

# The Development of Educational Administration System in China

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## Abstract

China has a long history of education and its educational administration system can be traced back to more than 2,000 years ago. This article focuses on the development of the educational administration system in China through a series of laws, regulations and policies, arguing that China's current educational administration system-the State Council and local governments at various levels are responsible to guide and administer educational work under the principles of administration by different levels and of a division of responsibilities needs to be further extended and reformed to address the new challenges and problems in the era of marketization and internationalization.

**Keywords:** educational administration system, central government, local government, reform of educational administration system

## 1. Introduction

China's educational administration system is closely related to the history of the centralized culture since the Qin Dynasty (221 BC). Since then, China's centralized educational system had been continuously strengthened and lasted for more than 2,000 years. In 1862, the establishment of the Imperial College opened the prelude of modern education in China. The emergence of new educational institutions, such as missionary schools and western affairs schools, had stimulated the internal demand of Chinese people for the administrative system of modern education. At the same time, some missionaries in China spared no effort to serve as pioneers of disseminating knowledge of the western educational system, which also had significant impact on China's education. Driven by both internal and external factors, Chinese society had gradually reinforced its cognition and acceptance of the modern educational system, brewing the birth of educational administration system at the beginning of the next century. In the last decade of the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese government actively learned from Japan. By borrowing Japan's educational system, China gradually established a complete system of educational administration in modern times. In 1901, the first Chinese law on school management was established. In 1902, the first administrative work of education, Educational Administration, which was translated by Chen Yi, marked the official start of the educational administration in China (Wang, 2012). Henceforth, educational administration system has evolved with the development of society, politics and economy, and the educational administration system with significant Chinese characteristics has been formed.

## 2. Literature Review

The research on China's education administration system has always been a focus among Chinese scholars. Through years of study on the development of educational administration and educational policies, they have made great contributions to the reform of educational administration system. One research object is to examine the development of educational administration system. In *Educational System in China*, Ming (2009) first gave a brief introduction to China's system of educational administration. He divided the system of educational administration into five periods: the completion of socialist restructuring (1949-1956), the beginning of the socialist reform (1957-1965), the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the time of building the socialist commodity economy (1977-1991) and the stage of building socialist market economy (1992-2008). He analyzed the development of educational administration in primary schools, secondary schools and higher education institutions in each period and then provided strategies and measures for further reform. In another book *Education in China*, Yuan (2015) introduced the basic framework of the education administration system in China, including the educational

responsibilities of central and local governments, the higher education management system and vocational education management system. He concludes that before reform and opening-up, China implemented a centralized model compatible with the traditional planned economy. Along with the establishment and improvement of its socialist market economy, China's education administration system has experienced dramatic changes. Currently, China has forged an education administration system in accordance with its socialist market economy. Their work shed light on the further study on the development of China's education administration system.

Other research focuses on the problems and reform of education administration system. Yu and Wang (2015) reviewed the reform of China's education administration system during the past 30 years. They stated that the educational administration system is an essential part of national administrative system. In the last 30 years, China's educational administration system has undergone four stages: the comprehensive restoration plan management system, the reform of the management system, the deepening of the reform and the development in depth. They also argued that with the fast development of China's society and economy, there exposed new problems and challenges. In Sun's research (2014), he summed up the achievements and the main characteristics of Chinese educational management since 1970s. In his research, he pointed out that the division of responsibilities between the central and local governments should be further clarified. Their research on achievements and problems provides valuable reference for the further research on the reform of education administration system.

### 3. Methodology

This paper examines research questions such as what is the basic structure of educational administration system in China? How have China's educational administration system changed since the founding of new China? How are different educational administrative levels interrelated and how is the power distributed? In order to address these questions and have a thorough understanding of educational administration system in China, we employ a historical approach comprising four stages including the completion of socialist restructuring, the Cultural Revolution, the socialist planned economy and the socialist market economy. By using relevant regulations, directives and policies promulgated by the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council of China, this paper traces the development course of compulsory education, senior high school education and higher education administration system of China, summarizes the achievements and existing problems in the system of educational administration at the present stage from a macro level and then makes an analysis regarding to its reform direction in the future.

