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### The Development of Education in China (1978-1990)

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#### Abstract:

China witnessed between years (1978\_1990) Major educational transformations formed an essential part of the reform and opening-up project led by Deng Xiaoping. Deng Xiaoping The leadership realized that education is not just a tool for social progress, but the cornerstone of building a modern and prosperous economy.

Prior to these reforms, China's education system was simplistic, focusing on providing education for all without sufficient attention to quality, with rural areas in particular lacking educational resources. With the reforms, the government adopted a strategic vision to radically improve education. This included strengthening basic education and expanding it to all parts of the country, while comprehensively updating curricula and aligning them with the changing needs of the economy. At the same time, China sought to benefit from global expertise, sending thousands of its students abroad to learn the latest sciences and technologies, and opening its doors to foreign investment and the private sector to participate in developing the education sector. These policies helped raise school and university enrollment rates and prepare a new generation with the knowledge and skills needed to lead the country's development.

These reforms were not merely sectoral improvements, but rather a strategic shift that reflected China's belief that education is the cornerstone of national advancement. With this vision, China established a modern educational system that contributed to advancing economic and social development, and positioning the country on the path to global competition with strength and effectiveness.

Keywords: educational development, China, Deng Xiaoping.

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#### The introduction

It is considered period The period between 1978 and 1990 was a pivotal period in the history of education in China. soIt underwent radical changes that contributed to the transformation of the education system toward modernization and innovation. In 1978, following the announcement of the reform and opening-up policy under Deng Xiaoping, a focus began on developing education to keep pace with the economic and social changes taking place in the country. Significant curricular reforms were introduced, and investments in school and university infrastructure increased, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education and expanding its scope.

During that period University education has witnessed remarkable development. so Students began receiving an education that kept pace with the needs of the evolving labor market, contributing to the revitalization of the national economy. In addition Emphasis was placed on science and technology education as key drivers of growth, and new educational programs were created in technical and vocational fields. As witnessed by theperiod1978-1990 Transformations in basic education, so the focus began on inclusive education and expanding educational opportunities for all, including rural areas. That the reforms are a step toward achieving the sustainable development goals that China has sought to achieve in the following decades.

The research is divided into an introduction, a preface, three chapters, and a conclusion. Review the preface. Education in China before 1978 As for the first topic Stages of development of kindergarten and primary education in China (1978-1990) and we discussed in the second section Development of secondary education in China (1978-1990) while the third section included Development of higher Education and scientific Research in China (1978-1990) as for the conclusion, I reviewed the most important conclusions I reached.

The researcher relied on many sources in Chinese and Japanese, which provided important information for this research.

#### Introduction

#### **Education in China before 1978**

China's education system prior to 1978 was plagued by profound structural and political challenges rooted in previous decades, particularly during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). This was characterized by the dominance of political ideology over the educational process. Schools and universities were transformed into platforms for inculcating communist values rather than focusing on developing academic competencies or scientific research. This led to widespread disruption of academic and research institutions, and higher education standards declined significantly, impacting the quality of China's educated workforce. For example, university graduation rates declined significantly during the late 1960s, as higher education opportunities were reduced to become available primarily to political or military elites. This era also saw many curricula restructured to conform to prevailing political discourse, limiting the intellectual innovation and creativity required for national development <sup>(i)</sup>.

The government sought to combat illiteracy and expand basic education, especially in rural areas. However, that Efforts suffer from poor funding and limited resources, resulting in significant gaps in the quality of education between urban and rural areas. The education system prior to 1978 was strictly centralized, so Great importance was given to the role of the state in organizing schools and providing educational materials, but this policy led to significant restrictions on creativity and development (ii).

#### ❖ Prominent figures in education before 1978:

1. Mao Zedong Mao Zedong (1893-1976)<sup>(iii)</sup> he was the leader of the Chinese Revolution and the founder of the People's Republic of China, which he ruled from 1949 until his death in 1976. Mao was a pivotal figure in shaping communist policies and had a major influence on the educational system in China, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) <sup>(iv)</sup>.

