

EDUCATION SECTION
PROGRAMME DIVISION



CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY: CHINA

UNICEF 2009

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**CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS CASE STUDY:
CHINA**



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INTRODUCTION

Guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – which was ratified by the Government of China – and its own mission statement, UNICEF has worked in close partnership with the Government of China since 1979 to improve the quality of basic services, including education and health care. UNICEF focuses on policy development and works with the government and its local partners to demonstrate innovative ways of improving children’s education and well-being.

Since 2001, a Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) Project has been operating as an integral component of the China-UNICEF cooperative programme on Education and Child Development. The CFS pilot started in 2001 in 12 rural township schools in 7 counties of three under-developed provinces – Guangxi, Chongqing and Inner Mongolia – with a CFS approach to teacher training as an entry point. It was subsequently expanded to an additional 60 rural village schools in these 7 counties during the latter years of the 2001-2005 programme cycles.

In light of the CFS project’s high consistency with China’s national education policy goals and its evidence-based impact at national and local levels, the project has been extended to 1,665 pilot schools in 20 counties in 10 provinces/autonomous regions in China during the 2006-2010 programme cycles.

The CFS project in China has been implemented in the broad contexts of high-rate economic development amid increased rural-urban and eastern-western region disparities; large-scale rural-to-urban migration as a result of industrialization in social transition; the construction of a human-centred ‘harmonious society’; and the multicultural diversity of 56 ethnic population groups.

The project has yielded important outputs and outcomes in terms of the expanded, inclusive education for children from disadvantaged groups; the provision of safe and protective learning environments; the improved capacity of all stakeholders in implementing a rights-based approach to quality education; improved professional teacher competencies; school-family-community partnership; and, most importantly, improved children’s participation and well-rounded development. As a result, a national framework of CFS vision, dimensions, standards and indicators has been developed for actual implementation and scale-up replication in the country.

The purpose of this case study is to document the Chinese experience with CFS and its policy impact at the national level, as well as to demonstrate the results of innovative implementation at the local level. It will also analyse the remaining challenges of the CFS model of quality education in action and lessons learned from the CFS implementation process.

In addition, the study will also present direction regarding the adoption of CFS national standards, enhanced governmental support, cost-effective scaling up, policy mainstreaming, continued capacity building, and more responsive programme actions to meet the emerging needs of all children and bring about their full potential for well-rounded development.

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Overview

Education plays a crucial role in the national development of China, and the Chinese experiences in CFS implementation cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of its broad contexts.

As the largest developing country, China still has 56 per cent of its total population (1.314 billion) living in rural areas (2006). With 56 ethnic groups, more than 80 languages and 30 written scripts, China is a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural society. Ethnic minorities represent more than 9 per cent of the total population (more than 82 million people).

Economic development in China has been characterized by sustained high growth rates, as well as by rural-urban disparity and east-west regional imbalance. The developed eastern region – with only 32.7 per cent of the nation’s total population – accounts for 59.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP), whereas the underdeveloped western region, with 28 per cent of the nation’s total population, has only a 17.1 per cent share. The rural-urban disparity has been striking: Among 764 million employed workers, 42.6 per cent are in agriculture or first industry, which accounts for only 11.8 per cent of GNP, due to the workforce’s low education level and low productivity (MOE, 2008).

Social equity and inclusion has been made a highest priority on the national development agenda, especially because of the increased rich-poor disparity, the large-scale migration from rural to urban areas, the changing labour force structure in human resources development, and the need for an improved legislature and policy environment. Building a human-centred ‘harmonious society’ has become a central aim of national development.

Preserving Chinese cultural identity is also a national policy goal, although multicultural/multilingual diversity is encouraged in light of the 55 ethnic minorities and in the context of increasing globalization. Core cultural values, such as harmony, collectivism, human-centredness, caring, tolerance and patriotism, are integrated in the school curriculum.

China has the world’s largest education system, with more than 700,000 schools. In 2005, the net enrolment rate (NER) in primary schools was 99.5 per cent and the gross enrolment rate (GER) for lower secondary education reached 95 per cent, resulting in a total of 171 million pupils enrolled in nine-year compulsory education. The GER for upper secondary education was 52.7 per cent, with a total enrolment of 39.9million, and the GER for higher education reached 21 per cent, with enrolment of more than 23 million.¹

Educational development in China, however, has also been correspondingly characterized by regional imbalance and rural-urban disparity. In 2006, 82.13 per cent (or

¹ Chen Xiao-Ya, Vice Minister of Education, ‘The Consistency of Child-Friendly School Goals with Those of Basic Education Reform in China’, an opening speech at the National Seminar on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Schools held by UNICEF-MOE, September 25, 2006.

more than 33,000 schools); 55.5 per cent (more than 92,398,000), total enrolment in primary and lower secondary schools; and 55.46 per cent (nearly 5.02 million) of teachers were in rural areas.² In terms of both equality and quality of education, schools and children in rural China are in positions that are much more disadvantaged.

The number of children not enrolled in primary schools in 2005 is small in percentage but large in absolute numbers: They actually amounted to 7 million, accounting for more than 50 per cent of out-of-school children in East Asia.

China's school system comprises (a) primary education (mostly for six years, but with some rural schools operating on a five-year basis, including an expanding three-year education from pre-school to kindergarten); (b) lower secondary education (mostly junior high school and some agricultural or technical schools, which are attended for three years, with some four-year programmes equivalent to the five-year primary school programme); (c) upper secondary education, which runs along two tracks: senior high schools and vocational-technical schools, which are both for three years; and (d) higher education, which includes four-year colleges for bachelor programmes, two- to three-year master's degree programmes, and primarily three-year doctoral degree programmes at research universities.

1.2 Issues and education challenges

High priority on rural education In improving educational equality and quality in China, a focus has been placed on basic education in rural areas. While remarkable progress has been made in the universalization of primary and lower secondary education, manifold challenges remain. Major rural-urban disparity exists in terms of teachers' qualifications, facilities and infrastructures, and teaching-learning qualities.

Gender equality Two important social development goals of China's public policy have been the reduction of gender disparity and the promotion of gender equality. Since 2000, the Chinese government has taken policy measures to promote educational equality as a fundamental policy in education, and gender equality has been further improved. Although gender disparity among first-graders in primary schools who have received pre-school education has been reduced, it still remains at 1.41 per cent. The primary NER for school-aged girls rose to 99.52 per cent in 2007, exceeding, for the first time, the NER for boys by 0.06 points. For the same year, however, the retention rate for girls in five-year primary education was 99.28 per cent, lagging behind boys' retention rate of 99.59 per cent.³

Exclusion and inequality While nine-year education has been universalized with a high NER and GER for primary education and lower secondary education, the problems of exclusion and inequality still exist. Despite the very low drop-out rate of 0.45 per cent (2005) for primary education, the number of children dropping out of primary schools could be as high as 7,650,000, taking into account the huge enrolment of 171 million in primary schools. If child-friendly schools are to actively 'seek' the non-enrolled excluded in

² Ministry of Education, China, a Report on School Teachers Development, Beijing, March 2008.

³ National Commission for UNESCO, Report on Mid-Term Assessment of EFA in China, Beijing, 2008.

schools, as they should by their mission, many more CFS should be established and enormous efforts need to be made to get this large number of dropouts back in schools.

Education for children of migrants Industrialization and urbanization of vast rural areas produced a large-scale migration from rural to urban areas. It is estimated that by 2010, as many as 130 million farmers will migrate to cities. This large-scale, rural-urban migration has created a major challenge to the basic education of millions of children of migrant parents both those who were brought to urban areas and those who were left behind. In recent years, the Chinese government has taken policy actions to address the issue of the education of children of migrants.

A national policy was developed whereby governments of localities receiving migrants shall be obliged to take major responsibility for the management of migrant children's education programmes, and public primary/secondary schools shall be the major providers of education for these children. In many primary schools in some cities, such as Hangzhou, the children of migrants have accounted for more than 35 per cent of students; at some others, the figure has even been as high as 40 per cent.

At the same time, government at all levels has paid high attention to the education, care and protection of the children of migrants 'left behind' in rural areas. These children have become a significant target population for retaining and improving compulsory education. Due to the manifold disadvantages of the migrants in terms of limited resources and hard living conditions, however, both visible and invisible disparities and inequalities remain regarding their education. Migrants' children might be discriminated at urban schools due to their lower learning achievement level; many of the children who were left behind might develop feelings of inferiority, insecurity or isolation, or other psychological-emotional problems. They might also find it difficult to interact with their peers. Children of migrants urgently need life skills education, and schools need to develop child-friendly environs to address these issues.

Examination-driven practices A major problem in the education system in China has been the existence of examination-driven practices. With the intense competition for college entrance, there was an overemphasis on total scores in 'core subjects' (math, Chinese and foreign language) for all college applicants, and additionally, in the subjects of physics and chemistry for science-technology-engineering programme applicants, and history and geography for liberal arts/social/human sciences programme applicants. As a result, what was measured became important, leading to a neglect of pupils' moral, physical, aesthetical, and work skills development. Since the late 1990s, China has been promoting 'quality-oriented education' or 'human competencies-based quality education' ('su-zhi-jiao-yu') to counterbalance examination-driven practices.

School curriculum reform In promoting quality-oriented education, a major endeavour has been the reform of the basic education curriculum and evaluation system since the late 1990s. Starting in the fall semester of 2005, the first-graders of all primary and lower secondary schools began using new curricula and textbooks. By September 2006, a new curriculum for senior high schools has been in use in 10 provinces and autonomous regions.

Learner assessment Since the adoption of new curricula by schools, one key challenge has been how to assess the learning achievement of children. This requires assessing the level of life skills applied in real-life situations, which is a major shift from the examination-oriented, rote-learning practices that had long been prevalent in Chinese schools. Despite many research studies and experiments, there are no policy guidelines on learning assessment in new contexts that have been widely agreed-upon. With the recently established National Center for Monitoring and Assessing Basic Education Quality, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is developing indicators for adequate measurement of educational quality as defined in the new curricula.

Teacher training Teachers are a key determining factor regarding education quality, and the most important facilitator of learning. In light of the average education level attained by schoolteachers in China, their continuing training and professional development is becoming increasingly essential, not only for the learning acquisition of students, but also for the teacher's contribution to the achievement of the national goals of educational equity and quality. A major challenge has been the development of professional teacher standards as benchmarks of professional growth.

Issues of safety and protection A safe, healthy and protective learning environment is a key factor in child-friendly quality education, and an essential condition for the development of all children. There have been various cases reported of injuries and deaths of school pupils due to transportation accidents, natural disasters, polluted waters, drowning, corporal punishment and other causes. In developing an enabling learning environment for quality education in the interest of the healthy development of children, the MOE in 2004 issued a policy document on 'Further Strengthening of School Safety', calling for policy actions on improved management, reporting of school safety and divided institutional responsibilities. The central authority has been making policy interventions in building 'harmonious schools' as peaceful learning communities.

Capacity building of government administrators As a result of the large-scale reconstruction of its administrative system and downsizing for greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency, there was a substantial reduction in personnel at the national and provincial levels, which led to a very limited number of officers to administer the world's largest school system. This implies an urgent need for the capacity building of administrative officers in changing the functions/responsibilities of the government; decentralized planning; results-based management and accountability methods for implementation; and monitoring and assessment of education programmes/projects in pursuit of equitable, sustainable and quality education in the country.

1.3 Current situation

While continuing endeavours in promoting educational equality through 'balance development' and reduced disparities, China has, since the late 1990s, placed highest priority on competencies-based 'quality-oriented education' for the well-rounded development of all children. As a highest priority, compulsory education has been universalized nationally.

✓ A national policy on balanced and equitable educational development has been put

into effect through the implementation of the revised Compulsory Education Law (2006), which stipulates that educational resources should be rationally distributed to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, and that local government should place emphasis on rural schools and the development of their teachers to improve the quality of rural education.

