition, there are public employment training centres (3,332 centres in 2009), which receive public financial allowances. These centres are subject to the management and monitoring of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

In 2013, there are 2,482 non-public institutions providing vocational education at the upper secondary level, and 20,104 non-public vocational training institutions. According to the *Law on Promotion of Non-public Schools of the People’s Republic of China*, non-public institutions need to be approved by local administrative sectors of MHRSS in giving them permission to deliver vocational skills training programmes, and MOE shall have the records for these registered non-public institutions as training providers.

To apply for preparing to establish a Non-public school, the sponsor shall submit to the examination and approval authorities the following materials: (1) an application, the contents of which mainly include: the sponsor, the aims of education, size of the student body, level of the school, forms of education, conditions for establishing and running the school, internal management system, raising of funds and their management and use, etc.; (2) names of the sponsors and their addresses or their titles and

³ The figures are provided by national data statistics agency.

<http://data.stats.gov.cn/workspace/index;jsessionid=276DAD50787555126934B58A36A2AE6E?m=hgnd>

addresses; (3) source of the assets, amount of the funds and their valid certificates, in which property rights are clearly stated; and (4) where the assets of the school are donated, an agreement on the donations, in which the names of the donators, the amount of the assets donated, their use and management, and the relevant valid certificates are clearly stated.

Educator Requirements

Teachers Law of People's Republic of China stipulates that, 'The State shall formulate a national system of professional qualifications for teachers (Article 10); All Chinese citizens, who abide by the Constitution and laws, taking a keen interest in education, having sound ideological and moral character, possessing a record of formal schooling as stipulated in this Law or having passed the national teachers' qualification examinations and having educational and teaching ability, may, after being evaluated as qualified, obtain a professional qualification for teachers.'

Its Article 11 stipulates that 'in order to obtain the required professional qualification for a qualified teacher in secondary specialized schools, technical schools for skilled workers/technicians or vocational upper secondary schools, the applicant must be the holder of a Bachelors degree - or above - awarded by higher education institutions providing teachers training courses'.

Citizens without the required academic qualifications must sit for a national examination in order to obtain professional teaching qualification.

Transnational/Cross Border Education

Chinese government attaches great importance to international cooperation on education. At present, China has established education cooperation and exchanges with 41 countries in the EU. It has signed education agreements with 23 countries within the EU, and with 40 Asian & African countries. Additionally, it has endorsed agreements on mutual recognition of academic degrees with eight East European and GUS countries.

In 1996, MHRSS released *An Announcement on Introducing and Enhancing Management of Foreign Vocational Qualification Certificates*. The Announcement stipulates that foreign vocational qualification agencies cannot operate individually in China. They have to work with Chinese counterpart agencies. Any agency working on introducing foreign vocational qualification certificate to China has to submit a report to local administrative agencies of MHRSS at the provincial government level to gain the official approval. The approved foreign certificates carry the same value as the Chinese qualification certificates.

In 2004, Chinese government approved *Regulation on Running Joint-Ventured Schools in P. R. China*. According to this Regulation, the state encourages Chinese educational institutions to cooperate with foreign educational institutions with high and quality academic standards; it is encouraged to cooperate in highly demanded professional areas and disciplines.

Indicators/Data

The following data are generally collected for the purpose of monitoring the quality of the TVET System:

- Student enrollments
- Leaders of VET institutions
- Basic condition of VET institutes
 - Land and construction space
 - Books and materials
 - Studying rooms
 - Internet
- Practical conditions:
 - Campus practical basis
 - Out of school practical basis
 - Occupational skills testing agencies
- Funds
 - Income
 - Expenditure
- Teachers:
 - Full time teachers
 - Part time teachers
- Specialty:
 - Formulation of specialties
 - Formulation of curriculum
 - Occupational qualification certificates and training
 - On-the-job training
 - Cooperation between industry and schools
 - Enrolment and employment
- Teaching and learning management
 - Teaching and learning system and operation management
 - Basic situation of full time management personnel
 - Basic situation of full time students management personnel
 - Teaching comments
 - Etc.
- Social evaluation
 - Enrollment situation
 - Employment rate
 - Social donation.

TVET BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

Barriers and obstacles include:

- The involvement of industries and enterprises into TVET needs further reinforcement;
- The TVET quality assurance system has not been completely established;
- Lack of effective cooperation between different administrative systems: MOE and MHRSS;
- Lack of mutual recognition between two qualification systems: educational and occupational.