### 4. Basic Structure of Educational Administration System

The administrative system is not only the most basic representation of a country's leadership in education, but also a crucial part of the nation's administration management, which guides, organizes, and administers the educational goals of the government. Before the reform and opening-up policy was launched, China adopted a model of a centralized administrative system that was compatible with the traditional planned economy. After over 30 years of reform and progression, China has established an educational administration system which adapts to the socialist market economic system.

Based on *the Constitution* of the PRC and a series of regulations issued by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council, the central government and local governments have already set up a basic structure of the educational administration system for all stages of education in China, including the secondary or lower stage education administration system, vocational education administration system and the higher education administration system. The *Constitution* and The Educational Law of the PRC make legal provisions on the administrative system of education. The *Constitution* stipulates that the State Council guides and governs the work of education. Local governments at or above the county level within the restraints of authority regulated by law are in charge of the educational cause in their respective administrative areas. The *Educational Law* specifies that the State Council and local people's governments at various levels, shall lead and govern the work of education in accordance with the principles of hierarchical management and division of responsibility. The so-called hierarchical management means that all levels of people's governments have different management responsibilities for education at all levels. Division of responsibility means the government departments at the same level, such as education, finance, national development and reform, personnel, audit and other parts, shoulder different responsibilities to the educational cause based on their duties. Secondary education (or below) is administered by local people's governments under the leadership of the State Council. Higher education is managed by the State Council and the people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government (Research office of the ministry of education of the People's Republic of China, 1999).

## 5. The Establishment and Functions of Educational Administrative Organs in China

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the State Council's executive body in charge of the national work on education. After 1949, the name of the MOE changed several times. In 1952, besides the MOE, the Ministry of Higher Education was established to be responsible for higher education. In 1958, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education were merged into the Ministry of Education. In 1963, the Ministry of Education was again divided into the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. In 1966, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education were merged again into the Ministry of Education. In 1985, the National Education Commission was set up to replace the MOE. In accordance with the reform plan of the organs of the State Council approved by the first session of the 9th National People's Congress in 1998 and *The Notification of the Establishment of Organs* by the State Council, the National Education Commission was renamed the Ministry of Education. Currently, the MOE consists of 27 bureaus and a number of affiliated organizations under the MOE, such as the Logistic Service Centre, National Academy of Education Administration, Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban), China Education Press Agency, China Education Publishing & Media Group, Secretariat of China Education Development Foundation and so on (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015).

According to The Educational Law of the PRC, the MOE is responsible for 17 tasks, including drawing up strategies, policies and regulations for educational reform throughout the country, taking care of overall planning, coordinating and governing the work of primary and secondary education as well as higher education, promoting integrated development of compulsory education and educational equality, providing direction for the reform of vocational education to make it employment-oriented, guiding the advancement and reform of higher education, taking charge of the overall management of educational funds, organizing international educational exchanges and cooperation, formulating guidelines for the nationwide standardization of spoken and written Chinese language, coordinating between the State Department and the UNESCO and so on (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the MOE's responsibility is only for general guidance, the local governments and corresponding departments can have their own educational bureaus and equivalents.

Local administrative institutions of education refer to the institutions under which the local people's governments at various levels organize, lead and govern the cause of education. In China, the local administrative departments of education are divided into four levels: province, municipality, county and township. All of them are under the unified leadership of the people's governments at the same level and under the guidance of the higher administrative departments of education. At the provincial level, there are 3 municipalities, 22 provinces and 5 autonomous regions in China. Each of them has its own people's governments and educational bureaus. The average provincial bureau of education has about 100 staff members, and the main divisions deal with pre-school education, general education, vocational education and higher education (Lofstedt, 1984). Some provinces or centrally-governed municipalities, like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, have separate bureaus for college and university education. At the prefectural level, the prefecture department of education directly manages a number of vocational schools and some secondary and primary schools. Also, it is in charge of the inspection of schools, educational planning, finance and personnel within the prefecture. The bureau of education at the county level plays the most significant role regarding the educational leadership and administration in primary and secondary schools. At township level, there has been an educational office responsible for the local educational administration on behalf of the prefectures or counties in every town. Each educational office has two sections, namely Culture and Education Section and Science and Education Section. The former one is in charge of primary and secondary education within the township while the latter one mainly deals with technical and adult education.