- ✓ Infrastructures and facilities of rural schools have been greatly improved as a result of a national development programme for the development for the western region of China (2004-2007), which has been implemented through the Compulsory Education in Poor Areas Project, Reconstructing Unsafe Rural School Buildings Project, Construction of Rural Boarding Schools Project, and Rural Modern Distance Education Project.
- ✓ A new mechanism has been developed for assuring the funding of compulsory education in rural areas: In 2006, 52 million pupils in nine-year rural schools in western and some central regions all received waivers for tuition and miscellaneous fees and, in 2007, students in primary and lower secondary schools in all rural areas of China received waivers for tuition and other fees for compulsory education.
- ✓ Another policy action taken to improve quality of education in rural areas has been the implementation of the Rural School Modern Distance Education Project in western and central regions, in which central and local governments invested 10 billion yuan during 2003-2005 for the provision of 292,000 sets of display equipment for teaching CD-ROMs, 167,000 satellite teaching receiving systems and 25,000 sets of computer equipment. All of this benefited 80 million rural pupils and improved the quality of schools through educational resources-sharing as well as addressing the issue of teacher shortage in rural areas.⁴
- ✓ Policies and regulations have been developed to ensure the schooling of children from poor families. In 2005 and 2006, the government was obliged to provide free textbooks to financially needy school children and a daily allowance to boarding school pupils. In 2005 and 2006, 37 million pupils from poor families were offered free textbooks and approximately 8 million boarding-school pupils benefited from an increased daily allowance. Therefore, the current policy environment is very favourable for the implementation of a rights-based approach of quality Education for All and conducive to the success of child-centred Child-Friendly Schools as a 'one-stop quality education model'.⁵
- ✓ Inclusive education is being achieved through enhanced policy actions at the local level, particularly in western and central regions. For example, in Tibet, the enrolment rate of Tibetan school-aged children had reached 96.5 per cent by 2006; 72 counties universalized nine-year compulsory education; and more than 90 per cent of primary and secondary schools had set up satellite receiving-televising teaching stations (MOE, 2006).

⁴ National Commission for UNESCO, Report of Mid-Term Assessment of EFA in China, Beijing, 2008.

⁵ CFS Reference Manual, UNICEF, 2009.

1.4 Statistics

Table 1 Basic figures of primary and secondary schools in 2006

| | | Primary schools | Junior secondary schools | Senior secondary schools | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Enrolment (in 10,000) | | 10,711.53 | 5,937.38 | 2,514.50 | 19,163.41 |
| | In rural areas | 6,676.14 | 2,563.66 | 232.09 | 9,471.89 |
| | | 62.3% | 43.2% | 9.2% | 49.4% |
| Schools | | 341,639 | 60,550 | 16,153 | 418,342 |
| | In rural areas | 295,052 | 35,283 | 2,160 | 332,495 |
| | | 86.4% | 58.3% | 13.4% | 79.5% |
| Teachers (in 10,000) | | 558.76 | 346.35 | 138.72 | 1,044 |
| | In rural areas | 352.06 | 149.92 | 12.74 | 514.73 |
| | | 63.0% | 43.3% | 9.2% | 49.3% |

[Source: 2006 Educational Statistical Yearbook of China, MOE, 2007]

Table 2 Education enrolment rate for all levels for 2003-2007

| Year | Pre-schools GER | Primary schools NER | Junior secondary schools GER | Senior secondary schools GER | Higher education GER |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2003 | 37.4 | 98.6 | 92.7 | 43.8 | 17.0 |
| 2004 | 40.8 | 98.9 | 94.1 | 48.1 | 19.0 |
| 2005 | 41.4 | 99.2 | 95.0 | 52.7 | 21.0 |
| 2006 | 42.5 | 99.3 | 97.0 | 59.2 | 22.0 |
| 2007 | 44.6 | 99.5 | 98.0 | 66.0 | 23.0 |

[Source: 2007 National Education Statistic Bulletin MOE, 2008]

2. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

2.1 Overview of the CFS programme

The concept of Child-Friendly Schools was first introduced in China through the UNICEF-assisted Education and Child Development programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in the 2001-2005 cycle. The initial pilot was implemented in the Guangxi Zhuang Minority Autonomous Region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and the Chongqing Municipality, which covers populous rural counties.

Through coordination at the national level by the Teacher Education Department of the MOE, teacher training was an 'entry point' in integrating the child-centred concept into classroom teaching in the pilot regions, promoting the care of and respect for children, improving pupil-teacher relationships, and making schools and learning environments more child-focused on the healthy development of children. The pilot was also intended to explore new models and approaches to quality education in the project counties of the underdeveloped, largely rural western region of China.

In 2001, the CFS pilot was started in 12 rural township primary schools in 7 counties of 3 provinces (Guangxi Zhuang, Inner Mongolia, and Chongqing). CFS assessment instruments and checklists were developed by national experts in consultation with pilot schoolteachers and principals.

In 2003, the CFS approach to child-centred learning was integrated into a national teacher-training programme, which stressed learner-centred, participatory teacher-pupil interaction in classroom teaching and learning. The CFS teacher training manual and CFS principals training manual were printed and used in training activities.

In 2004, the ministry's Teacher Education Department, the UNICEF Office for China, and the Beijing Academy of Education Sciences jointly published a book entitled *Children Say What Makes a Good Teacher*. As an original collection of children's views on teachers, the book reflects "the right of the child to speak their minds and participate in decisions which affect them." It presents fresh perspectives that, for the first time, break away from the traditional teacher-centred mindset in China. It could, therefore, be regarded as "an important milestone along the road to creating the 'child-friendly' schools."⁶

'It is hoped that this book will help them mould a new image of teachers, who love their students with a big heart, expose their students to their great personalities, guide their students with civilized behavior, and influence their students with their modern style.'

Guan Peijun, Former Director-general of Teacher Education Department of MOE

⁶ Christian Voumard, Former Representative of UNICEF Office for China.

By 2005, the CFS approach to child-centred learning had expanded its activities to include an assessment of the effectiveness of classroom teaching-learning processes, and issues related to protecting children from unsafe and unhealthy learning environments were addressed in the pilot province of Chongqing.⁷ At the same time, a gender perspective was integrated into the teacher-principals training package for 12 counties of 5 western, less-developed provinces, including Qinghai, Ningxia, Yunnan, Guangxi and Xinjiang. School-based software was developed to track out-of-school children, especially girls and ethnic minority children. A pilot on children's participation, monitoring their rights in schools as a second CFS 'entry point', was introduced in 11 rural schools in Gansu Province.

However, compared with UNICEF-assisted project coverage in the 2001-2005 cycle, which covered 50 counties of 12 western provinces, 3,700 rural primary schools with more than 3 million children, and 17,000 school teachers, principals and local trainers, while undoubtedly an essential intervention, teacher training alone cannot meet all targets for the CFS pilot.

In 2006, UNICEF and the MOE signed a project cooperation agreement on Child-Friendly Schools and learning quality for the period 2006-2010. It emphasized a comprehensive CFS approach to quality primary education in rural areas of China based on a range of cost-effective interventions initiated during 2001-2005 and UNICEF's global experience and 2006-2009 medium-term strategic plan (MTSP).

The concept of CFS, which was made up of five components, was given advocacy at a national seminar on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Schools (September 2006), which was co-sponsored by the MOE, UNICEF and UNESCO and which oriented CFS implementation towards a focus on CFS standards and indicators development, as well as on research to assess the impact of current Chinese laws and policies on the protection and care of children in education. The concept was also integrated into project interventions implemented respectively by the ministry's Departments of Basic Education, Teacher Education, Physical and Health Education, and Human Resources and Personnel.

Although the project coverage was reduced to 20 counties in 10 western provinces (Chongqing and Shaanxi were excluded), the number of pilot CFS targeted 1,000 rural primary schools in 2006, averaging 50 schools per county. The education authority has increasingly recognized the impact of the CFS approach on school improvement and education policies.

2.1.1 Overall goal of CFS

The overall goal of inclusive and child-friendly schools is, therefore, to get all children in school and encourage their participation and expression in learning, irrespective of background or gender, and to provide quality education for all children that ensures the holistic, well-rounded development of every child.

2.1.2 The central aim of CFS

The central aim of CFS in China is the development of all children and the full flowering of

⁷ UNICEF-MOE, Annual Reports on Implementation of Education Programme, 2004 and 2005.

the creative potential of each pupil. Children at Chinese CFS will learn with motivation; acquire problem-solving, knowledge-application and life/social skills; develop human competencies, respecting teachers, parents, peers and others; build moral character, and psychological as well as physical health; and pursue cooperative learning, ready to help others and working with others in team spirit. In sum, Chinese CFS pupils shall be enabled to develop in a well-rounded way, in ethical, intellectual, physical, aesthetical and life-skills dimensions.

2.1.3 Innovative features of CFS

Innovative features of CFS in China include:

- ✓ High consistency of CFS' general goal with China's basic-education reform goals;
- ✓ Significant relevance of CFS' rights-based, child-centred approaches to China's national policy on promoting educational equality through 'balanced development' and reduction of rural-urban, eastern-western and disparity among schools on the one hand, and improving competency-based 'quality-oriented education' on the other;
- ✓ The Chinese Government's strong support to CFS as a tool to provide quality education and its organizational capacity in coordinating inter-departmental collaboration for project implementation;
- ✓ The adaptation of CFS standards in country-specific contexts, addressing a yawning gap in the definition of school quality, within a rights-based framework in China and with the potential of influencing national policy development on school/education quality;
- ✓ UNICEF's in-depth situation analysis of the changing learning needs of children in China, its ever-readiness for responsive support to policy interventions in key areas, and its high-level professional inputs in project implementation;
- ✓ Integration in the CFS approach China's cultural values of 'harmony', 'well-rounded development' of children, collectivism, caring for each other, and appreciating education as an avenue for upward mobility.

2.1.4 Policy environment of CFS

The project has been implemented in a supportive, enabling policy environment. The revision in 2006 of the Compulsory Education Law (1986) made major breakthroughs and emphasized the inclusion, equality, safety, and health care of children. Under the law, 1) compulsory education was reoriented to 'balanced' or equitable development as a guiding principle, through the reduction of disparities among regions, rural and urban areas, and schools; 2) compulsory education was mandated to take on a new mission of quality-oriented education, with an emphasis on developing students' independent thinking and capacity-building for application practice and innovation; 3) compulsory education was made free of fee charge; 4) the provincial government's responsibility was enhanced regarding compulsory education; 5) the equal rights of all children were protected, especially for children of rural-urban migrants; 6) policy interventions were obligated for equitable redistribution of education resources; and 7) the status of primary-school teachers was improved through a revised ranking system.

2.1.5 National framework of CFS standards

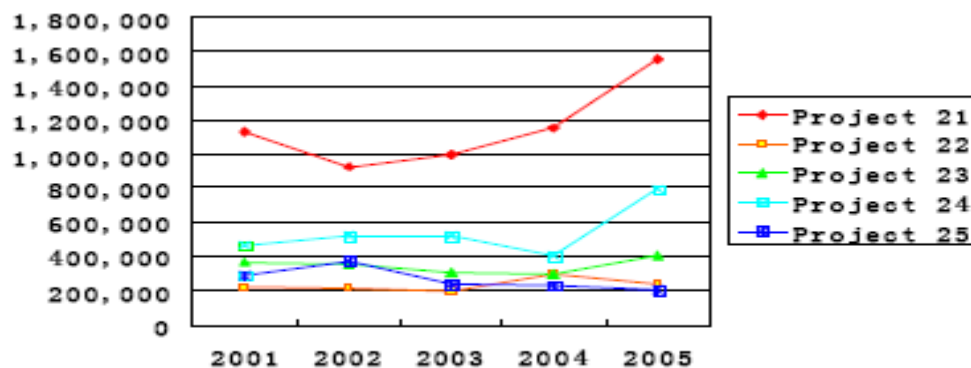
In 2007, a series of baseline studies on respective CFS dimensions were undertaken in preparation for the development of data-supported standards and indicators. A seminar on project work planning and technical meetings with experts were organized to develop and

modify the CFS vision statement, dimensions, domains and indicators (for both process and outcome). As a result of a series of UNICEF/EAPRO/Country Office consultations, a revised national framework of CFS standards has been developed, with visioning, dimensions and core indicators. See details under 4.1.9.

2.2 Funding

Figure 2.

The distribution of expenditures for five projects (Projects 21-25) each year during 2001-2005 (Unit: US\$)



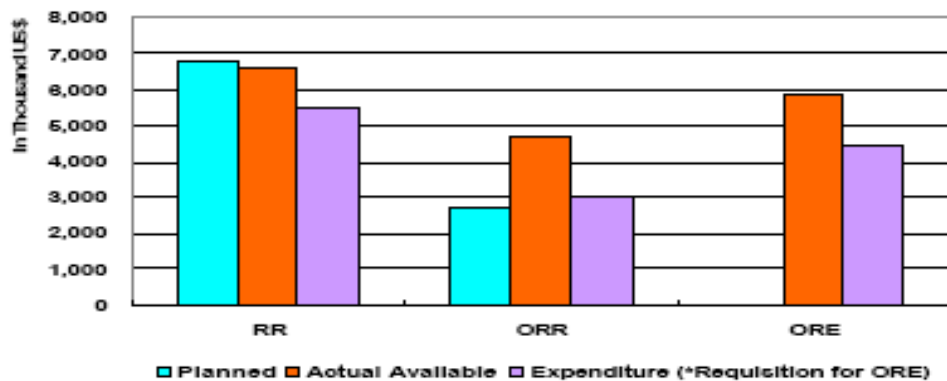
The increase of funds for Basic Education (Project 21), which included the CFS pilot, starting in 2002, was due to funds received for girls' education. Of the total expenditures, 56 per cent were used for capacity-building related to such activities as CFS training at varied levels, overseas study and participation in international seminars.

