



## СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ МИР CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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### Evolution and transformation processes of China's educational policy and governance in 1978–2019

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**Abstract.** Since the beginning of the period of reforms and openness, the PRC has constantly promoted a phased reform of the education system to modernize educational functions, rise new builders of socialism and support economic transformations in the country. Due to the active regulatory and management work, described in detail in the article with the help of instrumental observation, China gradually achieved several important results. State educational policy shifted from focusing on expanding the scope and improving the quality of education to its connotation-based development. The study of the Chinese experience of modernization of the education system has not only theoretical, but also practical significance, since successful Chinese examples of deep and rapid transformation of the national administrative system and state functions, as well as a clear adjustment of the characteristics of educational policy to current national priorities can be considered for partial application in other countries, including Russia. In order to adapt elements of the Chinese experience to the realities of other countries, such as Russian Federation, it is necessary to fully understand the context, features and stages of the educational policy evolution of the People's Republic of China, which is done in this article.

**Keywords:** China, educational policy, educational governance, regulatory framework, education institutions, functional transformation

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## Эволюция и трансформационные процессы политики и управления в сфере образования в Китае в 1978–2019 гг.

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**Аннотация.** С начала Политики реформ и открытости КНР постоянно продвигала поэтапную реформу системы образования с целью модернизации образовательных функций, воспитания новых строителей социализма и поддержки экономических преобразований в стране. Благодаря активной регуляторной и управленческой работе (подробно исследованной с помощью инструментального наблюдения) Китай постепенно добился нескольких важных результатов. Государственная образовательная политика сместила акцент с расширения охвата и повышения качества образования на его развитие, основанное на коннотации. Изучение китайского опыта модернизации системы образования имеет не только теоретическое, но и практическое значение, поскольку успешные китайские кейсы глубокой и быстрой трансформации национальной административной системы и государственных функций, а также четкой корректировки характеристик образовательной политики в соответствии с текущими национальными приоритетами могут быть рассмотрены для частичного применения в других странах, включая Россию. Чтобы адаптировать элементы китайского опыта к российским реалиям, необходимо полностью понять контекст, особенности и этапы эволюции образовательной политики Китайской Народной Республики, что и было сделано авторами исследования.

**Ключевые слова:** Китай, образовательная политика, управление образованием, нормативно-правовая база, образовательные учреждения, функциональная трансформация

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### Introduction

Education is one of the basic tools of modern society and nation-states. It not only carries general cultural and professional functions but also represents a channel for the distribution of social statuses and a factor in the formation of a new quality of the economy. The state educational policy in the narrow sense is a system of measures aimed at implementing the priorities of the state in the field of education, therefore, using its example, it is possible to objectively trace the evolution of national goals in a set period. Despite the series of difficult

events of the 20th century, consistent and carefully controlled from above educational reforms in China have become an example of one of the most successful transformations in this area [1]. The role of education in China's development is difficult to overestimate — it acts as one of the foundations of the security and survival of the socialist regime and helps to maintain the accelerated pace of economic development. The educational policy reflects the political and economic reforms carried out by the Government and the CPC — this area serves as a kind of litmus test for studying the intentions of the top leadership and is of serious interest to foreign researchers. Studying the evolution of the formation of the educational policy of modern China can deepen the understanding of the social processes and factors of this country and expand the empirical knowledge base on the behavior of the rising powers. In addition, a certain similarity of the educational systems of Russia and China, supplemented by an improved understanding of the PRC's education governance, opens space for all kinds of comparative studies.

This article is supposed to consider the evolution of the educational policy of the PRC in the format of natural interaction between such categories as basic and higher education [2]. Each of the categories is considered in accordance with the ideological aspect – the educational policy and practice of the CPC and the principles of socialist education with Chinese specifics. This paper seeks to form a theoretical and practical understanding of education policy in China in recent decades and to answer the question about how the government adjusted the management of education in China between 1978 and 2019 in accordance with national priorities?

## **Research**

In the PRC, the core of the education governance system has always been and remains the relationship between the government and educational institutions, that is, state functions and methods of managing higher education, or the issues of “what to manage” and “how to manage” [3]. For this reason, since the establishment of the PRC, its main goal in the field of educational policy has been to create a “centralized and unified” management system [4]. During the ten years of the upheavals of the “cultural revolution” (1966–1976), education in general and higher education in particular in China turned out to be the most affected industry and an extreme manifestation of the “revolutionary model of education” in a specific political situation [5]. This forced the country's leadership to take measures aimed at reviving and modernizing the national education system, which coincided with the beginning of a grandiose practice of reforms and openness. The period of transition of the educational policy of the People's Republic of China from the correction of management to reform and development began.