The basic functions of the local education administrative institutions are to implement the decisions and orders of the central education simulation, policies and laws, regulations and administrative departments of the higher education, to be responsible for the management of educational development plans, the construction of educational infrastructure, educational funds, cadres and teachers in the region, and to lead the teaching of education in various schools at all levels in the region. In 2010, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council issued *the Outline of the National Medium-and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* (MLPE), which explicitly pointed out the responsibility of provincial governments for the overall management of compulsory education, accelerating balanced development of compulsory education between urban and rural areas, promoting the reasonable distribution of general high school and secondary vocational education, speeding up the popularization of high school education, promoting the coordinated development of vocational education and resources sharing, making reasonable planning and adjustment of colleges and universities in the region and improving the management level and quality of education (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2010).

## 6. The Development of Administrative in Primary Education System in China

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1 October, 1949, the system of administration in primary education underwent great changes. The very first policy regarding the administrative system in primary education was seen in *Provisional Regulations on Primary Schools* in the year 1950. The *Regulations* explicitly pointed out the powers of administrative departments at different levels. The MOE was responsible for drawing up the syllabus of each subject in primary school, editing textbooks and establishing criteria for school construction while the educational administrative departments at the provincial level had the duty of setting up standards of the size of faculty staff, administrative personnel and educational budget. When it comes to the educational administrative departments of the county-level governments, they were in charge of the establishment, modification or removal of both public and private primary schools. In 1953, *Directives on Improvement and Development of Primary Education* was issued by the Administrative Council, stressing the governance of localities to primary schools under the governments at county level (Editorial Board of China's Education Yearbook, 1985).

During the years 1957 to 1965, the system of administration of primary education in China experienced revolution of power. In 1958, the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council documented *Regulations for Decentralizing Authorities of Educational Management at Local levels*. Based on the *Regulations*, local governments had the power in the establishment and improvement of primary schools, including revising educational instruction programs, syllabi and textbooks designed by the MOE. Also, the local governments were in charge of the appointment of teachers and principals in primary schools. *Directives on Educational Undertakings* issued in the same year emphasized the leadership of the CPC in educational undertakings. It stated that primary school education shall serve proletarian politics and shall be combined with production labor. In the next year, the Department of Propaganda under the Central Government of the CPC passed *Regulations on Strengthening Guidance and Management of Education Undertakings in People's Communes*. In the *Regulations*, all general, public and full-time primary schools were governed by the communes while all private primary schools were governed by the production units (Mao & Sheng, 1989). During the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976), the MOE and the educational administrative departments at different levels allocated educational expenditures, guided and gave instructions of primary schools together. The biggest change at that time was the delegation of public primary schools in rural areas to the production units.

At the time of building the socialist commodity economy from the year 1977 to 1991, the local governments began to take overall duties of primary education though the Central Committee of CPC made the vital policies and macro-planning. In 1980, the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council approved *Decision on Problems in Popularization of Primary Education*. The *Decision* stipulated that the local governments shall undertake greater responsibility of the development of primary education with the deepening reform of economic management systems in China. The governments of provinces, prefectures and counties shall regard popularization of respective primary schools as an important mission, carrying out reform and development of primary education by themselves positively. To achieve this goal, it was suggested that the MOE should investigate the problems of popularization of primary education and then draw up effective regulations and policies. In 1982, the revised Constitution of the PRC definitely set forth the Two Basics-basically universalizing the nine-year compulsory education and basically eliminating illiteracy among the young as the country's most imperative task. In 1986, the *Compulsory Education Law* was promulgated, putting forward a leadership and administrative system for compulsory education. Under this system, China's compulsory education was governed in a decentralized fashion under the overall leadership of the State Council. Local divisions of governments contained a three-tier school-running system including county, township and village-level administrations. Besides, the central government and local governments gave special financial support to improve compulsory education in poverty-stricken areas. Such an administrative system played a positive role in making China's compulsory education universal by the end of the 20th century (Legislative Affairs Office, 2004).