The allocation for the Child-Friendly Schools and Learning Quality project is to be US\$5,064,000 during the years 2006-2010. Resources used in all four projects (one per year during the 2006-2010 cycle) as of 31 October 2008 are indicated below. Of the total, 43 per cent was for regular resource (RR) expenditure and more than 50 per cent of other resource (OR) expenditures were for CFS. The majority of OR Emergency Funds were used to support schools in earthquake-affected areas in 2008.

Figure 3.

Resources used by the Education and Child Development Programme (as of 31 October 2008)

RR=regular resource; ORR=regularly supplementary resources; ORE=supplementary resources for emergency



2.3 Working structure and programme beneficiaries (boy and girls)

The CFS project, just like the three other projects of the MOE-UNICEF Education Programme, has been implemented under the agencies of the MOE at the national level, and coordinated by different departments in the ministry for implementation at subnational levels through project-related, provincial educational commissions and county education bureaus. The Department of International Cooperation and Exchange has been in charge of the whole programme's coordination. In the ministry, five departments have been involved in the project: the Departments of Basic Education; Teacher Education; Human Resources and Personnel Administration; Physical, Health and Art Education; and the National Center for Educational Technology.

Programme beneficiaries include all school-aged children, both boys and girls, and especially those affected by rural-urban migration, of ethnic minorities, and those out of school in the economically backward western region of China. Specifically, the CFS project will have directly benefited 350,000 rural children and 20,000 schoolteachers by the end of 2008, including 590 remote and small-sized rural primary schools (usually catering to the primary grades one through three) and 237 ethnic minority schools.⁸ Since 2006, UNICEF has provided 1,960 sports kits, 1,144 library kits and 957 teaching kits to rural child-friendly schools. Among the direct beneficiaries, 50 percent have been girls.



Indirectly, the learner-centred CFS approach has benefited many more schoolchildren and teachers through the replication of similar

⁸ UNICEF China Office: 2008 Country Office Annual Report.

interventions to different degrees by national and local counterparts in non-pilot provinces and counties. It has helped in the assessment of teaching-learning effectiveness, school safety, hygienic conditions, teacher quality and school-based participatory management.

Girls

According to an MOE baseline survey of girls' education in China (2003), in 2000, 6.42 million girls had not been to school, a figure that was 2.5 times higher than that of boys. The findings of a gender-disaggregated survey from 2005 of out-of-school children indicate that three factors accounted for the non-enrolment of girls: (a) unaffordable school fees (43 per cent), (b) the need to help parents in the field (31.3 per cent), and (c) parents' view on schooling being useless (18.8 per cent).

According to education statistics (2001), the national, average primary-school enrolment rate for 6- to 12-year-old girls was 0.04 per cent lower than that of boys. In the CFS project provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, Ningxia and Sichuan, the enrolment-rate disparity between girls and boys was much greater, reaching up to 3.8 per cent in some areas. This gender disparity was even higher at the lower secondary level: In 2007, the net primary enrolment rate was slightly higher for girls than boys, at 99.52 per cent and 99.46 per cent, respectively. However, completion rates were slightly higher for boys, at 99.59 per cent, compared with 99.28 per cent for girls.

Children of ethnic minorities

The realization of equal rights for children of ethnic minorities' to basic education is demanding policy interventions in at least two areas: inclusion of all school-aged children and provision of bilingual education. Due to a shortage of teachers in the mother tongues of ethnic minorities and to a lack of bilingual textbooks, problems have remained unsolved. Since 2007, UNICEF – together with the Teacher Education Department – has engaged in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate approach to participatory bilingual teaching and learning in eight ethnic minority counties in five western provinces.

The teacher training manual of CFS has been translated into the minority languages of Tibetan, Mongolian, Uigur and Kazakh, paving the way for piloting CFS in 237 ethnic minority schools with 5,600 ethnic minority teachers and 70,000 ethnic minority children.



Children at boarding schools, and remote and incomplete primary schools

In universalizing nine-year compulsory education in China, one policy measure taken was to build boarding schools for children in remote rural and mountainous areas and from financially needy families. By 2007, more than 7.5 million primary pupils have been enrolled in boarding schools, accounting for 7.2 per cent of total enrolment in primary education. For rural schools in the western region, the rate was 11.6 per cent, and in the CFS project provinces of Inner Mongolia, Qinghai, Tibet and Yunnan, the percentage was above 20 per cent.

While included in primary schools, these children have special safety, health and protection needs, and life-skills-based education is of particular importance to the large number of young boarding-school children. At the same time, about 5 million young children are studying in 80,000 remote and incomplete primary schools, accounting for 5 per cent of total primary enrolment in 2007. School quality is very poor at such schools in terms of teaching facilities and teaching quality.

As part of the work structures, teams of experts have been set up at national, provincial and county levels for advisory services to both governments and schools.

UNICEF and the MOE have also been developing technical and other types of coordination and cooperation in specific areas with other international partners, especially UNESCO, and also through the UN Basic Education-Human Resource Development Theme Group, to forge linkage with development agencies.

3. PROCESS

3.1 Building on existing structures for sustainability

The expansion of the CFS project in China has been built on existing structures for sustainability. In the first place, new project counties were selected on the basis of commitment and capacity to implement CFS. Secondly, capacity building was planned as a start-up activity for new pilot counties and schools, through training conducted by project officers and experts from existing pilot counties/schools. Thirdly, a partnership approach is always used to promote the exchange of experiences among new and existing CFS pilot schools and counties, through the coordination of provincial and ministerial project officers. Fourthly, within the existing institutional framework, an innovative networking of CFS schools in rural and urban areas has been developed to ensure sustainability by sharing online and offline educational resources. For example, two rural counties in Yunnan Province, Yulong County in Lijiang Prefecture and Yong-ping County in Dali Prefecture, joined hands with urban-clustered, child-friendly schools in the Wuhua District in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan Province.

3.2 Collaboration at government levels

The Chinese Government at the national, provincial and county levels has been cooperating closely with UNICEF in the project planning, implementation, evaluation and

scaling-up of CFS in the country.

At the national level, coordinated by the MOE Department of International Cooperation and Exchange, interdepartmental cooperation has been strengthened to ensure not only the effective implementation of CFS, but also the sharing of resources, mutual learning and conceptual complementation within the overall MOE-led, national educational development and reform programme. Focal points at each MOE department act as key links, as are contact persons between UNICEF China and provincial and county-level CFS project officers. Government offices also play key roles in building expert teams at different levels, and have based their decisions and actions largely on research findings and advice from the experts and teachers, as well as from the input of pilot-school principals.

3.3 Partner roles

Major governmental partners in the CFS project have included five MOE departments and the Beijing Teaching Aids Center. Their main roles focus on the overall planning, policy-making, distribution of funding resources, and monitoring and assessment of implementation.

National partners from other governmental sectors, and universities and research institutes have included the National Working Committee for Children and Women, Beijing Normal University, East China Normal Universities and the China National Institute of Educational Research. They concentrate on providing intersectoral policy support and professional advice through expert services.

Partners from international bilateral and multilateral organizations have included SIDA, Sweden; DIFD, UK; UNESCO, (especially its Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education); and the World Bank. UNESCO has contributed to the development of the CFS conceptual and evaluative framework based on inclusiveness.

Alliance among relevant UN agencies, which have included related UN Theme Groups, has also played a positive role in policy orientation and cooperative programme/project activities.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Project outputs/outcomes (planned and accomplished as of December 2008)

As a result of concerted efforts by all stakeholders, the CFS project in China has achieved major outputs and outcomes:

4.1.1 CFS' significant relevance to and consistency with China's education policies and basic education curriculum reforms are fully recognized by China's education authority, as evidenced by the Vice Minister of Education Chen Xiao-Ya's addresses at the China-UNICEF National Seminar on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Schools and at many

other occasions.

4.1.2 Baseline surveys and studies conducted on inclusion, gender, safety, interactive teaching, life skills-based education, school management, teacher support systems, and CFS through distance education. The study findings were not only instrumental in improving project design, but useful for the effective operation of MOE counterparts. They will also have a far-reaching impact on policy-making regarding basic education in China.

4.1.3 CFS contributions made to improved education laws and policies

For the realization of children's rights to protection and development through reduced education disparity and increased education equality and improved education quality, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) advocated at national and local school levels. The principles and spirit of the UNCRC were also integrated in the revised Compulsory Education Law. Policy interventions made regarding the equal educational rights of children from disadvantaged groups were made with related policy guidelines, circulars and other policy documents issued by the MOE and the State Council addressing respective issues and challenges.

4.1.4 CFS pilot schools made more inclusive and safe The CFS pilot schools and counties were made more inclusive, even in counties that are mountainous, have an ethnic minority population, or are poverty-stricken, such as Yulong and Yongping Counties in the Yunnan Province, Cangxi County in the Sichuan Province, and Sanjiang County in the Guangxi Autonomous Region. CFS pilot schools have increased their net enrolment rates to 100 per cent, without dropouts for boys or girls, and with awareness for equal care and respect inculcated in both teachers and students. He Shun, the boy in middle, enjoyed joyful learning every day because his teacher, Yang, and classmates always treated him as an equal and with respect (Bajiang Primary School, Sanjiang County, Guangxi).



4.1.5 CFS made gender mainstreamed The CFS project was assessed as being one of the best examples of gender mainstreaming in project interventions through UNICEF-assisted country programmes by an external assessment conducted by China Agriculture University (Wang Libin; Yu Lerong) in August 2008. Findings quoted below illustrate strategies the CFS project applied and lessons learned.

Strategies Used

- (1) Of the five dimensions on CFS, there is an explicit dimension on gender-sensitivities.
- (2) The criteria to measure other 3 of 4 dimensions of CFS, also addressed the gender-sensitive issues, such as: do boys and girls feel confident and comfortable to participate fully (dimension 1: inclusive of all children), do monitoring mechanisms exist to track school attendance especially for girls (dimension 2: academically effective), and do schools have safe hygiene and sanitation facilities for girls and boys separately (dimension 3: healthy, safe and protective environment).
- (3) The baseline survey surveyed each target group (students, teachers, head teachers, parents) on their gender awareness and sensitivities to identify the potential gaps in gender equality.
- (4) Since the official school enrolment data in basic education can not indicate the evident gender inequality, the project invited the gender expert to present the facts and evidences and explain how to analyze the data in-depth and identify the gender gap to the officials of MOE; the officials were very impressed by the presentation.
- (5) The project brings the gender experts to disseminate their related research in the annual project evaluation meetings, project inception meetings to influence the officials and education workers.
- (6) Developed the brochures in CFS with the gender-sensitive contents.
- (7) Two gender-based CFS training modules for head teachers and teachers respectively, developed in 2006, were acknowledged for inclusion in the nation-wide teacher training programme by the Department of Teacher Education of MOE.
- (8) Developed the Framework and Standard for CFS, with gender-sensitive process indicators and outcome indicators, and is promoting this guideline as the national guideline for School Management in the West of China.
- (9) Incorporated a variety of departments in the Ministry of Education (Department of Basic Education, Department of Teacher Education, and Department of Personnel) in the project to enhance the scale up of the successful experiences in the pilots.

Lessons Learned

- (1) Provide the convincing data and evidences to identify the gender gap can make the future work easier, and then the national partners will be more willing to address this issue.
- (2) Provide good strategies and tools to help the partners solve the problems. In some areas, there is a lack of female school teachers, and then the project helped with the training of the female school teachers.
- (3) Always think how to make the project duplicated under China's context and the government capacities.
- (4) Always try to make policy impacts, and scale up the pilot outcomes as the nationally adopted practices.

4.1.6 Capacity of schools, teachers, local community and government offices enhanced to plan, implement and monitor interventions of the project for the realization of children's rights.

- ✓ The capacity of government at all levels to provide quality basic services was enhanced through technical assistance and child-friendly approaches, as was evident during the supervision of CFS pilots in the Yunnan Province. Within a short period of

time, provincial education officials developed an institutionalized, intersectional leadership group for the overall planning and coordination of CFS project implementation. This involved not only units in the education bureau, but also developing a partnership with education authorities at the county and district levels, as well as with teachers and professional organizations.