Mao sought to transform education into a tool for promoting communist ideology, so he believed that traditional education promoted bourgeois values and hindered the revolution. As a result, he worked to de-emphasize academic education and replace it with education focused on instilling communist values. During the Cultural Revolution, many schools and universities were closed, and students and teachers were sent to the

countryside as part of the "Down to the Countryside" campaign. General 1968 to learn from the peasants and promote revolutionary values (v).

Traditional intellectuals and teachers were also targeted, so They were considered "intellectual bourgeois" and were attacked by the Red Guards, students who supported Mao's revolutionary policies. Mao's goal through that The campaign to place communist ideology at the heart of the education system (vi).

- 2\_Chuan Nozhou Enlai (1898-1976vii): In the 1950s, he began supporting educational initiatives aimed at improving China's education system, so Focused that Initiatives to expand technical and vocational education, which was considered an urgent need in light of the industrial and agricultural development that China was witnessing during that time. Duration This period also witnessed intensive efforts by the Chinese government to provide comprehensive educational opportunities for all members of society, while emphasizing the importance of vocational education in achieving economic and social growth. That Support during the 1960s with the launch of many programs and projects aimed at enhancing the technical skills of young people, In addition to Directing students towards specializations that meet market needs, and that Educational policies are an essential part of the government's plan to build a strong state that relies on local competencies in various fields (viii).
- 2. Dang Xiaoping Deng Xiaoping(1904\_1997)<sup>(ix)</sup>:He emerged as one of the most important leadership figures in modern Chinese history, and although his fame was notorious, QIt came after 1978 with the adoption of the policy of reform and openness, but his proactive view of the importance of reforming the educational system appeared before that Time Bperiod He clearly understood that education was the fundamental pillar upon which societal development depended, and he saw the need to reform the education system, which had stagnated for many years before major reforms began. His belief in the importance of education stemmed from his conviction that economic and technological progress would not be achieved without a strong education system that was commensurate with the needs of the times. Although he was not in actual power until the mid-1970s, his early influence on the policies of the Chinese Communist Party was represented by the trend towards improving education and making it an indispensable priority. When he assumed full responsibility in 1978, education reform became a crucial part of his comprehensive vision for developing and rebuilding China on a modern basis <sup>(x)</sup>.

## Education in China before 1978: An Analytical Study of Peking and Tsinghua Universities

China is one of the world's oldest civilizations, with a long-standing educational system for centuries. However, higher education in the country underwent major transformations in the 20th century. Prior to 1978, China's educational system was heavily influenced by political and social events, particularly the Cultural Revolution that began in 1966. At the same time The role of two of the most prominent Chinese universities can be studied: Peking University and Tsinghua University, which Marsta An important role in the scientific and educational development of the country (xi).

Peking University was founded in 1898 and was one of China's oldest and largest universities. Prior to 1978, it enjoyed a prominent position in the Chinese academic community. So it was a hub for many scholars and thinkers who contributed to intellectual and scientific development. However, with the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Peking University experienced period The university was greatly affected by the radical changes brought about by the waves of revolutionary thought that swept the country. So Many academic departments were closed, and many professors and students who did not align with revolutionary ideology were expelled. That The

1970

event marked the beginning of a period of decline in the status of higher education in China, as political ideology prevailed at the expense of scientific progress. Despite this, Peking University gradually regained its prominent position after the end of that The Dark Ages of the 1970s (xii).

Founded in 1911, Tsinghua University is distinguished by its focus on science and engineering, making it a major center for technical education in China., lost Its goal from the beginning was to provide higher education in technical and scientific fields, which helped create leaders in those fields, and Especially In the field of engineering and natural sciences, However, Tsinghua University was not immune to the effects of the Cultural Revolution, which affected all Chinese universities. Like Peking University, Tsinghua University experienced For a period of time from the turmoil, so Many of its educational resources were destroyed, and a large number of professors and students who did not align with the prevailing revolutionary ideologies were dismissed. However, like Peking University, Tsinghua University was able to gradually rebuild itself after For a period of time The recession that followed the Cultural Revolution (xiii).

