

## Instruction from the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government on Rectifying and Improving Primary Education

December 11, 1953

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Over the past four years, primary education across the country has been restored and has significantly surpassed the pre-liberation scale. The current number of primary school students has reached over 55 million, an increase of 135% compared to the highest number in old China (1946). Initial reforms have also been carried out in the content and teaching methods of primary education. The majority of primary school teachers have participated in various social reform movements and political studies, which has enhanced their political awareness. They have made significant efforts to educate the new generation, with many becoming excellent people's teachers. These efforts have laid a preliminary foundation for further improving primary education in the future. However, it must be pointed out that there are still many serious issues in current primary education. On one hand, the quality of existing teachers is generally low, school facilities are simple, and the rapid development in the past one or two years has not adequately addressed these issues, leading to significant chaos and poor teaching quality in schools. On the other hand, with the improvement of people's political awareness and economic conditions, the demand for culture has increased, and the current schools cannot fully meet the enrolment needs of the masses' children, especially in industrial and mining areas and large cities. These are difficulties arising from victorious development, which we must and can gradually resolve. However, it should also be recognized that this situation requires considerable effort over a long period to change. The following instructions are issued to address some major issues in current primary education:

(1) Primary education is the foundation of the entire education system. Its task is to educate the new generation to become healthy citizens of the new China. Based on the possible conditions of current educational construction and the actual cultural needs of the masses, primary education in the coming years should develop in a planned and focused manner on the basis of consolidation.

As the country gradually industrializes and the urban population increases rapidly, the proportion of urban primary schools' growth has generally been smaller than that of rural areas over the past few years. Therefore, in industrial and mining areas and cities, especially large cities, public primary schools should be appropriately developed. Given the general lack of teachers, school buildings, and other conditions, various methods should be actively adopted according to local conditions, such as adjusting classes, increasing enrolment, adopting a dual-shift system, establishing night schools, assisting industrial and mining enterprises, agencies, and organizations in running schools, assisting in managing private schools, allowing the masses and industrial and commercial households to continue running schools, and using other feasible methods to appropriately solve the problems of primary school graduates continuing their education and school-age children enrolling in school.

In rural areas, to appropriately address the issue of farmers' children enrolling in school, community-run primary schools (including complete primary schools) should be promoted based on the principles of need and voluntariness, fully mobilizing the enthusiasm of the masses to run schools. Local people's governments must pay sufficient attention to this, strengthen guidance, and help solve issues such as teachers and teaching materials. For public primary schools in rural areas, except in minority regions and old revolutionary bases where schools are few and need appropriate development, the focus should generally be on consolidation and improvement rather than expansion.

(2) Due to the uneven economic development in our country, primary education development is also uneven. We should adopt various forms and set different requirements for primary education according to different conditions. It is impossible to have uniform primary education across the country. In the future, the focus should be on running urban primary schools, primary schools in industrial and mining areas, complete primary schools, and central primary schools in rural areas. In rural areas, in addition to centralized regular primary schools, scattered irregular primary schools such as half-day classes and evening schools can also be established.

(3) Primary education is the foundation of the people's education. For a considerable period in the future, most primary school graduates will primarily participate in labor production, with only a portion continuing their education. Therefore, during regular school education, the focus should not be solely on how students will continue their education after graduation but rather on how they will engage in labor production after graduation, cultivating students' love for labor and good labor habits, and overcoming the current tendency of some students to look down on manual labor. At the same time, this principle should be clearly explained to the masses. From now on, all levels of people's governments and all primary school teachers should carry out this propaganda and education work among the masses and primary school students.

(4) Teaching is the central task that overrides everything else in schools. The primary task of principals and teachers is teaching, and the primary task of students is learning. To correct the trend of teachers and students participating excessively in social activities and non-teaching activities within the school, overcome the current chaos in schools, improve teaching quality, and enhance the health of teachers and students, the following provisions are made:

1. The work and study of primary schools should be uniformly led and arranged by the education administrative departments. Other units and organizations should not directly assign tasks to schools to avoid disrupting school work plans.
2. Teachers' participation in internal and external social activities during the semester should not exceed twelve hours per person per month, and should not exceed one-sixth of the entire holiday period during winter and summer vacations (concentrated study during the holiday period is included). Students' participation in internal and external social activities should not exceed one and a half hours per person per week.
3. Teachers' work should not be transferred casually to ensure they can work with peace of mind and become familiar with the children's situation to improve teaching effectiveness.
4. Classrooms and offices in schools should not be arbitrarily borrowed during the semester. If borrowing is necessary, it should be done during non-class hours to avoid hindering teachers' preparation and students' assignments.
5. Non-teaching organizations within the school should be appropriately streamlined, reducing meetings and the multiple roles of teachers and principals.
6. Each locality and school should formulate class schedules and teaching progress based on the teaching plan set by the Central Ministry of Education, combined with local conditions, and conduct classes according to the schedule and teaching progress. Attendance checks, leave requests, performance assessments, and other systems should be established. Except for holidays prescribed by the government, schools should not arbitrarily suspend classes or take vacations, and teachers

should not arbitrarily skip classes. During busy farming seasons, rural primary schools may grant farming holidays or allow older students to take leave to help with production at home.

7. Teaching methods should be improved. Teachers should be required to prepare lessons and teach carefully and, as much as possible, emphasize visual teaching, encourage teachers to lead students in collecting and making specimens and simple models.