The first installations in this direction were adopted at the third plenum of the CPC Central Committee of the 11th convocation in 1978 and fixed at the 12th CPC Congress in 1982, which also added education to the number of priority links along with agriculture, energy, and transport [6]. The new set course implied the introduction of nine years of compulsory education, the elimination of illiteracy, the development of vocational and higher education. With these goals, the projects “Basic popularization of nine-year compulsory education” and “Basic eradication of illiteracy among young people” (referred to in Chinese discourse as “liang ji” (“two foundations”)) were launched. The CPC raised the “two foundations” to the “highest priority”. The emphasis was placed on the effectiveness of training as a necessary condition for strengthening the economy through improving the quality of the workforce [7. P. 992]. In 1985, a full-fledged reform of the education system began with the adoption of “Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of the Education System” was adopted [8] and “Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China”, which provided legal guarantees of human rights in the field of children’s education [9]. These transformations established the strategic status of educational policy, emphasized the need for the development of high technology, supported the tradition of respect for teachers and education, and set the goal of education to develop human resources for economic modernization.

The basis and inspiration for the ideological aspect of the first educational transformations was laid by Deng Xiaoping’s educational theory [10]. At the beginning of reforms and openness, Deng Xiaoping inherited and developed Mao Zedong’s enlightenment thought from a scientific point of view, establishing the strategic status of education as a priority direction of development, and maintaining the tradition of respect for knowledge, talents, teachers and education for the party and society: “Education must face modernization, face the world, and face the future. ... Science and technology are the first productive force” [11. P. 210]. These provisions of Deng Xiaoping’s educational theory emphasized for the first time that China should not only have its own high technologies, but also occupy the first place in the global high-tech sphere. This became a priority for many years.

In March 1986 Deng Xiaoping approved a letter proposing Wang Daheng and four other scientists to track and promote high-tech research and launched the high-tech research and development plan “863 Program” [11. P. 214]. According to it, universities had to actively participate in high-tech research, cultivate outstanding talents, and rely on global breakthroughs in high technology. In 1987, the report of the 13th National Congress of the CPC proposed “to put the development of scientific and technological progress and education in the first place, so that economic construction could be translated into the direction of relying on scientific and technological progress and improving the quality of workers” [11. P. 230].

In 1988, the State Council promulgated the “Regulations on the Eradication of Illiteracy”, which contained specific provisions on literacy targets, standards, planning goals, as well as policies and measures. At that time, there were 180.03 million illiterate and semi-illiterate people over the age of 15 in China. Their share in the total population was 15.5 %. It was planned that by the end of 1992, the number of years of education per capita for adult citizens would average 6.5 years [12. P. 17].

The core of Deng Xiaoping’s theory of education was the transformation of the heavy burden of the population into a resource of talents: “In China, the strength of national power and the sustainability of economic development increasingly depend on the quality of workers, as well as on the number and quality of intellectuals. In a country with a population of one billion people, education should be encouraged, since the advantages of huge human resources are second to none” [11. P. 214]. This argument gave China a new mission to develop human resources and social productivity in education.

Priority to the development of education implied financial investments in this area, which was a pragmatic characteristic of Deng Xiaoping’s education theory [10]. According to him, “the correlation of economic development with the development of education, science, culture and health care is broken, and spending on education, science, culture and health care is too small and disproportionate” [11. P. 210]. Deng Xiaoping repeatedly asked high-ranking party cadres to pay attention to the development of educational financing, emphasizing the incompetence of those who do not care about this area: “Be patient in other aspects and even sacrifice a little speed to solve the problem of education well” [11. P. 173–174]. The popularization of compulsory education was supposed to follow the path of developing large-scale education in poor countries, using the opportunities of social mobilization and party organizations at all levels. The Chinese people had to “tighten their belts” to raise funds for the management of schools. Nevertheless, these ideas laid the political foundation for the formulation and implementation of the goal of achieving 4 % investment in education financing.

Thus, the first results of modernization were the approval of the concept of compulsory free nine-year education and the introduction of guarantees for its receipt, because of which the number of students in schools increased slightly and the gap in the availability of education between the city and the countryside was reduced [7. P. 992–994]. Until the 1990s, the main goal of educational policy in China was the restoration of the system and indicators that existed before the “cultural revolution”, and the main motivation was the education of “new builders of socialism” capable of supporting the course of creating a socialist system of a market economy.

