

Ministry of Education Directive on the Promotion of  
Spare-time Education for Peasants  
(Approved by the Government Administration Council;  
Issued December 21, 1950)

It is a crucially significant task in the current stage of our cultural reconstruction to systematically promote spare-

time education for peasants to raise their cultural standard.

During the last twenty-some years, the various forms of after-work education for peasants, as promoted by the governments of the old liberated areas to raise their political awareness, have had a great impact on the successful fulfillment of tasks directed against our enemy. Because of the circumstances during a long period of armed struggle, however, there has not been particularly noticeable progress in improving the cultural level of the peasants. But now that the whole country has been unified, spare-time education for peasants should be vigorously strengthened in order to meet the needs of our political and economic development. For this purpose, the Central Ministry of Education issues the following directive:

1. In general, the primary goal of spare-time education for peasants is to teach them to read and to provide them with a general understanding of government policies, economic production, and sanitation. Since local conditions in different areas vary, the levels of political awareness of peasants also differ. Therefore, the Central Ministry of Education considers it necessary to take into account the specific circumstances and demands and various approaches suitable to a given area at a given time, and to regulate according to the following rules the content of [spare-time] education in various areas:

A. In all old liberated areas where land reform has been successfully introduced and where peasants' lives have been somewhat improved, the first task is to launch a learn-to-read campaign, so as to gradually reduce illiteracy and at the same time to give some training to peasants in the understanding of current events, government policies, matters concerning economic production, and sanitation. But, whenever there is an important political task, the schools should increase their emphasis on the teaching of current policies. As for students, first of all the schools should start with village cadres, activists, and youths, then gradually reach the ordinary peasants. The goal is to help all village cadres and young activists to learn over 1,000 of the most frequently used words within 3-5 years and to acquire the basic ability to read, write, and calculate.

B. In the more recently liberated areas and the newly liberated areas, where land reform has not been completed because the antifeudal struggle is still going on in the villages, schools should organize the masses of people around the timely central tasks in a given locale, using current events as topics to stimulate the peasants' class awareness and political understanding so as to implement the party's various policies. When peasants demand it, or when circumstances permit, schools, too, may begin their learn-to-read projects, thus paving the way for an intensive learn-to-read campaign among the peasants to be launched after the completion of the land reform.

C. In addition to the adoption of different policies based on whether they are in the old liberated area or new liberated areas, schools in minority nationality areas should pay particular attention to the teaching of nationality policies but should also, taking into consideration the characteristics of the minority people in the area and local conditions, provide the necessary teaching of other matters. With the exception of cases in which there are no minority languages, all subjects in the schools for the minority people should be taught in their national languages. Schools may, however, use the most popular, but nonnative, language in a given area, if the people there so desire.

2. In the past, spare-time education for peasants has been primarily provided in the winter. This system has been quite effective and should be further developed into a way of extensively organizing peasants to study. But, in order to gradually make after-work schools for peasants more regular, necessary conditions must be provided for converting seasonal education into year-round spare-time schooling. In areas where conditions permit (e.g., in some old liberated areas) local governments should do all they can to establish and support spare-time schools for peasants and to supplement them with individual small-group learn-to-read classes, which are led by special leaders in the place of work. This type of learning can take many forms, and it must not be bounded by any rule of uniformity. Whether operating in the form of large well-orga-

nized groups, or small groups, schools should be quite flexible in using the year-round and seasonal school systems, as well as in cooperating with the peasant mutual assistance and cultural-recreational organizations. The year-round schooling for peasants, however, must not interfere with farming. During the busy farm season, peasants should be given holidays, and they should increase their study when there is not enough work to do. Education for peasants must be based on their needs, motivations, and desires. While it must not become a matter of coercion or formality, neither can the people's government permit it to be without any direction and guidance.