❖ Popular rural schools: It was established to meet the needs of rural areas, but suffered from a lack of resources and infrastructure.

Number of students (in millions)
Number of primary schools
116
900,000
1960

1,220,000

Table No. (1) Decline in rural education(xiv).

#### The first topic

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# Stages Education development Kindergarten and primary school In China (1978-1990) Firstly: development Kindergarten stage.

Kindergarten education witnessed a qualitative shift with the launch of the 1978 reforms led by Deng Xiaoping. The government introduced policies aimed at expanding the scope and quality of early education, including the construction of more kindergartens and providing financial support to improve access to these services in rural and poor areas. These reforms were also accompanied by changes in early education curricula, with an emphasis on developing children's social and cognitive skills (xv).

Enrollment rates have gradually increased as a result of the increased number of kindergartens and intensive government support for providing basic education for all children. For example, enrollment rose from 11.2% in 1978 to 38.6% by 1990. Furthermore, government efforts have included providing specialized training programs for kindergarten teachers, launching new courses that focus on modern teaching methods and the holistic development of children (xvi).

It is worth noting that that Developments were not uniform across China; rural areas continued to suffer from a lack of resources and infrastructure, prompting the government to launch development plans targeting those areas in the late 1980s. From the twentieth century One of the most prominent of these efforts was the "Education for All" initiative, which aimed to reduce regional gaps (xvii).

Table No. (2). Increase education in kindergarten stage (xviii).

Analysis rate (%)	Number of kindergartens	year
11.2	20,000	1978
15.8	28,000	1980
25.4	50,000	1985
38.6	90,000	1990

The table shows above remarkable growth In increasing the number of learners from Kindergarten enrollment rates between 1978 and 1990. While the number of kindergartens more than quadrupled during this period, enrollment rates saw a significant jump of 27.4 percentage points. This development reflects the impact of the government's reform policies, which focused on improving access to and the quality of early education, a significant achievement given the economic and social challenges the country faced during that era.

#### Secondly: Stage development primary education.

Educational reforms placed great importance on improving primary education, which is the foundation for raising the general educational level. In 1978, the Chinese government focused on laying the foundation for universal primary education, adopting strategies to significantly increase school numbers and update curricula to keep pace with economic and social changes. The following years saw tangible achievements. In 1982, a law was passed making primary education compulsory. So Legislation was passed requiring families to send their children to school and providing free education up to the sixth grade. Which led to a significant increase in enrollment rates (xix).

Accompany that Growth: Huge government investments in teacher training; regional training centers have been established to qualify teachers in rural areas, which has contributed to reducing the educational gap between urban and rural areas, however challenges remain, so Rural areas needed development Infra structure such as textbooks and school facilities<sup>(xx)</sup>.

Enrollment rate (%)	Number of students (in millions)	Number of primary schools	Year
85	154	1,000,000	1978
92	160	1,200,00	1985
96	175	1,350,000	1990

Table No. (3) includes. Significant increase in primary education (xxi).

The table above shows the significant growth in the number of primary schools and enrolled students between 1978 and 1990. The enrollment rate also increased by 11% during this period, reflecting efforts to achieve education for all. These figures highlight the importance of the government's focus on education as a means of promoting national development. Period Post- economic reform.

#### The second topic

#### Education development For secondary school China (1978-1990)

#### Firstly: Education Middle School

Education witnessed In middle school A major expansion during period Reforms that began in the late 1970s and continued through the 1980s, f in 1978, the government launched initiatives aimed at increasing the number of secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. Huge financial resources were allocated to improving educational infrastructure, including the construction of new schools and the expansion of existing ones, to meet the growing demand for education. By 1985, 45,000 schools had been built, compared to only 30,000 in 1978, and by 1990, the number of schools had reached 60,000 (xxii).

To encourage students from low-income families to attend secondary school, the government provided financial grants and special subsidies. These included: that Policies provide additional scholarships for female students with the aim of reducing the gender gap, so School enrollment rates were relatively lower among girls in rural areas. Furthermore, curriculum reforms were introduced to meet the growing demands of the

labor market and to enhance students' practical and academic skills (xxiii).