Despite the rhetoric and all the efforts, by the early 1990s China was still the second country in the world in terms of the number of illiterate

populations, there was a serious gap in the quality of education in urban and rural areas and an extremely low percentage of university applicants among rural residents. After five years of work since the release of the “Regulations on the Eradication of Illiteracy”, the illiteracy rate among the adult population was reduced to less than 15 %, and the illiteracy rate among young people decreased to less than 5 %, but the indicators of progress were insignificant [12. P. 18]. The educational policy had to gain a deeper meaning and be adjusted in accordance with the economic transformations of the country. It was the principles of building a socialist market economy that became the basis for reform during this period, because economic prosperity depended a lot on the qualitative characteristics of workers.

As a result, in 1992 the Central Committee of the party decided to promote the reform of the education system vigorously, paying special attention to comprehensively stimulating the viability of existing schools. The reform included the school management system, the investment system, the assessment system, and the employment system for further education. In 1993, at the fourth session of the 6th convocation of the National People’s Congress, the “Teachers Law of the People’s Republic of China” was adopted [13], and in 1995 at the third plenary session of the NPC — “Education Law of the People’s Republic of China” [14], which approved the socialist modernized education system and the statuses of participants in educational relations. The financing of public education, step-by-step management and step-by-step responsibility were introduced into practice: from now on, the main source of finance for educational institutions became government appropriations divided into appropriations of the central government and local authorities.

Higher education caused more difficulties than basic education. The Chinese higher education system was formed during the first five-year plan, which is compatible with the highly centralized planned economic system in the early days of the founding of the PRC [15]. Under this system, ordinary colleges and universities were divided into “strips” (“tiao”) of the central system and “sections” (“kuai”) of local government. Some integrated universities, as well as scientific, technical, and ordinary colleges were under the direct jurisdiction of the central Department of Education, while other central departments participated in the management of specialized higher education institutions that trained talents for their industries. With the market transformation of the economy, such an education system became a narrow, “bottleneck” (“pingjing”), limiting development [10].

Due to the influence of political upheavals in the late 1980s, the reform of the higher education management system abruptly stopped, and only three years later it was revised. In 1988, the State Council issued a “Temporary Regulation on Responsibility for the Management of Higher Education”, describing the responsibilities of the newly created National Commission

on Education for the Management of Higher Education. The “Opinions of the National Education Commission on accelerating the reform and active development of general higher education”, approved by the State Council in early 1993, indicated the need of reform is to align relations between the government, society and schools and make higher education institutions independent legal entities in accordance with the principle of separation of powers [16. P. 166].

In February 1993 The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council published a more authoritative “Outline for Education Reform and Development in China” to “reform a system that is too comprehensive and too unified”. The Central Committee stressed that the reform of the higher education system was mainly to resolve the relationship between the government and higher education institutions, the central government and local authorities, the National Education Commission and various business departments of the Central Government, as well as gradually establish a system of macro-management of the government and independent management of institutions of public interest [17]. At the same time, it was established that legislation explaining the rights and obligations of higher education institutions should be adopted in the relations between the Government and institutions. This was aimed at ensuring the transition of that higher educational institutions into a real legal entity focused on social self-government [16. P. 167–172].

In 1995, at the National Scientific and Technical Conference of Education, Jiang Zemin proposed to implement a strategy of rejuvenation of the country with the science [12. P. 18]. In 1997, the 15th National Congress of the CPC clearly stated that it was necessary to “grow hundreds of millions of highly qualified workers and tens of millions of specialized talents that are compatible with the requirements of modernization and development of our country’s huge advantages in the field of human resources” [18]. Next year, the National Leading Group for Scientific and Technical Education was established. Thanks to this strategy, perception of education as a ground for the emergence and spread of innovations began to form in China.

In 1995, “Opinions of the National Education Commission on Deepening the Reform of the Higher Education System” were published. Since that the development of educational materials and programs at all levels became the center of the implementation of the goals of quality education. The document also introduced the concepts of “organizer” (“juban zhe”), “manager” (“guanxue”) and “university manager” (“banxue zhe”) and developed the goal of institutional reform until 2000 to introduce these terms into practice [19. P. 8]. Putting forward these three concepts theoretically did not make sense, because it did not help to provide greater autonomy to universities. In addition, they were not easy to distinguish and understand in practice, especially for state higher education institutions.