At the stage of building socialist market economy from the year 1992, the system of administration in primary school education had been making tremendous improvements. In 2001, *Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education* was signed by the State Council. The *Decision* specified local governments' responsibilities at various levels in compulsory education, particularly in rural regions. Based on the *Decision*, the provincial and prefectural governments took the main responsibility of comprehensive planning and making arrangement for educational funds. At the county level, the governments had to plan everything in schools carefully, including the construction of school buildings, the employment of teaching staff, the management of principals and the follow-up of the instruction in schools. In 2002, *Circular on Improvement of the Management System of Compulsory Education in Rural Areas* stated that the governments at county level performed the duty of managing compulsory education system under the leadership of the State Council. The provincial governments shall decide

the criteria of expenditure for primary and secondary schools in rural regions and make the fees paid by students in poor areas affordable. *The 2003 Decision on Further Strengthening Rural Education* required the governments at county level fully fulfil their obligations of raising funds, hiring school principals and teacher as well as many other corresponding issues concerning school management. The revised *Compulsory Education Law* in 2006 emphasized the role of provincial governments in terms of distributing funds and other educational resources to compulsory education as well as the role of county-level governments in terms of improving balanced compulsory education in their own jurisdictions. The MLPE in 2010 further stressed the overall role of provincial governments in planning and coordination of urban and rural compulsory education and set out a strategic task of achieving balanced development of compulsory education within each region by 2020 (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2010).

Currently, when it comes to the leadership and administration of basic education, the State Council is responsible for the overall leadership and the governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities are in charge of planning, coordination and implementation while the governments at the county-level act a central role. Due to the collective efforts of the central government and local governments, the balanced development of compulsory education has been vigorously promoted in China. According to statistics in 2016, there were 177,600 primary schools nationwide with the total enrollment reached 17.52 million students, showing a steady rise since 2001. The number of primary school graduates was 1.57 million, and the net enrollment rate of children of primary school age reached 99.92%. With regard to primary school teaching staff, there were 5.79 million full-time teachers. The qualification rate of full-time teachers was 99.94% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2016).

Table 1. Number of primary schools, educational personnel by type and level in China (2016)

	Schools Educational Personnel	
Primary Education	189435	5560547
1. Regular Primary Schools	177633	5537298
Primary Schools	177633	5537298
9-Year Schools	—	—
12-Year Schools	—	—
2. Adult Primary Schools	11802	23249
of Which: Literacy Classes	8289	15727

Note. Data Source: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2016).

## 7. The Development of Administration in Secondary Education System in China

In China, secondary education is led and administrated by local governments, under the direction of the State Council and the leadership of provincial governments. In 1950, the MOE promulgated *Provisional Regulations on Secondary schools*. The *Regulations* stipulated that departments of culture and education under provincial governments had the power of establishment, modification or dissolution of secondary schools in line with the central government and the governments in the Great Administrative Regions. In 1952, the Administrative Council issued *Directives on Improvement and Development of Secondary Education*, emphasizing the significance of improving the leadership and administrative system in secondary schools. The *Directives* required that every province in the country should have secondary schools and run them efficiently (Ming, 2009).

After the socialist reconstruction from the years 1957 to 1965, the system of administration in secondary education completed its first reform. In 1958, the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council jointly signed *Regulations on the Delegation of Administrative Power of Educational Undertakings*. The *Regulations* stated that local governments could decide the establishment and development of general and vocational secondary schools, revise and improve teaching plans, textbooks and other learning materials on their own. In 1963, the Central Committee of CPC issued *Working Regulations on Full-time Secondary Schools*, stressing the micro-management of the educational administrative departments under the provincial-level governments. The *Working Regulations* pointed out that all the state-run full-time secondary schools shall be governed based on the levels they belonged to. Specifically, the full-time junior secondary schools were to be led by the educational administrative departments of the counties while the full-time senior secondary schools were about to under the control of government's department of education or delegated to and administrated by the department of education under the governments of prefectures or counties (He, 1998a). During the "Cultural Revolution", the system of administration in

secondary education seldom changed.