- ✓ The capacity of schools, teachers and principals to assess and analyse the situation of children has been improved, as evidenced by the baseline studies they conducted during CFS project implementation. Most CFS pilot schoolteachers are enabled to facilitate learner participation and interactive teaching in classrooms.
- ✓ CFS pilot schools have been engaged in the nationwide Rural School Modern Distance Education Programme, which has been promoting the use of distance education resources in classroom teaching and offers large-scale, low-cost, highly efficient teacher training. The capacity of CFS teachers improved in facilitating inquiry-based and collaborative learning through use of Information Communications Technology.

4.1.7 School-family-community partnerships forged The Chinese CFS dimension on 'Participation and Harmony' actually implies an 'outside-school partnership' among the school, family and community, as well as a 'within-school partnership' among the pupils, teachers and principal.

As a result of project implementation, all CFS pilot schools are reported to have been more open and participatory in community development, sharing educational resources with local people and making school a learning community. Families are becoming more involved in school decision-making, not only through occasional parents' meetings but also through 'child-friendly parents' schools'. In addition, the community has been more willing to provide CFS pilot schools with greater financial, material and human resources.

4.1.8 Children's participation has been facilitated in the teaching-learning process and decision-making, and the well-rounded development of children has been promoted at CFS pilot schools at a much higher level than in non-pilot schools and communities.

Child participation interventions were first introduced as a pilot in 11 rural primary schools of the Tianzhu County of Gansu Province in 2005, when 35 students and 45 teachers and principals underwent a participatory and multi-step training programme on child rights. The pilot focused on working directly with children, orienting them on child rights; field observation to monitor implementation of the activities; and the development of an action plan with teachers to improve the status of child rights in their schools.



The initial set of activities evoked a strong interest among children, teachers and local education officials, especially on issues relating to safety, sports facilities, library books, equal treatment and corporal punishment in schools. This resulted in a high demand for a replication of the interventions in other schools. In 2006-2007, the intervention of children's participation extended to 97 rural primary schools in 8 counties of Guangxi, Guizhou, Gansu and Yunnan, covering 351 adults (teachers, principals and parents) and 365 children, of whom 50 per cent were girls and more than 50 per cent were from the Zhuang, Dong, Miao and Bu-yi ethnic minority groups.

In all participating schools, children were encouraged to express their views on CFS standards for good teachers, good principals and good schools through drawings, compositions, posters and bulletin boards. Pupils were also encouraged to participate in classroom teaching and decision-making concerning their interests. They used to be excluded from classroom and school management, and were not supposed to react to teachers. Some pupils would write to the principal with suggestions on how school should be improved. The issues frequently pointed out by children include:

- ✓ Sanitation in schools
- ✓ Safety of school playgrounds and adequacy of sports facilities
- ✓ Availability of potable water in schools
- ✓ Availability of library books in schools
- ✓ Teachers' social accessibility and discrimination among boys and girls
- ✓ Incidence of corporal punishments, and harsh penalties for mistakes



The pupil-teacher relationship was made more equal and democratic, with the teacher becoming more caring and the pupil seeing the teacher as a friend and learning coach. CFS pupils have developed greater self-confidence and have more smiles on their faces than many of their peers in urban schools. As concluded in Yunnan province: "After training, both children and adults understood child rights and recognized the importance of mutual respect; after training, both children and adults were more sensitive to issues related to harsh penalties and corporal punishment in families or by teachers, and started considering how to phase them out; and after training, children became self-confident and sensitive to equal rights between boys and girls, and they appreciated what they learned from the training and would like to know more about child rights."

At a much higher level, children's participation has been a component of the National CFS Standards of China. As those standards say, "By adopting child perspectives in school management and through collaboration between family, school and community, children's participation in and out of schools is to be promoted. The inter-personal relationship and a positive atmosphere is to be created to manifest mutual respect, understanding and support so as to ensure the realization of child rights and building up of a joyful, relaxed and harmonious living and learning environment for children. Dimension IV is therefore consisted of four domains: a) channels and methods of child participation; b) school

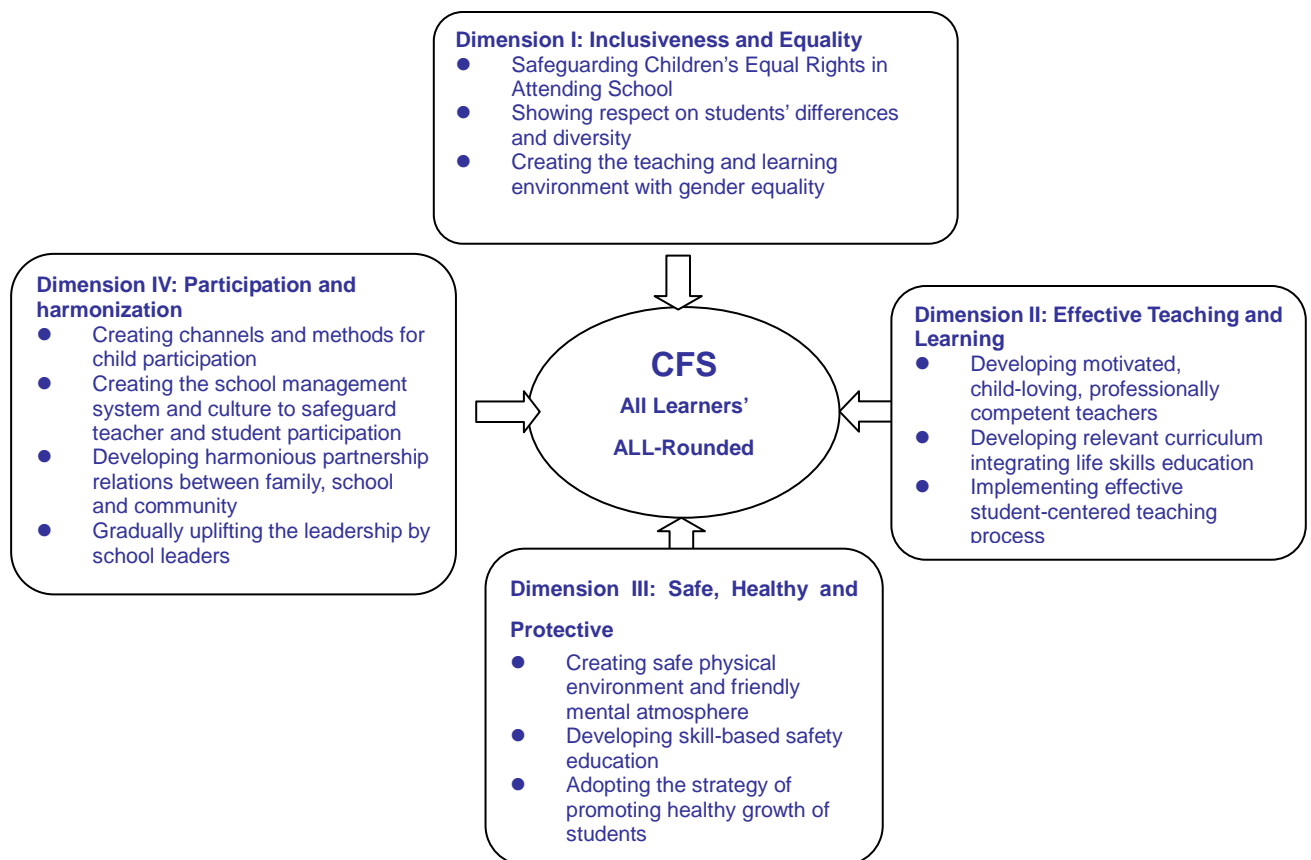
management systems and cultural atmosphere to safeguard teacher and student participation; c) harmonious relations between family, school and communities; and d) leadership of school principal.”

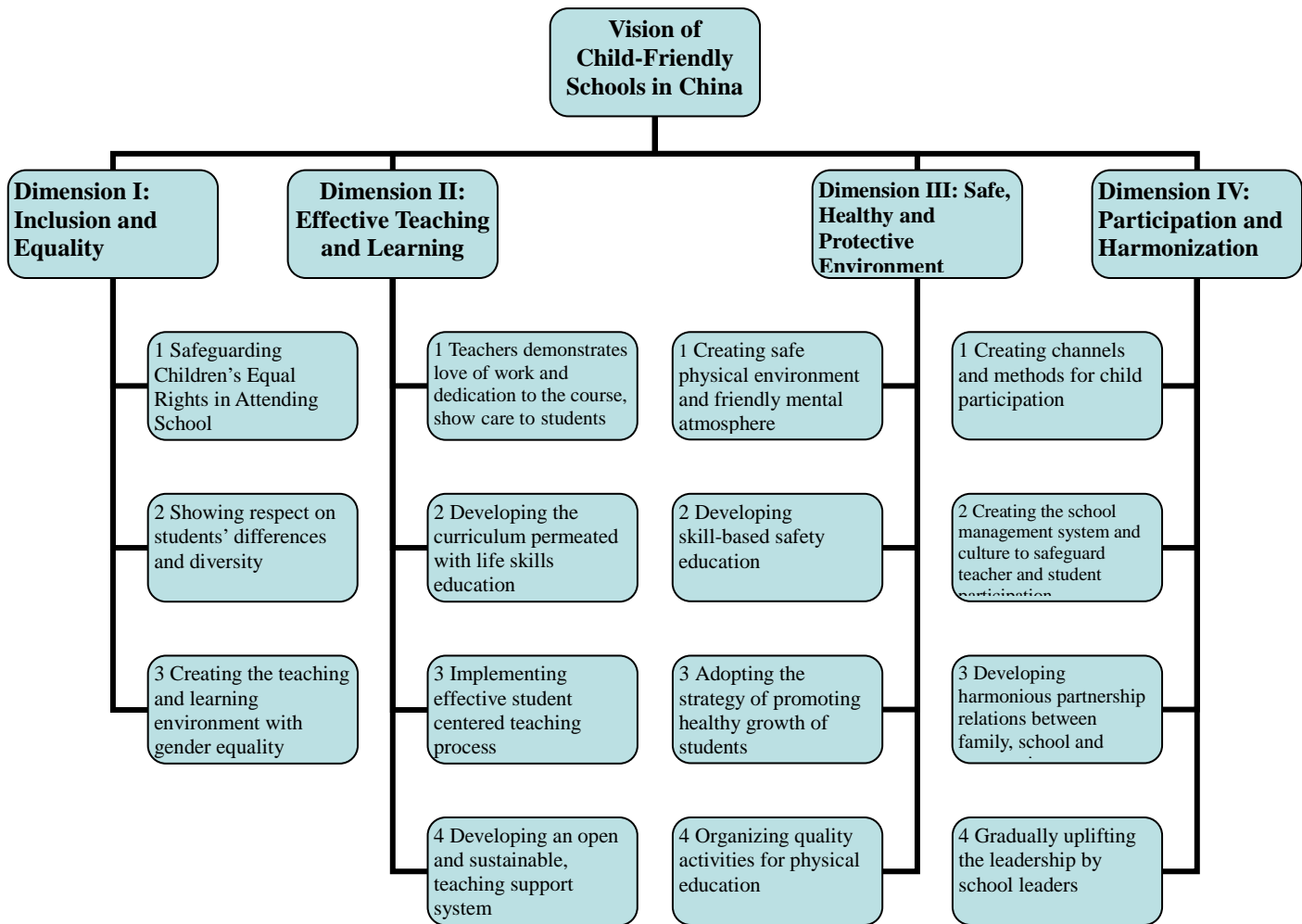
4.1.9 The development of a national framework of CFS dimensions and standards

The framework, based on a general consensus by key stakeholders, is presented in the graph below.

Vision of Child-Friendly Schools in China

In light of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and of China’s national education policy, Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in China aim to develop a school-level quality education model centred on the development of learners and based on children’s rights. CFS in China ensures **inclusive** enrolment and **equal** treatment of all school-aged children, in **safe, healthy and protective** environments, promotes learners’ actual acquisition of relevant knowledge, capacities and attitudes through relevant life skills-integrated curriculum and **effective teaching**, and strives for democratic **participation** of all pupils, teachers, the family and the local society, making the school a **harmonious** learning community.





4.2 Long-term effects

The achievement of expected results and the scaling-up of the CFS project will have long-term effects.

The gradual but fundamental change towards a child-centred approach in education has broken away from an age-long tradition, in which the teacher had the monopoly in educational processes and children had no rights to participate. The CFS concept, once it becomes widely recognized and implemented in teaching practices, will lead to manifold changes in education policies, curricula, pedagogy and assessments of learning achievement.