In fact, the process of reform of the higher education system in the 1990s did not concern the rights and obligations of these three concepts. He only developed a dialogue on two-level management and integration of regulations, as well as on specific measures such as “joint construction”, “university unification” and so on [19. P. 9–11]. These measures achieved some results, but most of them were carried out from top to bottom through administrative channels, combined with simultaneous reform of the financing system and the implementation of several major projects. Many aspects of the higher education management system not only failed to change the situation with excessive inclusiveness and excessive unification, but even concentrated resources for university management in the hands of the administration, which strengthened its power and authoritarianism. As a result, relations between the Government and universities only worsened.

Nevertheless, in 1998, at the fourth session of the 9th convocation of the National People’s Congress, based on the “Education Law of the People’s Republic of China”, the “Higher Education Law of the People’s Republic of China” was adopted, emphasizing the previously outlined course on socialist modernization, combining study with production and a socialist market economy [20]. The State Council was appointed as the coordinating body for resolving financing issues. In 1999, the “Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of the Education System” was adopted. It was aimed at improving the quality characteristics of students, the formation of self-discipline and personal development in order to maximally contribute to the development of socialism idea. In the same year, adjustments and reforms were made to the management systems of 25 colleges and universities, 34 colleges and universities for adults, as well as hundreds of secondary schools and technical schools. Subsequently, the State Council adopted a “Decision on Further Adjustment of the Management System and the Structure of the Placement of Educational Institutions Belonging to the Departments of the State Council” [12. P. 20].

In 1999, Prime Minister Zhu Rongji proposed to expand the scope of admission to higher education institutions, as this could ease the pressure on basic education and thereby contribute to improving its quality. Human capital development remained a priority, but still with clear economic challenges behind it. This had some positive results: over the next 5 years, the average annual growth rate of the number of university students was 26.5 %, and the average annual growth rate of the number of graduate students was 28.5 %. By 2006, the number of university students reached 25 million [21. P. 110–112]. For the first time, Chinese higher education in China began to move from an elite stage to a popular one.

The entry into the 21st century became a new stage for the PRC in the field of educational policy. By 2000, the goal of the “two foundations” was achieved



as planned: China got rid of the status of a great illiterate country, nine-year education was spread over most of the country [12. P. 25]. But from that point forward the PRC had the task of adapting to the demands of the time, building a modern educational system that would manage universities in accordance with the principles of the rule of law, independent governance, democratic oversight, and public participation [22. P. 11–13]. Building a new type of relationship between the government, educational institutions and society became highly important again [23. P. 4].

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the improvement of China's higher education policy has been based on six basic needs: striving for world status (construction of "world-class universities and first-class specialties"), systematic marketization, revolutionary popularization, structural optimization, organizational digitization, and comprehensive internationalization. This model was called the Chinese University 3.0 model, fundamentally different from the earlier versions [21. P. 118].

In November 2002, the 16th National Congress of the CPC was held, at which the goal of comprehensively building a wealthy society was put forward, which also influenced educational practice. A course was taken to increase equality in education. According to Hu Jintao, "equality in education is an integral part of the social justice that the party strives for" [24]. The State Council adopted several measures to promote equality in education. First, free basic education has begun to be introduced in urban and rural areas across the country. To help vulnerable groups of the population (families with economic difficulties, children of city migrant workers, residents of rural areas) and to solve the problem of difficulties with school attendance, the policy of "two benefits and one allowance" ("liang mian yi bu") began to be implemented for them at the stage of compulsory education [10].

Secondly, a number of social policy measures were taken for vulnerable groups of the population: a national system and mechanism of student loans have been created; the system of financing policy for students experiencing economic difficulties has been improved; the problem of education for "three categories of children" ("san tong") (girls, disabled children and children from ethnic minorities in poor areas); a program of educational "partner support" ("dui kou zhiyuan") (for example, "Partner support for school projects in poor areas in the East and West" and "Large and medium-sized cities partner support from large and medium-sized cities for school projects in poor areas of autonomous regions, municipalities, directly subordinated to the Central Government") [12. P. 25].

At the turn of the century, all strata of society began to put forward higher demands for the reform of the higher education system. China's accession to the WTO in 2001 also spurred the legislative process in the field of educational policy to increase compliance with the requirements

of the world market [25. P. 14–15]. From an economic point of view, over the past decades, the central Government had been playing a leading role in the development and financial support of the higher education. By the 2000s this role had significantly increased compared to the 1980s and 1990s [10. P. 21]. The increase in university funding made it possible to strengthen the capabilities of Chinese universities in the field of scientific research. From 1978 to 2007, the global share of SSCI publications in China increased from 0.01 % to 0.67 %, of which more than half were published over the past 10 years mainly due to accelerated investments in funds and personnel [26]. New actions were required to preserve positive results.