Since the mid-1980s, China gave the highest priority to the development of compulsory education and adopted a number of strategic initiatives to make it universal. In 1980, the State Council approved Report on Reform of Secondary Education Structure submitted by the MOE. The Report called for the reform of secondary education structure to make it adapt to the socialist educational system. To achieve this goal, the Report also suggested that each province, municipality and autonomous region shall set up a leadership group and take specific measures to meet the needs of vocational and technical education. In 1986, the National People's Congress passed the Compulsory Education Law, creating a new leadership and administrative system for compulsory education, which was under the overall leadership of the State Council, managed in a decentralized fashion and had local division of responsibilities. The *Compulsory Education Law* increased financial input via numerous channels to perfect the situation of primary and secondary education. From then on, junior high school education had been made universal in all cities and some rural areas in China (Legislative Affairs Office, 2004).

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the deepening reform of China's economic, political and scientific system, it was necessary that the secondary education should adopt a comprehensive scheme in order to enhance its leadership and administrative system. In 1997, the State Education Commission signed *Guideline for Educational Supervision in Primary School and Secondary Schools*. The *Guideline* stipulated that all primary schools and secondary schools shall operate a supervisory evaluation system, which covered the running of schools, teachers' management, administrative work etc. In 1999, the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council jointly issued *Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Promoting Competence Education*. In the *Decision*, local governments were required to shoulder the main responsibilities of running the administrative system of secondary education at different levels, and the powers of county governments in making educational budget, managing teachers, designating and removing school principals were enlarged. When it comes to vocational and adult education, it was requested that the local governments at different levels shall continually strengthen the overall planning under the guidance of the central government.

Currently, the system of running secondary schools at different levels and governing compulsory education at different levels has been formally established in China. In this system, powers with respect to building schools, designing curricular, distributing educational funds and other resources have been steadily devolved to local governments and local educational administrative departments. The mission of running and managing secondary schools is given to localities in accordance with their need of development. With regard to vocational and technical education, the primary guideline is to bring in enterprise-based management. Guided by a series of strategic reform, secondary education in China has made huge progress in recent years. According to statistics of 2016, there were 52,100 junior middle schools (including 16 vocational middle schools) with total enrollment of 14.87 million students. The gross enrollment rate of junior middle school was 104%, and the enrollment rate of junior middle school graduates was 93.7%. Statistics showed that there were 24,700 senior high schools in China with total enrollment of 13.96 million students in 2006. The gross enrollment rate in high school was 87.5%. In addition, there were 435 adult high schools and 10,900 secondary vocational schools nationwide with the total enrollment of 5.93 million students in 2016 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2016).

Table 2. Number of secondary schools, educational personnel by type and level in China (2016)

	Schools Educational Personnel	
	Schools	Personnel
Secondary Education	77398	7681640
1. Senior Secondary Education	24711	3681359
1.1 Senior Secondary Schools	13818	2595259
Regular Senior Secondary Schools	13383	2591946
Combined Secondary Schools	5479	1041601
Regular High Schools	6706	1306471
12-Year Schools	1198	243874
Adult High Schools	435	3313
1.2 Secondary Vocational Education	10893	1086100
Regular Specialized Secondary Schools	3398	401426
Adult Specialized Secondary Schools	1243	63644
Vocational High Schools	3726	344647
Skilled Workers Schools	2526	265053

Other Institutions	342	11330
2. Junior Secondary Education	52687	4000281
2.1 Junior Secondary Schools	52118	3997502
Regular Junior Secondary Schools	36471	2770381
9-Year Schools	15631	1226629
12-Year Schools	—	—
Combined Secondary Schools	—	—
Vocational Junior Secondary Schools	16	492
3. Adult Junior Secondary Schools	569	2779

Note. Data Source: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2016).