The CFS concept has been redefining major dimensions and standards of quality-oriented education in China because it influences the reformulation of strategies and core indicators for evaluating educational outcomes.

The CFS standards for effective teaching will contribute to the development and use of teacher professional standards in China, as well as continue to influence models of teachers' professional learning and development. The effective implementation of the CFS

dimension on safety, health and the protection of children and its standards in a most populous county imply that millions more children could benefit from thousands of child-friendly schools, and grow up in environments that protect them from accidents, natural disasters and other unsafe, unhealthy and non-protective practices.

“While many functions, including teaching and learning, can be performed outside the formal school system, we must not lose sight of the totality of what school could offer in terms of being a ‘one-stop’ socializing and life skills development community.”⁹ (Cream Wright) The CFS project, by making ‘participation and harmony’ a major dimension, reflects the value of school as ‘a holistic, one-stop community for education’, and materializes the fundamental concept that schools have a culture and an ethos, as well as a mission and a curriculum. Therefore, it is safe to say that the long-term effect of the CFS approach to quality education in China is not only educational but social as well.

Although the CFS project’s long-term effects can only be measured on the basis of more systematic longitudinal data on school completion rates, child participation rates and children’s achievement levels, which are not all available, the CFS project results and outcomes do offer evidence of the relevance of the CFS model for replication in non-project areas, and of its potential for long-term quality improvement and policy impacts at the national level.

For one thing, the CFS project results indicate that “quality and equity are inextricably linked” (UNESCO, 2005) and inclusive education for equal access by all children could be integrated or combined with quality education aimed at the well-rounded development of children. This complies with the central principle embodied in China’s revised Compulsory Education Law (2006) that all children should have equal access to basic compulsory education that is of a good quality. For a long time, the ‘universalization’ of education for equal access by all used to be implemented separately from ‘quality-oriented education’. The CFS model of linking equity to quality will have far-reaching policy implications for the best education for all children.

Secondly, the CFS’ achievement in various dimensions in largely poor schools proves that many essential elements of quality education don’t have to depend on the ‘supply’ end or substantial financial inputs; rather, quality can be improved by motivating ‘demands’ for enabling learning environments, better interactive teaching, and a more harmonious teacher-pupil relationship to better facilitate effective learning.

Thirdly, as a one-stop model of quality education, the CFS project results have proven that the rights-based child-centred ‘basic minimum standards’ of quality education could all be met by schools in poor, rural settings, and even by children in disadvantaged groups. Therefore, the success of all CFS pilot schools provides the most convincing evidence that ‘quality education for all’ is feasible and that the ‘best education’ should and could be made accessible to all, not to a select few.

⁹ M. Skilbech, quoted from Cream Wright, “Education, Technology and Development”, London: Commonwealth of Learning, 2000.

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

CFS project monitoring includes mid-year and annual reviews undertaken by the MOE and UNICEF, which involve project officers at all levels. UNICEF project officers have carried out frequent field visits in support of project implementation and monitoring. The UNICEF Global Chief of Education and Regional Education Advisor at the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) have also made missions to project sites to provide technical advice.

Reports at different levels of project implementation are required submissions to review evidence-based results and identify gaps for improved performance.

At the project level, all inputs and outputs are closely related to the improvement of child access to quality basic education, and they can be easily measured and examined. For example, the number of teachers being able to attend training (input) and the number of teachers already trained (output) could be measured quantitatively. It has been difficult, however, to monitor the UNICEF/CFS contribution to UNDAF objectively, and especially the data on enrolment rates and completion rates by sex or age in project areas, because many other factors are at work in local settings.

A series of joint field monitoring trips were conducted by UNICEF and national and subnational counterparts under the CFS project. On the basis of information collected from the trips, decentralized plans of action to improve teaching and learning environments for children living in remote and mountainous areas were supported.

In addition, the media visited pilot schools and have reported on the best practices of child-friendly and harmonious schools in rural China in 2006 and 2008.

4.4 Changing attitudes

Changes in attitude are among the important outcomes of CFS project implementation in China, as the change of the adult/teacher-centred mindset, and deeply rooted stereotypical views of education, are significant but difficult. Some examples of the changes resulting from the CFS approach include:

4.4.1 Attitude towards children at school and home

In traditional Chinese school culture, the child is not supposed to challenge the authority of the teacher. At home, the child had to be obedient to the parents; at school, children are taught to show respect and discipline by sitting still with their hands behind their backs. Their learning is evaluated in terms of testing scores. Some parents support teachers in administering corporal punishment, regarding it as being in the best interest of the child. With the adoption of CFS, children are placed in the centre as equal partners in the educational process. For the first time, teachers, parents and government officers come to know about 'the rights of the child' and they do gradually change their attitudes and 'make friends' with children. Furthermore, teachers are increasingly aware that they should treat all children equally without any discrimination on grounds of sex, family status, minority status, learning ability or achievement levels

- ✓ *A school principal from Longlin County, Guangxi Province said that, “I understood further my duty as a school administrator, which is very significant for children’s rights and development. In the past, I used to think about how to be accountable for my supervisor and kept my students out of my mind. Now, I promise to put my students at the top of my agenda, listening to them, caring for them and ensuring the school serves them.”*
- ✓ *“When she came back, my once-shy little girl talked to me a lot,” said Wang Shuxian, the mother of Wang Ling, who attended the initial pilot of children’s participation training in Tianzhu County of Gansu in 2005. “She asked me not to read her diary anymore, because she has the right to privacy. She told me not to always favour her younger brother because they are equal.” The 33-year-old farmer stood outside their three-room brick bungalow in Shi-men Town, Tianzhu County of Gansu, watching Wang Ling at play in the backyard. “I don’t really understand what children’s rights are, but my daughter’s words sound right. Anyway, it’s good to see her smiling face.” (Rong Jiao Jiao, ‘Workshop Plants Seeds to Empower Children’, China Daily, 3 April 2006)*

4.4.2 Gender sensitivity

Most teachers and government offices would think gender was no longer a problem in China. Through CFS piloting, many of them have come to recognize that gender disparities in poor rural areas and of ethnic minorities are still persistent, and that stereotypes and gender biases remain in the content of curricula. They also have had better conceptualization of ‘gender parity’ and ‘gender equality’ and act proactively to include a gender perspective in inclusive education for all. *“Since the official school enrolment data in basic education can not indicate the evident gender inequality, the project invited the gender expert to present the facts and evidences and explain how to analyze the data in-depth and identify the gender gap to the officials of MOE; the officials were very impressed by the presentation.” (Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in UNICEF China Country Programme, UNICEF, August 2008)*

4.5 Policy and legislation changes

The UNICEF-China programme on Cooperation in Education and Child Development, which includes the CFS project in previous and current cycles, has contributed to positive changes in legislatures and policies concerning basic education in China. Some of the major changes are the following:

- ✓ UNICEF’s child-centred approach to competency-based curricula contributed to the evolvement of the basic education curriculum reform, implemented nationwide since 2001. This changed the discipline-based, outdated school curriculum, which was mostly irrelevant regarding social and personal development.
- ✓ UNICEF-China, through its CFS and other education projects, promoted the policy action on ‘free textbooks’ for children of disadvantaged groups, especially of ethnic minorities and poor families, and girls in western rural areas. In 2005 and 2006, the Chinese Government provided free textbooks to 37 million financially needy pupils and waived textbook fees per person of 210 yuan and 320 yuan, respectively, for all primary and lower-secondary schoolchildren.
- ✓ Based on its experiences implementing the Compulsory Education Law since 1986, China took a major legislative action on the revision of the law in 2006. Through CFS and other projects in the Education and Child Development programme in

cooperation with China, UNICEF has influenced and contributed to the revision of the Compulsory Education Law. The revision made major breakthroughs in the following: a) reorienting compulsory education to 'balanced development', namely, reducing rural-urban and west-east regional education disparities, which is also a UNICEF-China programme objective; b) integrating competence-based educational quality into equality of compulsory education; c) making compulsory education free; d) ensuring equal rights of all children, especially those of rural-urban migrants, thus assuring a favourable policy environment for children of migrants and other disadvantaged children; e) making policy interventions in prohibiting differentiation of key-point and non-key-point and ability-based groupings within school to ensure the equitable distribution of funds and resources; and f) establishing a mechanism to ensure increased expenditures for compulsory education.

- ✓ Child-friendly rights-based justice systems developed and promoted through the MOE as a result of feedback from heads of school and teachers; existing child-friendly laws, including China's laws for the protection of juveniles; and the more effective implementation of gender-appropriate investigations and court procedures.
- ✓ UNICEF-China initiated the first study on the education of children of migrants in the late 1990s and incorporated the issue in the planning and implementation of UNICEF-assisted projects during 2001-2005; in 2005, UNICEF-MOE initiated a study on 'left-behind' children, and the results helped MOE deal with issues related to those children in a more comprehensive approach.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Operational challenges in leadership roles

As the rights-based perspective that is integral to CFS standards has to be integrated and mainstreamed into policy-making, implementation, monitoring and assessment among stakeholders at all levels, MOE will promote greater balance between the macro, top-down, duty-bearer-dominated approach and participatory, rights-holders-based planning and policy implementation.

Visionary leadership is the key to the successful development, implementation and innovative adaptation of the CFS model to locally specific contexts. For that purpose, the leadership should have an in-depth understanding of key factors determining the quality of education and measurable standards for good schools and good teachers.

The leadership should also develop the capacity to assess children's learning needs and achievements in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Finally, the leadership should have improved professional competencies in team building and results-based management. Leadership roles should also be based on broad international perspectives, which are linked to national policies and well-informed of local innovations and best practices. These will be at the core of operational challenges for education programmes as well as CFS project leaders in China.

5.2 Modifications made to CFS since its inception

In view of country-specific contexts, some minor modifications have been made to the CFS model during its implementation.

The CFS initiative was renamed by the MOE as 'Child Friendly and Harmonious Schools' to reflect the government's concern for safe schools and the 'well-rounded development' of children. The five agreed-upon dimensions were reduced to four, because 'gender sensitivity' was incorporated into the first dimension of 'inclusiveness and equality' since gender is considered an issue cross-cutting some other dimensions. 'Quality learner' (motivated, healthy, self-confident, well-achieving, etc.) is no longer a domain in the dimension of 'effective teaching and learning'; instead, the learner and his/her well-rounded development are placed at the centre of the CFS framework, since child-centred human development is the very aim of child-friendly schools.

In addition, 'life skill' is integrated into the CFS framework and made a cross-cutting issue, with 'life skill-based curriculum' added as a 'domain' in the dimension of 'effective teaching'. This is done to give higher priority to what and how schools should teach the pupils. In the domain of 'motivated and professionally competent teachers' under the dimension of 'effective teaching', it is essential to present a standards-based teacher profile, as China urgently needs to develop professional teacher standards to improve teacher quality.

School sanitation, emergency preparedness, sports and moral education became new components of the UNICEF-China Education and Child Development Programme 2006-2010, which have complemented the CFS strategy. This was necessary in view of problems in these areas and in response to MOE policy circulars concerning the provision of drinkable water, improvement in school sanitation, protection of children from traffic accidents and other injuries, diseases, physical development through sports, and affective/emotional development through education based on life skills.

Operational research and case studies have been planned and undertaken in the current programme cycle to generate evidence of improving policies at the national level and demonstrating results at the local level.

5.3 Addressing the challenge of teacher quality and other issues

5.3.1 Teacher quality

The teacher is a key determining factor in improving quality in education. In CFS, 'teacher quality' goes beyond the required level of educational attainment and knowledge of the subject matter, and includes professional and ethical values in respecting, loving and protecting children, as well as covers pedagogical skills to enable learner participation and learning with a good quality. This continues to be the greatest challenge in implementing the CFS approach.

Nationally, the percentage of teachers having achieved a qualifying level of education attainment for rural primary and lower secondary schools rose in 2006 to 98.4 per cent and 94.8 per cent, respectively. The minimum attainment level required, however, was

actually low, with an upper-secondary education for primary teachers and a two-year college education for lower secondary schools. Only 53.6 per cent of primary schoolteachers have a two-year college education, and only 30 per cent in lower secondary schools have a four-year bachelor's education (MOE, 2008). For CFS schools in poor rural areas, the average education levels attained by teachers are even lower.

5.3.2 Policy gap

There are also challenges relating to policy gaps. A top-down approach is adopted in the development of professional teacher standards. While teachers' rights and interests have been given priority, accountability for teacher performance and assessment is weak. Those who provide training are not responsible to assess its impact. Teacher assessment is not based on performance. Local CFS project offices seemed content with the number of teachers trained annually, rather than with the actual outcomes of the training.