For these reasons, reform policies were implemented one after another in full swing. In 2004, the Ministry of Education published the “2003–2007 Education Revitalization Action Plan” [27]. The plan was based on the “Law on Administrative Licensing”, promulgated in 2003, and proposed to reform the system of administrative approval of education, clean up the projects of administrative licensing of education and explore the possibility of creating a “modern university system” [28]. This concept was first proposed in the “Draft of the 11th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education”, published in 2007 [29].

At the same time, vocational education began to develop intensively. In 2005, the State Council published the “Decision on vigorously developing vocational education”, which clearly traced the orientation of education to service and employment: promoting the transformation of vocational education from planned training to market-based, from direct public administration to macro-management, from the traditional orientation of vocational education to employment [25. P. 4]. Guided by the policy of these “three transformations” (“san ge zhuanbian”), professional colleges and universities have begun to overcome the dilemma of “plan and demand” (“jihua yu xuqiu”). Changes were made to the curricula, and a talent training model was introduced as part of an employment orientation with the help of a team of teachers “with two mentors” (“shuangshi xing”) [15. P. 7].

Due to the orientation of the management of professional educational institutions to the education of talents and the need for employment, interaction between professional colleges and local enterprises and authorities was strengthened. This made it possible to increase the employment opportunities of students, strengthen their professional literacy and entrepreneurial abilities. Such transformations of vocational education as a result made a significant contribution to the “made in China” program and the industrial revolution [25. P. 19–20]. New highly qualified employees, graduated from the transformed vocational schools, contributed to the active development of the manufacturing industry, construction, information technology, transport, and cultural tourism in China.

Another trend of the Chinese educational policy of the 2000s was the development of independent innovative and technological talents, whose connection with the sustainable development of the country's scientific and technical industry was noted by Hu Jintao at the National Scientific and Technical Conference [30]. The National Strategy for Cultivating Innovation contributed to the reform of basic education curricula. Thus, in February 2001, the State Council approved the "Plan for the Reform of the Curriculum of Basic Education", which marked the official transition of education from the theoretical level to the practical [15. P. 7]. In the same year, the State Council approved the establishment of a Textbook Development Center for Basic Curricula under the Ministry of Education of China to strengthen research in the field of educational policy.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education published "Opinions on Further Strengthening of Undergraduate Teaching in Higher Education Institutions", emphasizing the importance of improving the quality of education and focusing on reforming teaching methods, curricula, and models of talent education. As a result, the "national high-quality curriculum" ("guojia jingpin kecheng") was released, and in 2007 the Ministry of Education published "Opinions on Further Deepening the Reform of Undergraduate Education and Comprehensive Improvement of the Quality of Teaching" and "Opinions on the Implementation of Projects to Improve the Quality of Teaching in bachelor's degree and the Reform of Teaching in Higher Education Institutions" together with the Ministry of Finance. These documents contributed to the relaunch of "quality engineering" ("zhiliang gongcheng") in research and general education universities and professional colleges [15. P. 7–8].

Updating the "Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China" in 2006 contributed to the development of human resources through educational policy. The principle of "man is the root of everything" was first introduced [10. P. 7–8]. The principle may mistakenly seem focused on the personality of students, however, on the contrary, it made education the "root of everything" and proved the possibility of influencing the personality of students. Nevertheless, these changes, at least on paper, made students a subject, and not just an object of education, and expressed the beginnings of a humanistic attitude to upbringing. Students' own activity and self-knowledge became an integral part of the educational process.

In May 2010, the State Council of the People's Republic of China and the CPC Central Committee published and adopted the "National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010–2020" based on the previous policy of modernization of education. The document proposed to "overcome the trend towards administratization" and "abolish the model of administrative management". The presentation of the problem in such

a volume reflected the courage and determination of the central Government to reform the higher education management system. The aim of the reform laid down in the program was “to promote the separation of government and universities”, as well as “the separation of leadership and management” [31]. Considering the new policy of this period, especially this document, it can be found that the model of education development and the value system of China have undergone three main changes: the development of innovative talents has become the center of deepening the education reform; comprehensive improvement of the quality and efficiency of school management has become the basis of educational innovation and development; equity in education and the promotion of education as attributes of the national economy and people’s livelihoods have become more significant.

