

A Summary Of The School System In China

The education system in China is divided into 3 categories – basic, higher and adult education. It is stipulated in the Compulsory Education Law that every child must have 9 years of formal learning.

Basic Education

In China, basic education includes pre-school, primary as well as regular secondary education. Kindergarten or pre-school can last up to 3 years, with students entering school as early as age 3 until age 6, when they usually go into elementary school. Academic year is divided into 2 semesters.

Secondary education on the other hand is divided into specialized/technical/vocational and academic secondary education. The latter is given by academic lower as well as upper middle schools. Graduates of lower middle schools who want to continue their studies take an entrance exam and based from the results, they have the choice to either enter a vocational secondary institution or continue in an academic upper middle institute. Vocational institutions provide programs ranging from 2 to 4 years as well as train medium-level skilled farmers, technical/managerial personnel and workers. Technical schools usually offer 4-year programs to educate intermediate technical personnel. Those Schools for Skilled Workers usually educate middle school graduates for positions that require operation and production skills. It usually takes 3 years to complete the training.

Higher Education

It usually includes 2- and 3-year junior colleges. Many universities and colleges also provide graduate programs that students can take part in to get a Ph.D or master's degree. Higher education in China is divided into 3-year and 4-year programs. The latter is offered at 4-year universities and colleges, but it does not give an assurance that a student can get a bachelor's degree. The 3-year programs are offered at short-cycle colleges and 4-year universities and colleges.

Adult Education

This category overlaps all 3 of the abovementioned categories. Peasants' Primary Schools, Workers' Primary Schools as well as literacy classes are included in the adult primary education. Specialized secondary institutions for workers and staff as well as TV/radio specialized secondary schools are included in the adult secondary education. Most of these schools offer 2- and 3-year short-cycle curriculum, while some offer regular undergraduate curriculum.