Nationally, 240,000 nine-year, compulsory education teachers have not yet reached the required level of educational attainment and, meanwhile, primary schools/teaching sites (incomplete primary schools) in remote rural areas have to depend on 450,000 'substitute teachers' who are even less qualified. (Wang, D., 2007).

5.3.3 Life-skills education

The new school curriculum reform has reoriented basic education to a child-centred approach and pupils have benefited from more relevant educational content and more interactive teaching-learning activities. However, 'life skills' is given different names in China and its education has not yet been well-integrated in the curriculum offerings. The interpretation of 'life skills' by education policy-makers also differs much from international practices.

The remaining challenge to address in this regard is two-fold: a) to facilitate a broader understanding of 'life skills education' to go beyond 'safety awareness and self-care in daily life' and include psychosocial and interpersonal/communication skills, etc., which are much neglected in traditional Chinese school curricula; and b) to provide 'life skills education' especially to 7.04 million children in rural boarding schools. While the boarding schools have ensured the inclusive enrolment of all school-aged children, especially girls in remote rural areas, 'life-skills education' and its curriculum development remains a challenge.

5.4 The challenge of organizational collaboration

Further improvement needs be made in two areas of organization collaboration. One is horizontal, inter-departmental, inter-project coordination. Due to the division of responsibilities by departments and divisions at the MOE and provincial education commissions, an organizational unit in the government tends to focus on activities in areas of its 'administrative responsibilities'. Since CFS is an essentially holistic approach to child-centred educational quality, whose success depends very much on integration of cross-cutting themes and cooperation of various departments/sections, the division of organizational responsibilities would lead to a repetition of project activities at the school level, and to difficulty in applying the holistic approach.

Another problem area is vertical coordination and cooperation between central and local and school project offices. Due to the Chinese tradition of centralized planning and decision-making, a top-down approach tends to be more favoured, although responsibility for the administration of primary and secondary education has been decentralized since mid-1980. Accordingly, major decision-making on CFS planning, implementation and evaluation has largely taken place at the central level.

This has been useful in terms of secured support from the central authority to CFS concept and the overall policy/strategy development for nation-wide replication of the CFS approach. However, CFS is meant to be a model of quality education at the school level – not only at the system level – and diversified innovations in applying the CFS approach have occurred at the local and school levels. Therefore, the further the CFS project progresses toward its goals, the more the bottom-up approach and grass-root initiatives should be supported, and the more focus should be placed on CFS local stakeholders for the best interest of children and their well-rounded development.

5.5 Capacity-gap analysis

The capacity gap exists mainly at two levels: policy-level intervention by government decision makers and local-level implementation by principals and schoolteachers at the school level. For the former, due to a heavy administrative workload, CFS project officers in the government may be only partially engaged in building capacity to analyse children's learning needs and to better monitor policy implementation for child development through CFS approaches. For the latter group, despite an improved awareness of the CFS concept and changing attitudes towards children, the capacity of most teachers to adopt the CFS approach in classrooms and through extra-curricular activities seems inadequate due to limited opportunities for training and limited expertise in pedagogy.

5.6 The need for continuous advocacy

UNICEF's incorporation of UNESCO's perspective of inclusive education into the CFS framework has been very useful to broaden and advocate the CFS concept, as well as to strengthen the CFS link to Education for All (EFA) goals.

The significance and relevance of the CFS project lie partly in model building. The 1,665 CFS schools account for only a small part of the total 341,639 primary schools in China. For both effective implementation of the CFS project and replication of the model for scaling up, advocacy is the most-needed strategy. In this regard, the Chinese Government, UNICEF offices, and the media have jointly done good work in advocating CFS concepts and outcomes and their relevance to China's basic education.

However, the coverage has not been very widespread, the reporting on evidence-based impacts not frequent, the scale of dissemination limited, and policy statements by MOE ministers on support to replication of CFS model have only been occasional. Continued advocacy is therefore needed to scale up relevant CFS policy interventions and best

practices at national and local levels.

5.7 Lessons learned from the implementation process

5.7.1 Goal-setting in light of national development context is a crucial factor in successful project implementation and replication

Project goals need be broadened, further elaborated and closely linked to the national priority regarding educational development, consistent with national educational policies. A series of policy-relevant actions should be taken.

- ✓ The CFS project needs to develop policy guidelines and undertake gap analysis in the implementation of established national policies.
- ✓ It should implement innovative approaches through demonstrative pilots to establish best practices and achieve measurable results.
- ✓ It should monitor and test the feasibility of innovative approaches, to produce results that will provide replicable models for national scaling up.

5.7.2 Strategy reformulation

As a whole, UNICEF's Education and Child Development Programme has used 'a three-pronged strategic approach' to achieve results.¹⁰ It has focused on research for development of its own strategies that have proved effective.

- ✓ **Model building.** As elaborated above, CFS is to be developed as a "one-stop model" of quality education, incorporating elements of inclusiveness, equality, child-centredness, gender sensitivity, participation, effective teaching, and school-family-community partnership.
- ✓ **Standards setting.** Research findings point to many factors affecting the quality of education, and many elements constitute a quality school. Quality education needs quality standards for teachers, learners, principals and schools. The national framework of CFS standards and core indicators will be a most useful instrument in achieving and evaluating measurable programme results and in scaling up the best practices of child-centred quality education as a national policy goal.
- ✓ **Capacity building.** This has been a prime strategy for upgrading technical inputs and managing innovations linked to the CFS approach. The capacity of individual stakeholders and partners holds the key to effective implementation of the project. For each pilot county, the project was implemented and evaluated through various training workshops at national, provincial, county and school levels.
- ✓ **Inter-departmental and multi-sectoral coordination.** In its implementation, the CFS project concerns five departments at the ministerial and provincial levels and education sectors, and it should therefore facilitate and enhance inter-departmental and inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation.
- ✓ **Service delivery.** This strategy will provide a solid foundation for more sustainable development, which will ensure the maintenance of achieved results in project counties.

¹⁰ UNICEF-MOE Education and Child Development Programme Plan of Operation 2006-2010.

5.7.3 Adaptation to nationally/locally-specific contexts

The CFS concept is highly relevant to Chinese education policy on 'quality-oriented education', but its implementation has to be adapted to locally specific contexts.

First, CFS' child-centredness runs counter to the deeply footed Chinese tradition of teacher centredness, suppressing the pupil's individuality and reducing the child to a passive recipient of information. In implementing the CFS approach, it is therefore most necessary for the teachers, as well as principals and parents, to change their mindsets. Meanwhile, it is also important for a 'child-friendly' school to be 'teacher-friendly' and for child rights to be balanced with child responsibilities (e.g., timely attendance in school, respect for teachers, timely completion of homework, hard work and high achievement level).

Secondly, the dimension of 'effective teaching' in China is broadly understood to cover learning areas in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetical and work skills development, namely the well-rounded development of all children.

Thirdly, the dimension of 'inclusiveness' and 'equality' has major and complicated implications in Chinese settings. To make CFS truly 'child-seeking' implies an enormous challenge, as 0.1 per cent of 'non-enrolment' or 'dropout' would mean more than a million children. Therefore, the 100 per cent net enrolment in child-friendly schools in poverty-stricken, rural counties populated by ethnic minorities or migrant communities does indicate a remarkable success. It remains an unmet challenge for all those already enrolled to be equally included and treated in the educational process, for learning acquisition to actually take place, and for all the results achieved to be sustainable.

5.7.4 Capacity building is essential

If CFS is to achieve expected results and effect fundamental changes in the attitudes and behaviours of those in the educational community, the capacity building of policy-makers and educational practitioners at different levels will be crucial.

Despite the high numbers of teachers in pilot counties already trained, the true application of the child-centred, rights-based approach to effective quality teaching will take time. What is important is not how many have been trained, but against what standards and in what ways have those teachers been trained, and whether the training has yielded expected results. An indication of the inadequate capacity of teachers is that, in facilitating interactive teaching, few teachers are able to change the traditional classroom layout designed to focus on teacher lectures into one conducive to pupil-group discussion and teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions.

Another is that many teachers are not good at developing and using individual pupil portfolios to track learning achievements and give timely feedback for advice on quality monitoring.

5.7.5 The CFS concepts need to reflect traditional Chinese cultural values

In ancient China, the teacher was one of the five most respected and revered, along with the God of Heaven, the God of Earth, the Emperor, and the parents. The teacher was deemed to be not only an authority on knowledge, but the best example of morals and

social norms. Therefore, learner-centredness has to be complemented by or combined with teacher guidance; friendliness and care for pupils needs to be balanced with expectations of high academic performance by pupils; children's rights need be balanced with their responsibilities, and their 'freedom' with 'discipline'; and 'joyful learning' should be made possible by ensuring that the environment does not conflict with 'hard work' and diligence, which considered a virtue in Chinese culture. Finally, a 'reduced learning load', as required by a 'quality-oriented education', has to be made consistent with the required amount of time for instruction/teaching and for homework/learning, which is a proven factor of quality educational achievement.

5.7.6 Strong organizational leadership and inter-project, central-local and inter-departmental coordination

For effective coordination, implementation, monitoring and management of the CFS project, it is necessary and useful to have a three-in-one Project Task Force (or 'Leading Group') involving government, experts, and school principals. The Project Task Force needs to be established at pilot county/provincial/national levels for overall action planning, policy intervention, resource input, technical assistance and monitoring.

6. FUTURE DIRECTION

6.1 Overview

An in-depth understanding of the CFS as a concept, approach and tool is a precondition for appropriate policy intervention and creative implementation of the project.

Based on the results already achieved, the CFS project in China is expected to increase its policy impact at the national level regarding standards-based education quality and rights-based education equality, and to demonstrate innovative practices and the results of the child-friendly, quality education model at the local level.

The four dimensional national CFS standards will be piloted for effective implementation, monitored for expected results and evaluated with core process-outcome indicators. There will be better-coordinated support from the Education Ministry for both the quality control of the existing 1,665 pilot schools and the expansion and replication to scale up successful CFS experiences in non-project counties and provinces. The CFS approach will be better integrated in basic education policies once its policy-level impact and local-level results are more widely advocated, and once the capacities of the government and community to monitor the project's implementation are improved.

The effective implementation of the CFS model and its replication in other settings requires the involvement of three major parties: a) the international community for technical and professional assistance, b) the public authorities for political commitment and policy intervention, and c) the national local community (including teachers, principals, parents and children) for active participation and innovative practices.

Multi-pronged strategies should be reformulated and effectively applied. For capacity building to be more relevant, there is a growing need for the development of quality training

modules or guidebooks. For evidence-based impacts and results-based management to be more convincing and replicable, systematic data collection and case studies should be undertaken by CFS teachers, principals and local policy-makers using more scientific methodologies. For evaluation and monitoring to be developmental and effective, a built-in system should be set up at the school and county levels for project implementation and assessment purposes.

6.2 Adopting national standards on CFS

The MOE and UNICEF Office for China have agreed on a **national framework of CFS standards**, with ‘process indicators’ and ‘outcome indicators’ proposed for each standard defined in a particular domain under one ‘dimension’. After minor revisions by international experts, it will be finally adopted for piloting at CFS project schools.

Rather than being evaluative, the CFS standards are meant to be developmental, to be used in guiding child-centred school development, teachers’ professional growth and local community-school partnerships. Therefore, emphasis will be placed on research-informed model building, capacity building, service delivery and case studies of evidence-based impacts for scaling up. The ‘ownership’ is meant for the CFS pilot schools and communities, which would replicate the CFS model as a tool to provide quality education for the well-rounded development of all children. National/provincial project officers and experts will be engaged in fieldwork for grass-root implementation. In turn, the innovative practices and results achieved and lessons learned at the local level will contribute to influence national policy change and strategy reformulation.

6.3 Support from the Ministry of Education

The MOE vice-minister for basic education has highly commended the great relevance to and close alignment of CFS with China’s basic education policy, as well as expressed her strong support of the CFS pilot. The MOE’s Department of International Cooperation and Exchange will lead the process of programme coordination, while the other related departments are to enhance intra- and inter-project collaboration through the Department of Basic Education, which will engage its Division of School Management, Division of Curriculum, and Division of Moral Education in respective CFS components. The Department of Teacher Education will focus on project activities related to the development of rights-based professional teacher standards as well as a continuing, interactive teacher support system at the county level. The Department of Human Resources and Personnel, along with the College of Educational Management, will supervise work on the implementation of CFS standards for ‘Participation and Harmony’. The Department of Physical, Health and Art Education will be addressing issues in the life skills-based curriculum, especially for children in boarding schools.