## 8. The Development of Administration in Higher Education System

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1949, compared with the traditional culture of centralization, the system of administration in China's higher education was relatively decentralized. Though the central government constituted a number of national laws, policies and regulations, local governments acted more vital rules in the management of higher education. After the PRC was established in 1949, the models of higher education administration in China vacillated between centralization and decentralization, concerning the role and authority of the central and local governments and their relationships.

In 1950, the State Council issued *Decision on Problems of Administrative Affairs in Higher Education Institutions* that set the principle of unified leadership by the Ministry of Education of the Central People's Government. The *Decision* stressed that the Ministry of Education had the responsibility of leading all the higher education institutions (HEIs) (except military ones), and local governments had the responsibility of leading all HEIs in their administrative regions according to unified policy of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The *Decision* also clarified that the MOE takes charge of promulgating national higher education policies, higher education system and regulations, principles of education, setting up or suspending higher education institutions, appointment or removal of higher education institution presidents, treatment of teachers and students, standard of expenses, and all the HEIs shall follow them. The promulgation of the *Decision* marked the official establishment of a centralized and unified governance and management system for higher education (The Government Council of the People's Republic of China, 1998). In 1952, the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Central Government passed a *Resolution* in terms of setting up the Ministry of Higher Education. The administration of higher education at the central government level changed into two sequences after 1953. The Ministry of Higher Education was in charge of affairs of comprehensive universities while other ministries were in charge of the professional higher education institutions. Such a dual system lasted until the end of 1990s.

The year of 1958 witnessed the decentralization of administration of HEIs when the CPC Central Committee and the State Council promulgated *Regulations for Decentralizing Authorities of Educational Management at Local level*. Abided by the principle of combining centralization and decentralization to enhancing leadership of the local authorities, the *Regulations* empowered local governments more responsibilities in the administration of HEIs. Since then, the MOE and other ministries of the central government mainly focused on making plan of educational development, implementing educational policy of the nation, organizing the publication of national textbooks while local governments could modify the national education policies and systems, make local policies and development plans and decide the setting up of new HEIs under their jurisdiction (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 1998).

Unfortunately, the new policy brought about irrational development of higher education for the lack of central government's macro control as well as the lack of experience of the local governments to planning their advancement of higher education. Drawing on the past experiences, in 1963, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued *Decision on Strengthening the Unitary Leadership and Management at Different levels*. The *Decision* stipulated that the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council shall take the responsibility for the unified leadership and management of HEIs. It also emphasized that all localities and HEIs must implement the national policies and plans, abide the unified teaching system and other critical rules. The local educational departments, under the direct leadership of the MOE, were responsible for the leadership and administration of higher education, the national policies as well as regulations based on the empowerment given by the Central Government (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 1998).

During the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976), the educational administration in HEIs underwent two significant

changes. Firstly, the central government adjusted the governance of personnel among local governments and HEIs. The new adjustment required all HEIs to have autonomy. Secondly, both the central government and local governments granted recurrent and capital expenditure for comprehensive HEIs, but it was the central government who decided the appointment and removal of school administrators. In the next 20 years, the administrative system of HEIs evolved several times, from the resumption of the central unitary leadership at the central and provincial government levels to the enlargement of autonomy and the increase management power in HEIs, but the essence of the system basically remained unchanged.

From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the administrative system of higher education has made a great leap forward as Chinese society was making transition from socialist planned economy to socialist market economy (Deng, 1993). In 1993, the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council passed *Program of China's Educational Reform and Development*. In terms of higher education, the *Program* adjusted the relationship between governments and HEIs, allowing HEIs to have their own autonomy under the macro-level control of the central government. In 1994, *Implementation Opinions on Program of China's Educational Reform and Development* was issued by the State Council. The *Implementation* enlarged the power of the provincial governments, giving them permission regarding to making overall plans for all HEIs within their jurisdiction. From then on, the HEIs, especially those in economically developed regions, were administrated by local governments on the basis of the central government's plans. During the years between 1994 and 1998, four meetings were held by the General Office of the State Council for the purpose of seeking further consensus among stakeholders of HEIs, pushing them to carry out the reform of higher education system on a large scale. In 1999, the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council promulgated *Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Promoting Competence Education*. The *Decision* pointed out that the reform of leadership and administrative system in higher education shall be accomplished before the year 2002. This *Decision* marks the establishment of a new leadership and administrative system, in which provincial governments can have main governance on the HEIs, vocational technical colleges and higher specialized colleges under unified guidance of the Central Government.