8. The teaching and management of primary school students should rely on patient persuasion and education, prohibiting the use of corporal punishment, confrontation, and other violent methods, while also opposing laissez-faire attitudes. Discipline education should be strengthened to cultivate students' habits of consciously observing discipline. Teachers should be encouraged to care for students, students to respect teachers, and cultivate a friendly and united atmosphere between teachers and students.

9. School sports and extracurricular cultural activities should be strengthened, and attention should be paid to ensuring teachers and students get rest during non-class time and weekends to enhance physical fitness and ensure the healthy development of students' physical and mental health.

(5) Improving the quality of primary school teachers is a decisive factor in running primary education well. In the future, we must organize in-service teachers to study in a planned and guided manner to improve their political, cultural, and professional levels. Teachers with at least a junior normal school (hereinafter referred to as junior normal) graduation level should focus on studying politics and professional skills. Teachers who have not reached the junior normal graduation level should primarily supplement their junior normal coursework to improve to the junior normal graduation level. There are three main ways to organize these teachers to supplement their junior normal coursework: one is to select teachers with a high primary school level to study at junior normal schools; another is to set up teacher training classes to provide one to two years of training for teachers with the level of junior high school grades one and two; the third is to establish teacher evening schools and correspondence schools to organize teachers for in-service study. Improving teacher quality is a long-term and regular task. High and urgent demands should not be made, and attention should be paid to practical conditions to prevent formalism.

The primary school teaching staff should be appropriately rectified. Those with very low cultural levels who are indeed unable to teach should be actively helped to study or change careers, and those suitable for returning home to produce should be mobilized to return home for production. Elderly and frail individuals unable to continue teaching or those with severe infectious diseases that affect children's health should be properly arranged based on specific circumstances. Teachers changing careers or transferring schools should receive one month's salary as a living allowance in addition to travel expenses. Teachers returning home for production should receive two months' salary as a living allowance in addition to travel expenses, and those with special difficulties may be given one to two additional months of salary as appropriate. Rectifying the teaching staff must be done cautiously to prevent chaos. Surplus teachers should be properly placed with a positive and responsible attitude, and until they are placed, they should continue to receive their original salary and should not be left unattended.

(6) There is a significant number of overage students in rural primary schools. This is a positive phenomenon, reflecting the labouring people's desire to learn culture after the revolution's victory. The people's government should give this due attention. Therefore, overage students who are already

enrolled should not only be allowed to continue their studies but should also be taught well. It is unacceptable to irresponsibly force them out of school. To better organize overage students' learning, where conditions permit, accelerated classes or accelerated primary schools should be established for them within primary schools. In places with accelerated classes, accelerated schools, and well-run perennial community schools, the age of new entrants should generally be limited to twelve full years for junior primary schools and sixteen full years for senior primary schools, with transfer students following the same principle. In places without accelerated classes, accelerated schools, or perennial community schools, overage students should still be given appropriate consideration for enrolment. To ensure children's healthy physical and mental development, the enrolment of children below school age should be strictly restricted in the future.

(7) Regarding the five-year integrated system in primary schools, it is unsuitable to continue due to inadequate preparation of teachers and teaching materials. Therefore, starting this school year, the implementation of the five-year system will be temporarily halted, and the primary school system will revert to the four-two system, divided into junior and senior levels, with a four-year term for junior and a two-year term for senior levels.

(8) Primary school teachers' political and material treatment should be given sincere attention. Cadres and the masses at all levels should recognize that primary school teachers are the cultivators of the new generation, bearing a glorious and arduous task, and should respect them to strengthen their enthusiasm for serving the people. Any discriminatory and exclusionary behaviour towards primary school teachers is wrong and must be corrected. Primary school teachers' salaries should generally remain unchanged, but for those relying solely on their salary with no other income and having many children or special difficulties, appropriate assistance must be provided. After the primary school work has been consolidated, grading work for teachers can be carried out under leadership based on their professional ability and years of service, and based on local conditions and next year's budget indicators, salaries for a few teachers with particularly low wages may be adjusted.

(9) From January 1, 1954, the management of primary education funds should follow the administrative leadership relationship of primary schools and be included in the budgets at various levels. The maintenance, construction, and equipment costs of urban public primary schools should be covered by the budgets of the respective city or county governments. The maintenance, construction, and equipment costs of rural public primary schools should be coordinated by the respective county people's government, and if insufficient, funds should be raised on the principle of voluntariness, or labor and materials should be provided by the masses. If there is flexible land retained during land reform in the counties, a portion should be allocated as school land, managed by the county, to supplement primary education funds.

(10) Rectifying and improving primary education is a challenging and meticulous task. The people's governments of all provinces and cities should give it great attention and strengthen their leadership in this work. They should first conduct investigations and research to grasp the situation, such as thoroughly investigating basic figures like the number of schools, classes, students, and teaching staff. Based on local conditions, they should make trial implementations in key areas, formulate plans, and proceed cautiously and step by step. This work should be largely completed in the first half of 1954.

(11) To strengthen the leadership of primary education, attention must be paid to strengthening educational administrative leadership at the county level and below. Over the next one to two years, plans should be made to significantly equip the educational administrative agencies at the county

level with politically and professionally competent cadres to strengthen and improve them. They should be actively assisted in establishing systematic and regular business operations, avoiding over-assigning other tasks, and encouraged to diligently study their department's business to become familiar and proficient. County and district education administrative cadres should not be easily transferred to ensure they become familiar with their work and effectively lead the people's education.

Premier Zhou Enlai

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