The policy and practice in the field of education after the 18th Congress of the CPC evolved again. Firstly, in 2016, at the National Conference of Colleges and Universities on Ideological and Political Work, Xi Jinping introduced the principle of “four services” (“si ge fuwu”) of educational policy: serving the realistic goals of the country, the people, the CPC, reforms, and openness [10. P. 7–8]. Due to them, ideological work in educational institutions, intensified after the publication in 2013 of “Opinions on the cultivation and application of basic Socialist values”, became clearer.

To strengthen the ideological leadership of the Party “Opinions on Strengthening Party Building in Primary and Secondary Schools” were published in 2016. According to them the party organizations of secondary schools fully provided leadership based on the principles of socialism and the quality of ideological and political theory courses. The National Bureau of Educational Materials comprehensively analyzed the ideological and moral values in school textbooks and simultaneously strengthened the development of thematic university courses. The Central Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Education organized 2 rounds of revision of unified textbooks and curricula for ideological and political theory courses at colleges and universities.

After the 19th CPC Congress in 2017, a human-oriented educational policy began to take shape, with justice, equality and access to high-quality education becoming priorities. The difference between justice and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups in China, in contrast to Western discourse, was very noticeable. In the decisions of the 19th Congress, the emphasis was shifted from social assistance to the poor, primarily in rural areas, to the fair distribution of educational resources since social justice called for providing rural and urban youth with equal opportunities for development [15. P. 8–9].

The second change was the transformation of teaching methods through such documents as: “The Plan for the Implementation of Patriotic Education

in a New Era” 2019, “Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Education and Teaching and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education” 2019, “Guiding Opinions on the Promotion of the Reform of Methods of General Secondary Education in a New Era” 2019, “Opinions on the Comprehensive Strengthening of Labor Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in the New Era” 2019, “Conclusions on the Pilot Work on the Reform of Basic Subjects in Some Colleges and Universities” 2020, “Conclusions on the Comprehensive Strengthening and Improvement of School Physical Education in the New Era” 2020 in order to strengthen physical education, “Conclusions on the Comprehensive Strengthening and Improvement of Work on Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era” 2020 in order to strengthen aesthetic education, “Overall Plan for Deepening Educational Evaluation Reform in the New Era” [32]. The meaning of all the documents was to support the comprehensive development of students by improving the quality of teaching and introducing methods of physical, labor, and aesthetic development to classical training.

In the documents listed above, there were already fewer statements about the upbringing of the builders of socialism and the vocation of education to support the accelerated modernization of the country’s economy. Of course, education was still aimed at producing highly qualified personnel, but at the same time, Chinese educational policy in pursuit of socialist justice supported the global trend for equality and equal opportunities. Thanks to the funding, by 2017, it was possible to achieve the working goal of “not allowing a student to drop out of school due to family financial difficulties” [33]. By this time, the total financial assistance to students exceeded 470 billion yuan (69.99 billion dollars), and the total investment in educational institutions reached 220 billion yuan (32.76 billion dollars) [10. P. 13].

Changes in governance and the role of Government in education deserve special attention. In 2017, in connection with the entry of socialism with Chinese characteristics into a new era and the general promotion of the reform of the “Deregulation and Maintenance” of the national administrative system, the Ministry of Education published “Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Simplified Management, Decentralization and Management Combined with the Optimization of Higher Education Services”, proposing to break down the institutional barriers that restrain development of higher education, and further decentralization of power in favor of local colleges and universities, deregulation of colleges and universities, simplification and removal of the burden, as well as giving schools more autonomy [34].

Through this document, the authorities recognized the existence of relations between them and educational institutions in the “master-slave” format [15. P. 9]. In the same year, the Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Directorate of the State Council published “Opinions on Deepening the Reform

of the Education System and Mechanism”, which raised the problem of “governance and decentralization” to an unprecedented level [35. P. 78-80].

With the adoption of several policy documents, the Chinese reform of the education management system made some positive progress in decentralization. For example, administrative approval issues were reduced, projects such as “National Key Disciplines” and “National Outstanding Doctoral Dissertations” were canceled. The disadvantage of these projects was that they assumed the complete dependence of such important issues as the choice of key disciplines and the best scientific papers only on the decisions of the Central Government. Mechanisms such as independent enrollment, evaluation of the rank of teachers, remuneration for work, attraction and distribution of talents, international academic exchanges, awarding of scientific degrees and the use of self-financing funds were delegated to universities to varying degrees [33].