Since 2010, the leadership and administrative system of the higher education entered a new stage of unprecedented development, with more HEIs emerged. Statistics showed that there were 2,880 HEIs, and the overall scale of all kinds of higher education reached 36.99 million students, and the gross enrollment rate of higher education had reached 42.7% in 2016 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2016). At present, the total scale of higher education in China ranks the first in the world. The total number of employees with higher education degree ranks the second in the world. Evidently, China has become a big country of higher education.

Table 3. Number of higher education institutions, number of students and gross enrollment rate in China (2000–2016)

Year	Number of Higher Education Institutions	Number of Students (10 thousand)	Gross Enrollment Rate (%)
2010	2723	3105	26.5
2011	2762	3167	26.9
2012	2790	3325	30
2013	2788	3460	34.5
2014	2824	3559	37.5
2015	2852	3647	40.0
2016	2880	3699	42.7

Note. Data Source: Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2016).

## 9. Problems in the System of Educational Administration in China

Through years of development of educational administration in China, the administrative power of the county governments in making overall plan for compulsory education has been gradually established and strengthened. The mission of running and governing compulsory education system was given to localities so as to fit their needs of development. However, in the process of development, there emerged new problems in the system of educational administration in primary and secondary schools. One problem lies in the ambiguity of the power division among the localities. By far, the division of responsibilities among the localities is still undefined, which leads to the transfer of power to the counties and towns. In fact, some county governments in rural areas have limited financial competence to support the primary and secondary schools under their jurisdiction. Although the central government and provincial governments are financially capable of giving funds, there lacks effective

appropriate structures of transferring the funds to county governments. Second, though a number of policies and guidelines are put forward to guarantee the compulsory education in rural areas, the widening gap between various regions and the gap between urban and rural areas cannot be eliminated by far. As what has been mentioned, in the current educational system, the localities are in charge of the development of basic education, but the development of basic education is closely related to the economic situation within localities. Nevertheless, China as a very large country is confronting tremendous pressure from its huge population among vast regions with diverse natural resources and economic conditions. As a result, the difference of economic conditions in localities gives rise to the difference of allocation in educational resources.

As for higher education, China has established the unified leadership of the central government and the hierarchical administration by the central and provincial governments in higher education, but the functions of central and local authorities are not clearly defined yet. The central government has too much power whereas the autonomy of the local government is comparatively insufficient, which has affected the flexibility of the progress of local higher education in such a large and diverse country. It also hindered the development of educational intermediary organizations and involvement of the society in higher education governance and management. In addition, higher education governance is lack of autonomy in HEIs, which can be reflected through the relation between the governments and the HEIs. Though promulgation of the *Higher Education Act (1998)* clearly stipulates the autonomy of higher education, these regulations have not been fully implemented. It is still a long way to go for the HEIs to become independent legal entities and operate according to social requirements and the needs of self-development. Furthermore, the boundary among political power, administrative power and academic power is not clear. The current internal administrative system of the HEIs obviously not only upholds the leadership of the party, but also exercises administrative functions, quite similar to the system of the government. In short, the purpose of the president responsibility system under the leadership of the CPC institution committee is to strengthen the leadership of the party in higher education. However, the operation of the internal administrative system of colleges and universities is not necessarily able to achieve this goal effectively since the boundary between political power and administrative power is not clearly defined. Influenced by the previous planned economy, the highly centralized governance system and officer-based culture, academic power is weakened. The power is still too concentrated in the hands of the leadership of the party and administration, and the academic power is quite weak whether it is at the institutional level or at school level. The academic committee is not the actual decision-making power on academic issues. There are also other problems on the system of educational administration in higher education, including strong bureaucratization and weak involvement of teachers and students.