6.4 Assessing the cost-effectiveness of scaling up

Since all CFS pilot counties are in the underdeveloped rural western region, with many still

defined as 'National/Provincial-Level Poverty-Stricken Counties', they will not be able to increase budgetary support under the current education administrative system, whereby the county government is made the principle responsible provider of nine-year compulsory education. However, the provincial government might occasionally make special grants to support CFS expansion at the county level. Technical assistance and increased financial support need to be sought from government authorities and/or international EFA partners.

6.5 Policy mainstreaming and legislation changes

It is anticipated that the CFS concept, approach and standards will be mainstreamed into related national policy and legislative changes, especially at the moment, when the Government of China is developing its medium and long-run planning on education development, which focuses on equitable and quality education for all.

- ✓ The CFS 'child-seeking' approach will be mainstreamed to make basic education truly inclusive;
- ✓ The children's rights-based approach will be used to promote China's educational policy on balanced educational development;
- ✓ The concept of safety, health and protection in both physical and mental/psychological terms will be put into effect;
- ✓ The approach to life-skills education will be better applied in school sanitation, emergency preparedness, sports and moral education as new components of the school curriculum;
- ✓ The approach to children participation and interactive teaching-learning will be applied to make education effective;
- ✓ The CFS perspectives and principles will be integrated in child-centred, professional teacher standards, which are the 'core businesses' of the profession of teaching.

6.6 Continuing capacity-building

Capacity-building, as a prime strategy for upgrading technical inputs and managing innovations linked to quality education should continue to be enhanced. In the CFS pilot, schoolteachers, principals, parents and local community decision-makers will be the main target. Capacity-building will not be done through traditional top-down lectures, but in a school-based, participatory approach. The emphasis will be on the quality of training rather than on the number of trainees.

6.7 Responding to needs

For CFS to achieve its objectives and scale up its successes, it has to be responsive to the emerging needs of pilot schools and local communities. This may include:

- ✓ increased sustainability for higher retention rates, and lower or zero dropout rates;
- ✓ in-depth understanding of, and strong commitment to, the realization that children's multi-dimensional rights are not fully respected and realized;
- ✓ better documentation of child development and learning achievement as a result of effective and participatory interactive teaching and improved teacher professionalism;

- and integration of broadly defined 'life skills', with a focus on HIV-AIDS and drug abuse prevention in the basic education curriculum as learning domains;
- ✓ holistic school management for more active participation by children, teachers, parents and local communities and for attestable, measurable 'harmony' at school as 'a community of cooperative learning', and 'harmony' in local community as an EFA partner of the school; and improved monitoring of the implementation of regulations and guidelines on safety, health and protection of children, especially of girls, ethnic minorities, and poor rural households;
- ✓ effective strategies in replicating and scaling up the CFS model as a tool in providing child-centred, child-friendly quality education; and increased sustainability as a result of an improved policy environment and enhanced government/school capacity.

7. VIGNETTES

7.1 Feature story on children's participation in schools

Workshop plants seeds to empower children

by Rong Jiaojiao *China Daily*
3 April 2006

TIANZHU, Gansu: She clammers up a rock, reaches both hands onto the corners of the shabby cement wall and heaves herself up, being careful not to get her schoolbag caught on the protruding bricks. She straddles the top and then jumps gingerly down onto the pebbled ground beside the railway line.

Leaning into the curve of the track, she lifts her right hand to shade her brow and trains her eyes on the light seeping through branches of a tall tree at the corner. Then, like a hare, she darts across the tracks.

About 60 more children will follow her some giggling, pushing and shoving, others accompanied by their teachers. All are on their way to Xinhua Elementary School of Tianzhu Tibet Autonomous County, Gansu Province.

Four times a day, for the past 30 years, this has been the way to and from school for most of the children in Xinhua. No child has ever been hit by a train, yet.

Pei Suping, an 11-year-old fifth grader from the school (Right, in red), captured these scenes in a bunch of pictures. Pointing to a photo of the tracks, the girl said: "I think a tunnel should be built for us. Otherwise, it's too dangerous. Children have the right to be protected."



She also shot pictures of vendors' stalls that block the entrance to the school, saying they also "suggest children's rights are not fully protected." Through capturing these moments on camera, the girl said she "became more aware of my living environment and learned to make suggestions to students and teachers."

The term "children's rights" was still alien to Pei a month ago. Nor did she know how to use a camera. "My parents always kept it to themselves, afraid I might break it. If I hadn't attended that workshop a month ago, I don't know when I might ever get to take a picture."

Pei learned her new skills at a UNICEF-funded participatory training workshop on children's rights in Tianzhu last October. Forty teachers and 32 students aged 11-13 came together from five schools of the county for the three-day courses on knowledge of children's rights and the skills to realize these rights. At the end of the workshop, each school received one Kodak camera with 72 films for students to interpret children's rights through their own perspective.

Special training

The workshop forms one small but significant part of the UNICEF girls' education programmes that started in 2005 in 12 project counties of five western provinces in China.

Such programmes focus on gender-sensitive, child-centred effective learning in a safe school environment, free of discrimination. The workshop was the first time in 26 years of UNICEF co-operation in China's educational projects that students and teachers sat and trained together about children's rights, said UNICEF educational project official Guo Xiaoping. "Children should be the advocates for their own rights and become the watchdog to safeguard these rights," she said at the opening of the workshop.

Four experts came from Beijing to root the theoretical principles in the children's minds. Students played games, held group discussions, drew pictures and charts—a new approach for village schoolchildren.

Liu Wenbo, a 10-year-old student of Chengguan Elementary School, illustrated children's rights using apples, with each apple representing one right: the right to be protected, the right to participate and the right to life, subsistence and development. "I used to take a nap during classes at school," he said. "But this workshop always keeps me busy and excited. It is more fun."

Ba Tingting, 10, had thought the workshop was about how to improve their English "because it was supported by the United Nations." But the student of Tianzhu Elementary School, affiliated with the Tianzhu Normal Institute, found it "more interesting than our English class."

During a group discussion about the "four fundamental rights of children," Tingting argued the right to parental care wasn't that important. "We should learn to take care



of ourselves, and later on take care of our parents," she said.

Schoolmate Qi Xiaoyun, 11, insisted that the right to privacy was much more important than food and clothes.

"Everybody has their own secret, and we children are no exception," said the fifth-grader. "I can have poor food to eat and old clothes to wear, but I need somewhere that only belongs to me." (Qi Xiaoyun, right, in orange)

Zhu Yue of Chengguan Elementary School has gained her own understanding of the right to protection. "We cannot always wait for others to protect us," said the 11-year-old during the discussion. "Instead, we should learn to protect ourselves."

Children know better

Chen Ying, one of the trainers from the China National Children's Centre, said participation itself is one of the most important children's rights. "Through expressing their own thoughts, children can associate the literal meaning of rights with their daily life," said Chen.

The mother of 10-year-old Wang Ling has noticed the difference after the girl attended the workshop. "When she came back, my once-shy little girl talked to me a lot," said Wang Shuxian. "She asked me not to read her diary anymore, because she has the right to privacy. She told me not to always favour her younger brother because they are equal."



The 33-year-old farmer stood outside their three-room brick bungalow in Shimen Town of the north-western province, watching Wang Ling at play in the backyard. "I don't really understand what children's rights are, but my daughter's words sound right. Anyway, it's good to see her smiling face." (Wang Ling, left, in workshop)

But not every adult welcomes advice from a 10-year-old.

"Some grown-ups had no patience for our suggestions and asked us to go away," said Ren Chengyu, 10, from Shuiquan Elementary School, during the presentation on her findings at a follow-up session of the workshop in late November. "Even my father said to me: 'Don't try to be my teacher. After you grow up, only then is it time for you to talk to me like that!'"

Adults learn

"I felt students were more ready to raise their hands to answer questions here than they used to be in my class," said teacher Wei Rong. "After all, sitting on this tiny, hard, cold wooden stool all day is not that easy."

When discussing a plan to improve student learning, Wei found her students often knew more than she did in handling certain issues. "I wanted to set up a special class at weekends and invite teachers from other schools to give poor students special artistic training to enrich their after-school life.



"But the students thought that setting up a reading room alone was enough, because all the students, rich or poor, can sit together reading interesting storybooks and share them with each other."

The 33-year-old Wei, with 10 years' experience as a Chinese language teacher of Tianzhu Elementary School, admitted it is more difficult to be a teacher than it used to be, because "students have so many channels to acquire information that they always raise harsh questions and ideas to challenge your authority." "One of the students named Sun Jialu told me during the discussion that there are no rich or poor, good or bad students, just female and male students," Wei said (Wei Rong, left, in light blue).

Xinhua Elementary School's Chen Yufeng brought pictures taken by her four students, including those by Pei Suping, to the follow-up session where officials from local educational bureaus and UNICEF were present. "We had appealed to the county educational bureau many times on students' safety, but the situation just remains unchanged," said Chen, a Chinese language teacher with 13 years' teaching experience. "This time, with these pictures and student advocates, I hope they can pay more attention to this concern."

For a place like Tianzhu Tibet Autonomous County, with a population of 217,400 people coming from 16 ethnic groups, where earnings average 1,523 yuan (US\$190) a year, a couple of workshops cannot wipe out traditional conceptions overnight. "The dominant power of male grown-ups still prevails," said Li Shengdi, deputy director of the Tianzhu Educational Bureau. "I hope this training is like a bud planted in children's hearts, which can blossom in the future through the combined efforts of government, teachers, parents and students."

Pei Suping is happy to hear the local educational bureau chief has seen her photos and promised the situation will soon be changed. "I never thought anything could be changed when I took the picture. But if it really does, that will really inspire me," she said.

Chalking about a revolution

by Rong Jiaojiao, *China Daily*
20 September 2006

Whenever a newcomer enters the classroom, little Li Shunye would point at the wall. "Look at that!" he says, looking at a picture of something that looks a bit like a pink furry fox, only with an oversized tail.

"It's a squirrel," says the 9-year-old. "I made it."

Fox or squirrel, it doesn't matter because Li still feels like the king of the castle: The wall is ablaze with colour, sunshine, houses, chimneys, flowers, trees, monkeys, roosters, dolls and a fat grey cat with extra-long whiskers.

Until recently, a smiling sunshine face was never to be seen at Shuiquan Elementary School in central Gansu Province: posted on the walls instead were articles 1-10 of the comprehensive school regulations and various slogans exhorting students to study hard, study every day, and so on.

Nowadays, says the boy, students are exhorted to play a game or sing a song at the beginning of class. Those who get the right answer receive applause from their classmates. Students swap seats and form discussion groups. "It makes the atmosphere much more lively," he said. "I am constantly concentrating and being encouraged.

"I love going to school because I love my teacher Ms Li, who is always in a good mood and smiles to us in class."

Outside in the playground is where the boy feels happiest. He can play basketball now because the hoop doesn't wobble precariously anymore.

"Last winter, our teachers reinforced the base with steel so that the hoop was fixed when we shoot ball," said the third-grader. Plus, the court is smoother too, says Shunye, because teachers filled potholes with sand and removed all the big stones.

Chalk & talk

Located in Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, the 761-square-metre school consists of four red-brick single-story houses accommodating 212 students. Their parents earn on average 1,523 yuan (US\$190) a year, less than half the rural Chinese average of 3,255 yuan (US\$407).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2006 decided to install Shuiquan in its child-friendly school framework, which affects 30,000 students of at least 200 rural schools in 18 counties in China's seven western provinces.

"The framework is designed to create a child-friendly learning environment where child-centred and activity-based teaching and learning processes help children fully develop their potential," said Guo Xiaoping, a UNICEF-China educational official.

The traditional "chalk-and-talk" teacher-centred teaching methodology dominates schools in the Chinese mainland. A frowning teacher, a bullying father or a pleading mother browbeats the child to study harder.

"Education should not overload students with stress but prepare them for success. We need to give students the tools they need to build up their confidence," she said. Child-friendly schooling consists of five broad dimensions; inclusiveness, effectiveness; health, safety and protection; gender-friendliness; and the involvement of students, families and communities.

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office Youth and Partnership Project Officer Joachim Theis visited the child-friendly schools of Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County. "Inclusiveness means seeking out and enabling the participation of all children and especially those who are different ethnically, culturally, linguistically, socio-economically and in terms of ability," Theis said. Theis strongly believed children should not be marginalized by teachers who did not engage with them, did not believe they were capable of learning and did not have the teaching skills to handle their diversity. In short, it was about learning to talk the same language.

