FRANCIS MANGUBHAI

INSTITUTIONS OF POST-LITERACY IN CHINA

Administration of Literacy and Post-literacy Programmes

Literacy and post-literacy programmes in China, while under the unified leadership of government at all levels, are the responsibility of various educational administration bodies and are implemented by different authorities and organizations.

In the early days of the People's Republic of China, a Literacy Committee was set up at each government level. As the situation changed, and in order to meet the demands of literacy and post-literacy education, Adult Education Authorities (AEA), which bear the management responsibilities for literacy, primary, secondary and higher education among cadres, workers, peasants, out-of-school children and adolescents, were set up to replace the Literacy Committees at all government levels. Since peasant illiterates constitute the major proportion of China's illiterate population, within each AEA there is a unit specially designed for peasant education. For example, a Peasant Education Division has been set up in the Department of Adult Education of the State Education Commission and in all education commissions of provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions directly under the Central Government. Within the peasant education department of a prefecture or a city or county, there is an education office (or section), while in townships (the former communes) there are usually professional personnel in charge of peasant education. And there is a leading group in charge of literacy and post-literacy programmes in each village authority. The above peasant education bodies and personnel are responsible, in rural areas, for literacy and post-literacy programmes and for primary, secondary, cultural and technical education as well as various short-term training courses.

In order to coordinate literacy and post-literacy efforts, Education Commissions for Staff and Workers and Education Commissions for Workers and Peasants have been set up at both the central and local levels. Research bodies for adult education which are engaged in compiling and publishing adult education materials and in developing teaching materials and teaching methods for literacy and post-literacy programmes and for primary, secondary, cultural and technical education, have been established in some provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions directly under the Central Govern-
ment, as well as in some prefectures, cities and counties. In addition, adult education administrations have also been set up in industries, agro-businesses, commercial departments and in large or medium-sized factories and mining enterprises for the cultural and technical education of their own staff and workers.

In literacy and post-literacy education, the State Education Commission is in charge of the strategies, policies, overall planning, establishment of goals and arrangement of meetings to exchange experiences and allocate high-level personnel and units, while the authorities of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, as well as the prefectures are charged with the drafting and implementation of concrete policies and detailed plans, with compiling textbooks, training management personnel and summarizing experiences gained. Similarly, each county authority is required to make plans and policies suitable to its local conditions, raise funds, supply teaching staff, supervise and guide the literacy programmes within its boundary. The township and village authorities are the key links in the chains of literacy programmes, where the goals of peasant literacy and post-literacy are achieved through contracts. That is, the head of each authority signs a literacy and post-literacy contract with the next higher authority to reach the literacy goals while he or she is in office. Those who successfully carry out the contract will be rewarded while those who fail to do so will be penalized.

Spare-time Education

Spare-time education is a general term referring to literacy, post-literacy and continuing education for adults both in urban and rural areas. It is the chief means of adult education and has played a greater and greater role in the informal education of adults. The total enrolment of adult students in 1987 was 41.23 million, among whom about 90 per cent were in spare-time study.

Spare-time education is a complicated term and takes many forms. As far as the names are concerned, there are Night Schools, Spare-time Schools, Radio and TV Schools, Correspondence Schools, etc. in use. Learners include peasants, workers, staff members, cadres, school drop-outs and out-of-school youngsters. As far as equivalent school levels are concerned, spare-time education is divided into primary, secondary (junior and senior) and higher education. Learners, according to their time and ability, may take up a single subject, two or three or all the subjects for study. Different spare-time schools require different times of attendance: some meet after work, some require four to eight hours of working time per week, and others may be attended full-time or part-time in the day. The Spare-Time Primary Schools in the countryside, taking the characteristics of farming into consideration, arrange the times of classes and vacations in accordance with the principles of ‘having more classes in the slack season and fewer classes in the busy season, and having vacations in the very busy season’. There are certificated subject(s) and non-certificated subject(s) for all spare-time learners.

Spare-time Schools run by different sectors have different purposes. For example, national higher radio and television education, including the Central Radio and Television University, the Central Agricultural Radio School and the radio and television universities at the level of province, municipality or autonomous region directly under the Central Government, provide the broad masses and cadres with diploma or certificate courses in culture, science and technology. An important role played by the radio and television colleges of provinces, which are under the people’s provincial governments, is to train teachers and management personnel both for formal schools and