However, “decentralization” is only one aspect of the reform of the higher education management system, while the greatest attention, according to Chinese researchers, should have been paid to “simple management”, since if the political issues of the competent department are not reduced or significantly simplified, there will inevitably be a risk of a need for decentralization again. Another problem is that, judging by the pilot project of the “modern university system” over the past ten years, the main reason why it has not been effective is that the reform is seen as pure university reform or reform on campus, ignoring the improvement of relations between the government and universities [36. P. 68]. With the current education management system in China, it is difficult to build a “modern university system” without first transforming state functions and reforming the management methods of competent departments.

The difficulties of management in education begin with the problems of understanding this term. In Chinese, two words are used for “management” (“guanli”) or “governance” (“zhili”). Both words are translated as “management”, but the first term refers more to management, while the second is related to governance through the involvement of several parties [37. P. 66–67]. Based on the analyzed policy documents, it can be concluded that in the management of higher education in China during the time under study, there was a transition from a “guanli” to “zhili”, that is, a transition from the simple transmission of orders and directives from above and their implementation on the ground to joint decision-making by authorities and educational institutions. The term “zhili” appeared and came into use in China in the late 1990s, when new management theories were developing in China [1. P. 8]. The term immediately began to be included in official policy documents and became part of the political language. The concept has opened a new vision for the reform of the higher education management system in China.

In the “Draft of the Education Plan”, published in 2010, the issue of improving the management structure of the university was raised. Although

here the term “zhili” was intended only for universities and mainly refers to internal management, its appearance in official authoritative policy documents caused a great response in the higher education community. At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2013 the “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues of Comprehensive Deepening Reform” was adopted. The document stated that the goal of comprehensive deepening of the reform is to improve the socialist system with the characteristics of China and to promote the modernization of the national governance system and management capabilities [15. P. 8–9]. The document raised the issue of governance to the level of a national strategy, mentions the importance of linking the governance of the country and individual organizations.

The definition of the concept of “zhili” in China was proposed by the Global Governance Committee in 1995: “Governance is a combination of many ways in which various public or private individuals and institutions manage their common affairs. It is a continuous process of reconciling conflicting or different interests and taking joint measures” [4. P. 40]. In accordance with this definition, the characteristics of governance can be described as follows: it is not a set of rules and not an activity, but a process; the basis of the process is not control, but coordination; governance includes both the public and private sectors; governance is not a formal system, but a continuous activity [4. P. 41]. Some Chinese scientists have generalized this term, arguing that the characteristics of governance are mainly process, coordination, multi-personality, continuous interaction, etc. [35. P. 78] There is a clear distinction between “management” and the traditional concept of “governance”: management is basically a controlling activity, and governance is basically a coordinated process; management mainly uses power to implement from top to bottom, and governance is mainly achieved through equal consultation and cooperation; management mainly reflects a stable hierarchical system, and governance basically reflects a continuous dynamic balance. In simple words, “guanli” relies on vertical relations between the upper and lower levels, and “zhili” reflects the planar relations between several subjects. Traditional management in the PRC uses the political power of the government to implement unidirectional management of social and public affairs by issuing orders, formulating policies, and implementing policies. On the contrary, the new governance concept is a process of interaction between levels, which is mainly carried out through cooperation, consultation, partnership and the establishment of identity and common goals.

In 2018, the State Council of the People’s Republic of China published the “Implementation Plan to Accelerate the Modernization of Education (2018–2022)” [38]. In 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council published “China’s Education Modernization 2035” [39]. One of the ten main strategic objectives set out in the documents was “promoting the modernization of the education management system and

management capabilities” [38]. Specific measures included improving the level of public management services and increasing the ability of the Government and local authorities to make full use of modern management methods, such as laws, standards, and information services, as well as improving the ability of educational institutions to self-government. The documents were clearly focused on political decentralization, deregulation and facilitating the transfer of state functions to universities. Finally, China has moved closer to the model of joint governance, which has been discussed since the 1990s.

Starting from the “Draft of the Education Plan” in 2010 and ending with the “China’s Education Modernization 2035” in 2019, a vision of modernization of higher education management was gradually formed, and the thinking of the manager went from the university level to the system level [39. P. 17]. The management system had turned into a sum of various elements, including the subject, procedures, management rules, coordination methods, distribution of powers and adjustment of the management itself. The governing body could be analyzed from the point of view of the “organizer”, “manager”, “university organizer” and other stakeholders of higher education. For colleges and universities supported by central financial funds, the organizers were residents or taxpayers of the whole country; for colleges and universities supported by local financial funds – all local taxpayers [39. P. 17].