"I had thought that my teachers and schoolmates would barely understand me," said Qian Li, "because I speak Tibetan in the family and I am not good at Chinese." The 11-year-old studies Tibetan, Chinese and English with her Tibetan classmates at Tianzhu Elementary School, affiliated to the Tianzhu Normal Institute. Li's herder parents have rented an apartment in the county town of Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County to help their daughter qualify for a better elementary school and the chance of a better high school. "I feel comfortable here speaking and learning my own language while learning English," said the fifth-grader. "I think English is not difficult compared to Tibetan. Maybe in the future, I can teach foreigners Tibetan." (Qian Li, in middle; Chen Ying, life behind; Yang Tingting, right in dark blue)



Gender-responsive

A child-friendly school should also be "gender-responsive," creating environments of gender equality for the students through the active engagement of family and community in all aspects of school policy, management and support to children.

When a maths teacher Li Chunling, at Shuiquan Elementary School, noticed all the girls were sitting together in a discussion group, she knew what to do. She invited the students to change seats, mixing girls and boys together in different groups. "After I attended the workshop organized by UNICEF on child-friendly schooling and child participation last November, I began to realize the importance of interactive learning, not only between teachers and students, but among students of different gender," said Li.

After the first class with boys, said Li, one of the girls approached her and said it was efficient and interesting to work with boys together because "in rural places, girls sometimes feel inferior to boys, and even jealous about the boys as they are considered the centre of the family."

Li hopes that gender-sensitive teaching would also prepare students to live more

harmoniously with the opposite gender in wider society.

As Joachim Theis puts it: "If the teacher just changes the order of the seats instead of the teaching methods, it's useless." It depends a lot on the teacher. Some poor places can have good teachers. Also with good facilities, teachers can disappoint students."(Joachim Theis, UNICEF EAPRO Child Protection Consultant, left, in an English Class of Shi Menxia Primary School, Tianzhu, May 2006)



Teacher Li Chunling was still worried about the practicality of child-friendly teaching. "Some parents tell us to punish their kids as severely and as often as we can, otherwise they worry their child won't study hard," Liu said. "So when we grant some autonomy to children, they consider us irresponsible."

The greatest challenge to child participation, according to a trainer for the UNICEF workshop and a professor with China's Women University, was adults. "Adults are gatekeepers," said Professor Jiao Jian. "They create opportunities for children and also they set limits sometimes. Adults will decide how much autonomy should be given to children. Sometimes they find an excuse not to promote children's rights."

Problems include not only parental expectations and examination pressures, but a lack of boldness in taking on the status quo among teachers and education officials. "So it is society and people that ultimately determine how far child participation can go," she said.

7.2 Preliminary application of national CFS standards in select schools in Yunnan

The CFS pilot has been implemented and developed in Yunnan for three years, starting in 2006 in select schools. At the beginning we felt it's something new and we needed to learn more about the programme to better understand what it was about. Gradually, the concepts became clearer and our actions became closer to child-friendly standards.

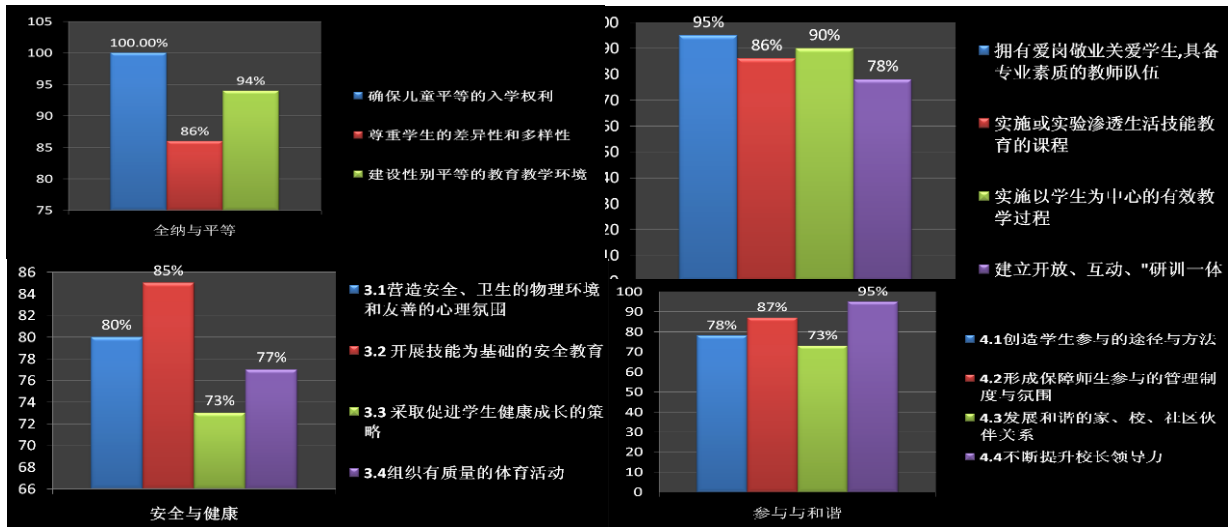
It seems everything is changing quietly ... However, with the deepening of the CFS pilot, what is the vision of CFS, how can we really make a CFS, when we are concerning these issues, the National CFS Standards give us a clearer guidance as to the development direction for the CFS pilot.

Now, let me on behalf of Yunnan Education Commission and our CFS Project Experts Group, present how we primarily applied CFS Standards in Yunnan's project schools.

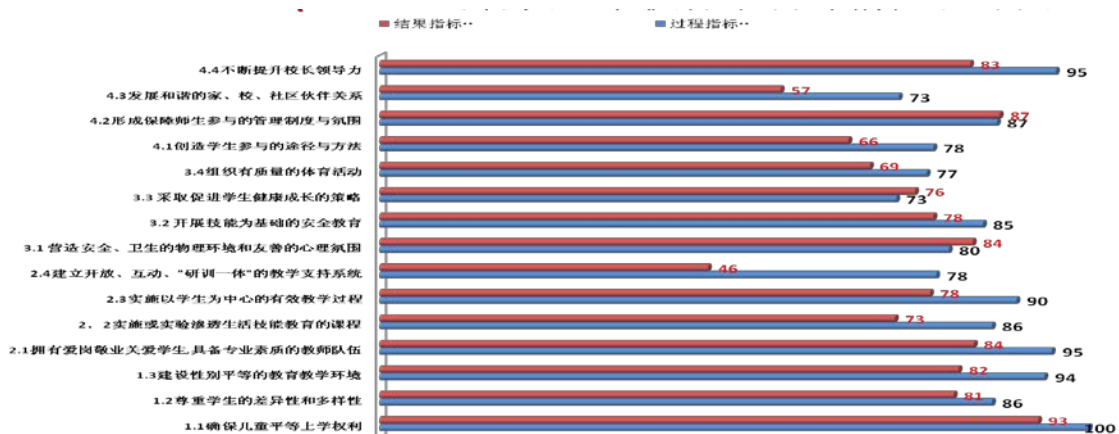


Long Deng-li, Provincial CFS Expert from Yunnan Normal University at the 2008 Annual Review Meeting of the UNICEF-MOE Education Programme (Long Deng-li, middle, in white)

Following the participant's self-diagnosis, the provincial project experts keyed all responses into computers and conducted data analysis for every dimension (from Upper Left to Right: Inclusiveness and Effective Teaching; from bottom Left to Right: Safe, Healthy and Protective, and Participation and Harmonization).



The data analysis also included the identification of gaps between progress indicators and outcome indicators



Based on all above analysis, the provincial and county-level experts jointly made an analysis on how far selected schools in Yunnan were from the vision and standards of CFS.

| Dimension | Brief analysis |
|---|--|
| Inclusiveness and equality | Comparatively speaking, this dimension has been well recognized and implemented among other dimensions, especially in safeguarding the equal rights of children to attend school. Not only is the concept well accepted, but concrete actions are also taken to achieve the objectives. |
| Effective teaching and learning | There is still some distance between recognition of the process indicators and the achievement of the objectives. In the domain of establishing an open and interactive teaching support system that combines research and training, the gap between outcome indicator and process indicator is as high as 32 per cent. The gaps in other domains are between 10-13 per cent. This shows that there are many barriers during implementation of this dimension; therefore, more support is needed. During the construction of CFS, the contrast between high expectation and little effect is not what is expected. |
| Safe, healthy and protective environment | Despite a low level of recognition of the process indicators, the results tend to be the same as the objectives. Something particularly exciting is that the outcome indicators are higher than process indicators in the two domains of 'Creating Safe Physical Environment and Friendly Mental Atmosphere' and 'Adopting Strategies to Promote Healthy Growth of Students', which indicates that great efforts and strong actions have been made in this dimension. |
| Participation and harmonization | CFS management enhanced the capacity of principals in school management. But there is still a long way to go in children's participation in school management and establishing good relationships among school, family and community. We need to further improve the administrative mechanisms that respect the rights of the child and communication with communities. |

[Source: Presentation presented at 2008 Annual Review Meeting of UNICEF-MOE Education Programme, Long Dengli]

During the process of self-diagnosis, the relevance of CFS standards was also assessed by participants.

Item 3.4.1 There is little understanding on Sunshine Sports Award for students in outcome indicator.
Item 4.2.1 The progress indicator does not fit rural primary schools. It is suggested that “the school holding an assembly of faculty each school year” is changed into “an assembly of faculty is held each school year in each township.”

Comments provided by teachers from La-shi Township Primary School of Yulong County

Item 1.1.2 The enrolment rate indicator shall be further divided into three small indicators: Enrolment rate of school-aged children, enrolment of children with special needs, and enrolment rate of girls.

Item 2.4.4 The process indicator is not suitable.

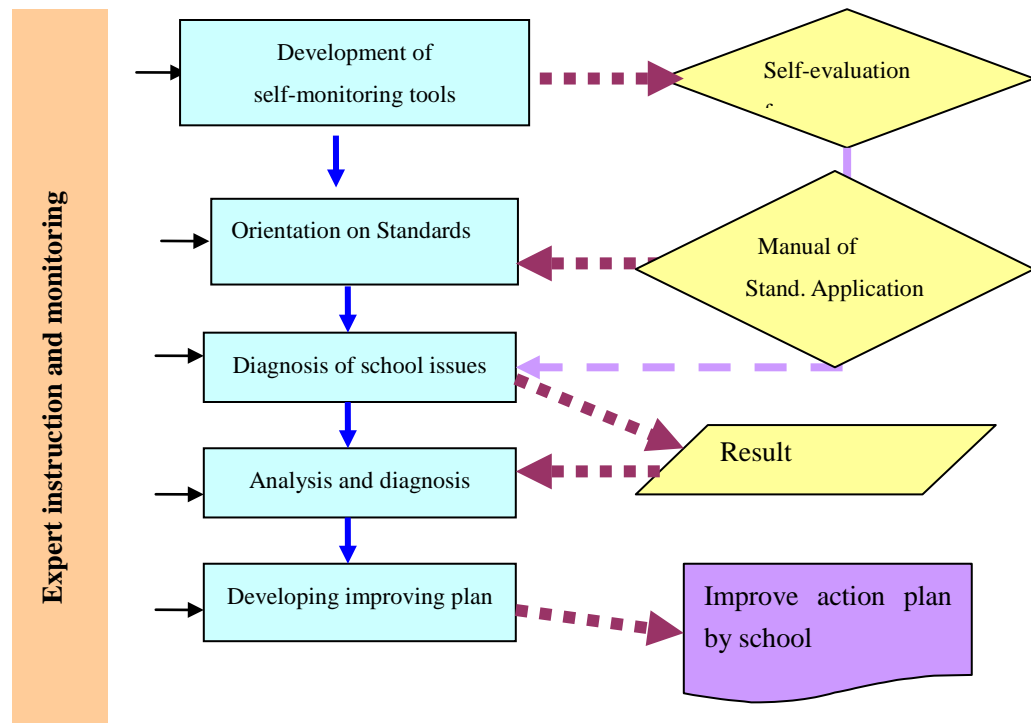
Comments provided by teachers from Lining Township Primary School of Yulong County

Development of a plan of action towards school improvement

This third stage was not started yet in 2008 because of time limits. However, the following steps developing CFS standards will be applied in Yunnan:

- ✓ Participatory approach to ranking problems and developing a realistic and time-bound plan of action for school improvement
- ✓ More technical guidance and field monitoring should be provided by provincial and county-level project experts to selected schools
- ✓ Adjustment of certain CFS standards to make them fit better with the real situation of rural schools
- ✓ Operational research and documentation of school improvement for evidence-based advocacy

Flow of applying CFS standards in schools in Yunnan



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