I witnessed That period Establishing training programs to qualify teachers, especially in remote areas, to ensure comparable educational levels throughout the country. that Efforts towards a strategic vision to develop the workforce and meet the needs of China's growing economy, which contributed significantly to raising enrollment rates and increasing the number of students from 40 million in 1978 to 70 million in 1990. The government has also begun to introduce reforms to the school curriculum to make it more relevant to the changing requirements of society and the economy (xxiv).

Table No. (4) includes. Educational development in the intermediate stage (xxv).

Number of students in millions	Number of secondary schools	year
40	30,000	1978
45	35,000	1980
55	45,000	1985
70	60,000	1990

The table above indicates the continuous progress in the number of lower secondary schools and the number of students enrolled during the period Between 1978 and 1990, the number of schools increased by nearly 100%, reflecting the government's commitment to expanding access to lower secondary education. In addition to However, enrolment rates have witnessed a gradual increase, so the number of students increased from 40 million in 1978 to 70 million in 1990, reflecting the success of educational policies that focused on reducing the gap between rural and urban areas.

#### Second: Vocational education.

Since the beginning of China's economic reforms in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, emphasis has been placed on developing vocational education to meet the needs of the growing labor market. Initially, efforts to develop vocational education were limited to improving curricula and teacher training. In addition to Opening the way for the sector Especially to participate in that the field. In the period From 1980 to 1985, vocational education saw a major expansion, so Numerous vocational schools were established in various cities and rural areas, focusing on fields such as manufacturing, agriculture, and construction. In 1984, the government launched a national plan aimed at improving the quality of vocational education and increasing the number of educational institutions, which contributed to the significant growth of vocational education. By the mid-1980s, China began to further modernize and regulate vocational education, and nationally recognized training centers were established (xxvi). Modern technology was also introduced into the curriculum, and training programs were expanded to include fields such as information technology and electronics, helping to develop the skills of the workforce. In 1989, the government launched programs to stimulate investment in vocational education, while enhancing cooperation between the government and the private sector to improve the quality of vocational education to meet market needs (xxvii).

Table No. (5) includes. Vocational education has developed with the increase in the number of vocational schools (xxviii).

Annual increase rate (%)	Number of students in secondary vocational education	year
	1.3%	1978
13.3%	1.7	1980
17.9%	3,3	1984
21.2%	4.0	1985
8.8%	7.4	1989
8.1%	8.0	1990

Through the table above it is evident that there was a remarkable development in vocational education in China between 1978 and 1990. At the beginning of the reforms in 1978, vocational schools were very few, covering only a few basic fields. However, over time, with the launch of government plans to expand vocational education, the country witnessed an increase in the number of vocational schools, coinciding with an improvement in the quality of education. By 1989, there was a significant increase in the number of vocational schools and student enrollments. That The increase was a direct result of government reforms aimed at enhancing public-private sector cooperation in education, as well as the introduction of modern technology into the curriculum.

#### Thagum: education Preparatory.

Upper secondary education has seen a special focus on promoting scientific and technical education. The government has built new schools and improved curricula to align them with changing market demands. Vocational training programs have also been introduced in upper secondary schools, allowing students who do not wish to pursue university education to acquire technical skills that will improve their chances in the job market. Furthermore, programs have been launched to encourage innovation in higher secondary education, including the introduction of modern educational technologies (xxix).

Table No. (6) includes. Increase in the number of schools and the rise in the level of learners (xxx).

Number of students (in millions)	Number of upper secondary schools	year
12	8,000	1978
14	9,500	1980
18	12,000	1985
25	18,000	1990

It became clear to us from the table The above data shows a significant development in upper secondary education, so the number of schools doubled between 1978 and 1990, while the number of students increased from 12 million to 25 million. This growth reflects the government's focus on preparing students for university entry or direct entry into the job market by providing innovative educational programs. That period crucial in bridging the gender gap, so the percentage of girls enrolled in secondary education has increased significantly.

