

**A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE: CHINA'S
PLAN FOR EDUCATION REFORM AND
DEVELOPMENT (2010-2020)**

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Executive Summary

1. China has developed from a country with a huge population to a country with huge human resources. It is now looking into becoming a country with strong human resources by 2020.
2. As defined in the Outline for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), the strategic goals to be attained by 2020 are to “modernize education, bring a learning society into shape, and turn China into a country rich in human resources.”
3. Building on the momentum since the late 1990s, China will continue to expand its higher education, but at a much more modest pace. Between 2009 and 2020, the total enrollment is projected to increase by about 5 million.
4. Compared with compulsory education, high school education, and higher education, the greatest expansion in the next decade will be pre-school education and continuing education.
5. If the development targets were to be met, the average years of education will increase from 12.4 in 2009 to 13.5 in 2020 for the new labor force, and from 9.5 to 11.2 for the entire working population, among whom 20% will have higher education.
6. With this outline, the emphasis has been shifted to the quality of education as the expansion of enrollment is slowing down for compulsory, high school and higher education. It recognizes the need to overhaul the way education is delivered, examined and administered.
7. The outline identifies six areas for reform, covering cultivation of talent, examination and enrollment, school governance, school operation and

financing, education administration and international exchanges and cooperation.

8. Unlike developmental targets that are very specific, this outline is general on most institutional reforms. This reflects a lack of consensus on the priority and the path of education reform. It also reflects a reluctance to fully embrace best practices proven in other contexts, which require more profound changes than what the current system allows.
9. Instead of offering specific guidelines, this outline relies on pilot reforms for ways to make China a country rich and strong in human resources. Ten pilot reforms will be carried out in the years up to 2012.
10. Unlike most other countries, China is in a much better position to increase spending on education. Its problem is more of a reform issue than a development issue. It remains to be seen how China “modernizes” its education system to cultivate talent, foster innovation and develop scholarship in the next decade.