#### **10. Reforms of Educational Administration System in China**

In order to perfect the system of educational administration in primary and secondary schools, two measures should be carried out. First of all, there is a need for specifying clear divisions among governments at province, prefecture, county and town levels. The provincial governments shall fulfill their responsibilities in terms of making comprehensive distribution plans of funds, helping county governments delivering teachers' remuneration, transferring funds of the central government and setting up a student support system to ensure that every school-age child can receive basic education. The responsibilities of county governments shall be further specified under the unitary leadership of the central government. Their corresponding responsibilities and powers shall be matched to guarantee that their primary schools and secondary schools operate normally. Secondly, there is a need for further implementing compulsory education in rural regions, particularly in poverty-stricken areas. The county level governments shall formulate and carry out a balanced development policy concerning the current situation of their jurisdiction. They shall make detailed plans based on the actual geographical distribution of schools, set up an effective mechanism to keep schools safe, ensure the number of teachers in rural schools to meet students' needs and improve teachers' teaching quality as well as regulate the structure of educational expenditures.

In order to deepen the reform of the system of administration in higher education, three measures should be taken. Firstly, the responsibilities of governments at all levels shall be well defined. Higher education should be placed under the jurisdiction of provincial governments with central unitary guidance. The relationship between the central government and local governments should be both complementary and competitive. To achieve this, the central government should retain only the powers of giving guidelines and making overall educational plans while most concrete educational affairs should be delegated to local governments and other social actors. The responsibility of the provincial education departments to co-ordinate the higher education in the region should be further specified in laws and regulations to establish the system of provincial government-based management of higher education. The clear division of powers and responsibilities will be beneficial for both the central government and local governments. Secondly, the autonomy of the HEIs should be implemented and enlarged. The

monopoly of HEIs can harm both the equity and efficiency of higher education, so it is imperative for the higher education administration to improve their management mode and supervision mechanism, reduce and standardize administrative examination and approval matters for the HEIs, ensuring that the HEIs fully exercise their autonomy in institutional operation and undertake corresponding responsibilities (Wan, 1992). The HEIs, in accordance with national laws, regulations and policies, should have the autonomy to carry out teaching activities, scientific research, technological development and social service; set up and adjust the discipline and majors; develop their own plans and implement them; set up teaching, scientific research and administrative organizations; determine the internal distribution of income; manage and use personnel, resources and funds. Thirdly, it is strongly suggested to establish a new mechanism to promote the close relationship between the HEIs and the society. The council of the HEIs should be encouraged to improve the long-term mechanism of social support and supervision of the development of the HEIs so as to strengthen the joint support from the Ministry of Education and the provincial governments to co-ordinate various resources, and enhance the ability of the HEIs to serve the regional and local economic and social development. The cooperation among different ministries, departments and sectors should be intensified to give full play to the advantages of industries to enhance the ability of the HEIs to serve the economic growth and social progress and establish an interactive mechanism between education and industry. Strategic alliances among universities, research institutes and enterprises should also be encouraged, and resource sharing mechanism shall be explored to reinforce their cooperation in education, scientific research and development.

## 11. Conclusion

The system of educational administration is the basic system of the State's organizing and managing education. Through years of development, a modern system of educational administration in China has been identified, in which educational institutions at the secondary or lower levels are administered by local governments under the guidance of the State Council while HEIs are administered by the State Council and governments at the levels of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. In the meantime, we have to admit that as a developing country, the system of educational administration in China needs to be bettered as a respond to the new challenges it encounters in the new century. In July, 2010, the Chinese central government released the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*, which marks the beginning of the comprehensive reform of education in China. By the year 2020, the primary task of China's education is on the transformation of government functions and decentralization, deepening the reform in education administration system and improving public education services (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, 2010). The responsibilities of governments at all levels shall be well defined, and the effort to separate government administration, school operation and evaluation shall be stepped up, so that a well-planned, well-coordinated administrative system of education shall come to stay, in which government administration is detached from schools' day-to-day affairs, and rights and responsibilities are clarified.

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