3. Regardless of the form — large well-organized groups or individual small groups — spare-time cultural education for peasants, depending on local conditions, may consist of beginning classes (groups) and advanced classes (groups). The former admit illiterates and semiilliterates in an attempt to teach them over 1,000 words within a period of three years, thus giving them the basic ability to read, write, and calculate. The latter admit those peasants who have graduated from the beginning class or have its equivalent to give them an education equivalent to a 6th grader's. Depending on local conditions, schools may increase or decrease the number of classes and the time needed to complete their curriculums. The beginning class (or group) tentatively divides its curriculum into two parts: first year — reading, second year — arithmetic. The advanced class (or group) tentatively divides its curriculum into three parts: Chinese, arithmetic, and general knowledge. The class tentatively should meet between 150 and 200 times a year, 1 to 2 hours each time. During the busy season, schools may grant peasants holidays, depending on local conditions. After the completion of the courses and the passing of the examinations, students of the beginning and advanced classes will be issued diplomas by the county or city people's government. These beginning and advanced diplomas are the equivalents of the 4th grade and 6th grade diplomas of primary schools, respectively, when submitted as credentials for general purposes and for admission into accelerated middle

schools for workers and peasants, or cultural remedial schools for industrial and agricultural cadres.

4. The education agencies of government at various levels should direct, with the assistance of other government and party offices and mass organizations, the spare-time education for peasants. When necessary, county people's governments may, together with local peasant associations, the New Democratic Youth Corps, and the Democratic Women's Association, organize a County Committee on Spare-time Education for Peasants for the purpose of providing coordination and supervision of the work.

5. As a rule, in developing the spare-time educational programs for peasants, only when there are advanced classes with a large enough enrollment can there be full-time teachers. Otherwise, the policy is to "use ordinary people to teach ordinary people," mobilizing all who can read to become "teachers of the masses" because teaching others to read is an honorable duty. Those who have comparatively better educational backgrounds can be picked as the backbone "teachers of the masses." When necessary, local governments may start short training classes, admitting unemployed educated persons, or students who are not in school for some reason, giving them political indoctrination, and supplementing it with some essential specialized education courses. Upon graduation, these students will be assigned to work in the spare-time schools for peasants. In addition, teachers and employees of village primary schools should give "teachers of the masses" professional advice and assistance. County governments should regularly improve the level of political education and teaching skills of "teachers of the masses" in various ways; e.g., periodically send them to school, dispatch specialists to teach them, help them prepare classes, hold meetings to discuss teaching, hold teaching exhibits, organize teachers to observe how others teach, and study reports of outstanding teachers. In order to help "teachers of the masses" to become oriented and dedicated to their work, ministries (offices) of education of large administrative districts, provinces, and cities may, depending on local con-

ditions, prepare their own regulations to ensure preferential treatment for "teachers of the masses" with respect to welfare, and to offer different kinds of awards. All other government and party offices and mass organizations have the obligation to assist the Committee on Spare-Time Education For Peasants in their own area, and to help their spare-time school for peasants find housing and equipment when necessary.

6. The Central Ministry of Education and the General Publications Office are responsible for the planning and directing of the preparation and publication of teaching and reading materials in the field of spare-time education for peasants. People's governments of large administrative districts may also publish their own teaching materials. People's governments on provincial, city, and county levels, depending upon special local conditions, may publish supplementary teaching materials; in addition, they should publish as much popular reading materials, newspapers, and magazines for peasants as possible.

7. Expenditures for the spare-time schools for peasants shall be provided by the local people themselves. County governments, however, may allocate, when necessary, a special amount as a subsidy for this purpose. People's governments of all large administrative districts, provinces, and cities shall appropriate a definite amount of funds to finance special projects and to give awards to promote spare-time education for peasants.

8. In accordance with the above principles, the departments (offices) of education of provincial and city people's governments should work out their own measures to develop their spare-time educational programs, and, after gaining the approval of the ministry or department of education of the next higher people's government, should promulgate and implement them.