The National People’s Congress is a fundamental political system in China. That is why it has become an organizer for universities directly subordinate to the Central Government. Local People’s Congresses at each administrative level have become an organizer for local universities. According to the provisions of the Law on Higher Education, the “managers” of Chinese higher education institutions are the State Council and its competent departments of education, local authorities, and their competent departments of education. Regardless of the nature of educational institutions (including private secondary schools), they must accept the management of “managers”. The essence of the problem lies in the management functions. The assistants of such managers should be teachers and administrative heads of educational institutions, as well as, ideally, students, since in China they pay for the training of students and deserve a place in the management system — this is recognized by Chinese experts [35. P. 78]. Other stakeholders, such as parents of students, donors, and related social institutions, can also be included in the management process, if necessary.

Summing up, the evolution of educational policy can be described as follows. At the first stages of the reform, the state policy on higher education in the PRC was aimed at getting rid of the chaos caused by the “cultural revolution” and restoring the former respect for teachers and intellectuals. The reforms deepened significantly in the 1990s. From that moment on, the main emphasis was placed on improving the education management model [15. P. 8–9]. As a result, by 2020, the management of education and higher education in China has developed a lot: for the effective implementation of the goal and mission



of education, a joint community consisting of organizers, managers, school administrators and other important stakeholders of higher education institutions has been created. The overall structure of this community is flat, not vertical, and its effective functioning was based on equal interaction, negotiations, and reconciliation between the subjects. According to this definition, the so-called “ability to manage higher education” represents the ability of management entities to fulfill their powers and the ability of subjects to interact, negotiate and coordinate continuously and equally.

The role of the Government in education policy has also changed. From the point of view of the subjects of governance, the Government continues to play a dominant role. The second most important role is played by the ruling party. The role of the legislature is extremely limited, and the degree of legalization in the field of higher education is low [22. P. 7]. Judging by the content of regulatory documents, the leadership and management of the ruling party in education is constantly expanding and strengthening. The general trend is that the role of the government as a “producer” is weakening, and its role as a “supplier” is strengthening. In general, the government still plays the role of “producer”, and this affects the autonomy of higher education institutions. However, after reforms and openness, a significant number of management functions has been delegated to provincial governments [40]. Although the relevant reforms and policy documents have repeatedly called for granting colleges and universities more autonomy, reducing State administrative interference and encouraging independent management of colleges and universities, the Government is still accustomed to mandatory management of educational institutions. It is gratifying that after the construction of a service-oriented Government the share of the Government using coercive methods shows a downward trend [19]. As a result, the autonomy of educational institutions, especially universities, has not increased much, but the social functions of higher education have strengthened.

In general, the policy regarding higher education in China during the period under review corresponded to global trends in this area: the globalization of education, the transfer of powers from the state to individual higher education institutions, the increase in the autonomy of universities on issues such as funding, enrollment, and decision-making [41. P. 154–157]. In addition, the PRC skillfully integrated its national priorities and political needs into the development of educational policy [23. P. 8–9]. The preservation of the state’s macro-control over education, the introduction of the concept of accountability and the priority of education over training made it possible to maintain political stability; the mass dissemination of higher education and the policy of attracting talent ensured the achievement of economic modernization; the granting of greater autonomy to local authorities in matters of education supported the trend towards strengthening provincial

authorities; the emphasis on international educational standards and global recognition ensured the rise of the PRC's authority abroad and its infusion into international networks.

## Conclusion

The main conclusion of the paper is that the state policy in the field of education in the PRC has gone through several transformational processes since 1978 till 2019: from localization to internationalization; from extensive growth to intensive growth; from unconditional authority of the teacher to approach, focused on students, but based on teachers; from education for all to human resources power; from raising the builders of socialism to raising talents; from more talents to high-quality talents; from expanding the scale and quantitative indicators to development of education based on connotation; from vertical relationships between government and educational institutions and top-down directives to planar relations and equal cooperation between the subjects. For most of the reform period, the priority of the state was collective values that ensure the survival of the Chinese socialist regime and are an expression of the vital need of the PRC for active economic construction, which means high-quality personnel. The labor force was perceived as a single whole and an instrument requiring modernization through educational policy, and not as individuals requiring internal harmonious development.

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