#### The third topic

#### Development of higher education and scientific research In China (1978-1990)

#### First: University education.

The 1978 reforms restructured university education, so the number of universities has increased, and the quality of education has improved. Particular attention has been paid to scientific and technological disciplines to support China's economic development. The government has focused on establishing specialized research centers within universities to provide the necessary support for industrial and agricultural development (xxxi).

International cooperation programs have been launched with leading universities and educational institutions in countries such as Japan and the United States, contributing to the exchange of knowledge and the development of academic competencies. And thanks those updates there has been a significant increase in literacy rates and improved opportunities for higher education, so Guangzhou University of Technology was established in 1985, contributing to the development of scientific research and supporting the local economy. The challenges facing this development include: the uneven

geographical distribution between rural and urban areas, and the lack of qualified human resources in some remote areas (xxxii).

Table No. (6) includes: The increase in the number of universities is due to the increase in the number of students (xxxiii).

Number of students in millions	Number of universities	year
1.0	600	1978
1.8	850	1985
2.5	1,200	1990

The table above indicates the increase in the number of universities and students enrolled in higher education between 1978 and 1990. The number of beneficiaries during that period expanded to approximately 1.5 million students. That the government's growth trend is towards promoting university education as a major tool for socio-economic development. In addition Support modern science and technology.

#### Second: Scientific research and postgraduate studies.

Scientific research witnessed a qualitative leap during this period, thanks to increased government funding and international cooperation programs. This helped strengthen China's position on the global academic scene. Multidisciplinary graduate programs were established to produce specialized researchers in the fields of medicine, engineering, and the social sciences, with an emphasis on applied research (XXXXIV).

Table No. (7) includes: A rise in the class of enlightened intellectuals qualified to manage the requirements of the Chinese government (xxxxv).

Number of published research	Number of postgraduate students	year
5,000	20,000	1978
15,000	50,000	1985
30,000	100,000	1990

The table above shows how the Chinese government has sought to develop the education program through: Establishing graduate scientific programs and expanding the scope of research.

Which in turn enables Which resulted in major changes in the economy and society, as well as in the field of education and scientific research.

#### Conclusions

- 1. Significant progress has been made in universalizing compulsory education, with emphasis on primary and secondary education to ensure literacy.
- 2. The education system was reorganized to align with economic and social needs, resulting in improved quality of curricula and teachers.
- 3. Government spending on education has increased significantly to support infrastructure and provide educational resources.
- 4. Technical education has been enhanced to meet the demands of the changing labor market and support industrial growth.
- 5. Students were sent to study abroad, and foreign experts were brought in to promote cultural and educational exchange.

(i)李强, 《中国教育史》, 人民教育出版社, 1995, 页 45.

- (ii)山田太郎、『中国の教育革命』、東京大学出版会、東京、1980、页35.
- (iii) Mao Zedong: child Mao was born in Shaoshan, Hunan Province, China, on December 26, 1893. He was educated in local schools and then, in 1913, entered the Changsha Normal School to enter a higher education institution where he studied law, history, and business. He settled into teaching and graduated from the Normal School in 1918. After graduating in 1918, he began to adopt revolutionary thought. He moved to Beijing to work in the library of Peking University, where he was influenced by Marxist thought. In 1921, he was a co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party. In the 1920s and 1930s, Mao led communist rebellions in the countryside and organized peasants. In 1934, he led the "Long March," which reorganized the ranks of the Communist Party. During World War II (1939-1945), he played a role in an alliance with the Kuomintang against the Japanese. In 1949, Mao declared the founding of the People's Republic of China and became its president. Mao remained in power until his death on September 9, 1976. For more, see:

The Columbia Encyclopedia, Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 2000, PP 1700-1702.

- (iv)王学义,《文化大革命与中国的社会变迁》,人民教育出版社,北京,1992,页75.
- (v)黄纪华·《毛泽东与中国文化革命》·北京出版社,北京,1990,页150.
- (vi)李光耀, 《毛泽东与中国革命》·人民出版社, 北京, 1995, 页 120.
- (vii) Chuanlai was born in Huai'an, Jiangsu Province, eastern China, in 1898. He received his primary education at a local school in Huai'an from 1905, and then moved to Tianjin in 1910, where he enrolled at Nankai High School. In 1917, he traveled to Japan to pursue higher education, but did not complete his studies. He returned to his country in 1919, before leaving again that same year for France under the "work-study" program, which allowed young Chinese to combine earning and education. There, he enrolled at Montpellier College in 1924, where his political awareness blossomed and he joined the Chinese Communist Party. He then assumed the position of Deputy Director of the Organization Department in 1925, and was appointed Head of the Party's Security Bureau in 1926. During the 1930s, he held leadership responsibilities within the Red Army and played an active role in the Party's military administration during the Long March of 1934–1935. In 1949, he was appointed the first Prime Minister of the State, simultaneously serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1949 to 1958. He continued to serve as Prime Minister until his death on January 8, 1976, in Beijing, after a long illness. His passing marked the end of a bright page in China's modern political history. For more, see: Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, 2010, p. 948.
- (viii) 周恩来: 《支持1950年代和1960年代的教育倡议》, 人民出版社, 1959, 页 24.
- (ix) Deng Xiaoping: Born in Baifang Village, Sichuan Province, on August 22, 1904, he began his education at Shuping Elementary School in 1911. He then traveled to France in 1919 to complete his education. In 1924, he joined the Chinese Communist Party. In 1926, he moved to the Soviet Union to study political and military science at Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow until 1927. In 1929, he joined the Red Army after returning to China and participated in the Long March in 1934-1935. He was then appointed Vice Premier of the State Council in 1952 and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1955. He became General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1956 until he was removed during the Cultural Revolution in 1966. He was then appointed Vice Premier in 1973, and in 1975, he became Chief of the General Staff of the Army. In 1976, he was appointed Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China. In 1978, he assumed effective leadership of China and spearheaded a program of major economic reforms. He was appointed chairman of the Central Advisory Committee of the Communist Party in 1978 and continued to guide China's policies until the early 1990s. Deng Xiaoping died on February 19, 1997, at the age of 92. For more, see:

Encyclopedia of China, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2003, P 312.

- (x) 丹小平, 《中國改革與發展》, 人民出版社, 北京, 1994, 页42.
- (xi) 赵大龙, 文化大革命中的中国大学, 北京大学出版社, 北京市海淀区, 2002, 页135.
- (xii) 李彦宏, 《中国高等教育历史》, 北京大学出版社, 北京市海淀区, 2005, 页214.
- (※ііі) 赵大龙,《文化大革命中的中国大学》,北京大学出版社,北京市海淀区,2002,页135.
- (xiv) The table was prepared by the researcher based on data

李强,以前的來源,页45;山田太郎,以前的來源,页35.

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- (xvii) 山田太郎, 以前的來源, 页 35.
- (xviii)高橋宏明、『中国高等教育の展望研究》,复旦大学出版社,上海,1997,页页 78-82.
- (xix)**王志**强, 《中国教育改革史》, 高等教育出版社, 北京, 1998, 页页 89-91.
- (※)山田次郎、『現代中国の教育変革』、京都大学出版会、京都、1995、页页47-49.
- (xxi)The table was prepared by the researcher based on data
- **王志**强,以前的來源,页页 89-91; **山田次郎、,以前的來源**,页页 47-49.
- (xxii)王志强, 《中国教育改革史》, 高等教育出版社, 北京, 1998, 页 112.
- (xxiii)同一來源,页 112.
- (xxiv)山田次郎、『現代中国の教育変革』、京都大学出版会、京都、1995、页63.
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- (xxvi)方一, 《中国教育改革》, 人民出版社, 上海, 中国, 1988, 页页 122-130.
- (xxvii)李元, 《中国职业教育:历史与发展》·北京大学出版社·北京·中国·1991, 页页 56-59.
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- (xxxi)陈晓东,《中国基础教育发展分析》,人民教育出版社,北京,2000, 页78.
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