



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetans sent to mainland Chinese schools under guise of “progress”

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At the seventh Tibet Work Forum in August 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for a patriotic re-education of the younger generation of Tibetans, asking officials to look into “strengthening ideological and political education in schools, put the spirit of patriotism throughout the entire process of school education at all levels and types, and plant the seeds of loving China in the depths of the hearts of every teenager.”

This project appears to be advancing. In December 2020, Chinese state media reported that a propaganda team from the Tibet Autonomous Region visited Tibetan schools and classes in Chinese cities to hold “National Unity Education Activities.” One speaker from the TAR came to give a “[t]alk about the kindness of the party” and instructed students to “love the core, listen to the Party.”

The TAR spans about half of Tibet, a historically independent country that China annexed more than 60 years ago and continues to rule with an iron fist.

On Dec. 26, 2020, the Changzhou Tibetan Middle School in Jiangsu Province held events to celebrate its 35th anniversary. According to state media, this school is among the first schools in Chinese cities where students from the TAR were brought for schooling.

As part of the Chinese government’s ostensible plan to improve “Tibet’s backward education and lack of talents,” special schools and classes have been established in several Chinese cities since 1985. These schools and the Tibetan students are now increasingly seen by Chinese authorities as avenues for indoctrination.

In 1984, the Chinese Communist Party decided to establish schools for Tibetan students in Chinese provinces and cities a part of the so-called “nationwide aid to Tibet.” Beginning in 1985, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Liaoning, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Shandong, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Chongqing, Shaanxi, and Yunnan began to admit 1,300 students annually from the TAR who had finished primary school.

In the first year, there were 400 students from Tibet’s capital of Lhasa, 200 from Lhoka,

(Chinese: Shannan), 250 from Shigatse (Rikaze), 100 from Nyingtri (Linzhi), 200 from Chamdo (Changdu), 100 from Nagchu (Naqu) and 50 from Ngari (Ali).

In 1989, classes for Tibetans opened in secondary technical schools and high schools in Chinese cities. In 2002, Tibetan classes opened in some other high schools and in 2010, Tibetan classes opened in 48 secondary vocational schools.

According to information made available on Chinese government websites, as of January 2019, a total of 141,900 students were enrolled in these classes and schools, including 53,000 in junior high schools, 42,000 in high schools, 11,000 in technical and vocational secondary schools and 35,000 in colleges and universities. There were 75 junior high schools and senior high schools in 20 Chinese cities; 29 schools in 12 cities with secondary vocational classes; and 196 colleges and universities with Tibetan students. In 2020, there were 4,472 students taking college entrance examinations.

Nature of schools for Tibetans

There are two types of schools for Tibetans in Chinese cities. One category includes separate schools specifically established for Tibetan students. These include schools such as Wuhan Tibetan High School, Shanghai Gongkang Tibetan High School and Chongqing Tibetan High School.

The other category is existing schools with classes for Tibetans in Chinese cities, such as Foshan No. 1 High School in Guangdong Province and Liaoyang No. 1 High School in Liaoning Province. Additionally, some Tibetan students are also admitted to existing schools in Chinese cities.

Tibetan students studying in junior and senior high schools in mainland China are mostly aged between 12 and 18. In terms of the teaching faculty, only the Tibetan language teacher is chosen by authorities in the TAR, while those teaching all other subjects, including the teacher in charge, are from Chinese cities or provinces.

After finishing junior high school, the students have to return to the TAR to take their high school entrance examination. For example, state media reported that 1,600 students returned to Lhasa from Chinese cities in July 2020 to take the high school entrance exams there. Upon graduating from senior high school, students take the college entrance examination directly from the place in Chinese cities where they have been studying, rather than returning to the TAR.

While the majority of students sent to these schools are Tibetan, there are Chinese students, too, who are the children and relatives of Chinese cadres working in Tibet.

These schools and classes for Tibetans have now formed a relatively complete school system, including junior high school, senior high school, secondary vocational school, junior college, general undergraduate and postgraduate education.

Schools as places to groom supporters of the CCP

Chinese authorities say the goals of this educational system are to provide economic and social development in Tibet and to benefit Tibet's long-term stability. However, they increasingly look at these special schools and classes for Tibetans as political tools to nurture supporters of the Chinese Communist Party.

This was made clear in the "Implementation Rules for Class (School) Management of Tibetan Middle Schools in the Mainland" issued by the State Education Commission in September 1992, which said, "Practice has proved that running schools for Tibet in the interior is a strategic decision of the Party Central Committee and the State Council. It will play an important role in safeguarding the unity of the motherland and ethnic unity." The document continued: "The fundamental purpose and task of establishing schools for Tibet in the interior is to take advantage of the conditions for running schools and the advantages of teachers in the interior schools to help Tibet cultivate a group of supporters of the Communist Party of China who support socialism, consciously maintain the unity of the motherland and ethnic unity, and have a preliminary scientific world outlook and comparative perspective."

Similarly, in a State Council notice to the education commissions in 1996, the running of such schools and classes for Tibetans was referred to as "highly political."

In 1990, then-President Jiang Zemin declared that interior schooling helped Tibetans understand the motherland and broaden their view of the world.

In an extensive article, Yan Qing, a professor at Minzu University of China, wrote in 2016 about the "special significance" of these Tibetan schools based on the "political environment." Yan wrote, "From the perspective of the political environment, Tibet is the only province with an illegal government in exile in our country's provincial-level administrative divisions, and it is based on foreign countries that undermines the development

of domestic ethnic relations. The Dalai Clique fled to India in 1959 and established a government in exile in India to carry out criminal activities to split the motherland. They fought fiercely with us in the field of culture and education, and used various means to attract and deceive domestic students to study abroad.”

Yan continued saying, “The success or failure of Tibetan education is related to the safety of our country's southwest border. Since the political environment and regional location of education in Tibet is more unique than that of ordinary provinces and

regions, and the foundation of education development is extremely weak, it is in urgent need of special care and support.”

In 2015, Xi Jinping said that “the achievement of running classes in the Mainland is remarkable and far-reaching, and should be persistently improved, and should be summarized and a long-term plan should be put forward.”

Most recently, state media reported in December 2020 that a propaganda team from the TAR met with students studying in Chinese cities. Among them was Lobsang Dhondup, deputy director of the Tibet Youth Daily, who spoke to students of the Tibetan class in the Zhuhai No. 4 Middle School and “urged the children that the Party and the state have created such good learning and living conditions for you. You should be grateful and use your own practical actions to repay the kindness of the party and the state.” This event was part of the “National Unity Education Activity for Tibetan Class in the Mainland” that has been held annually since it was launched in 2013.

Although the authorities wanted to use these students as propaganda tools, in reality the experience of studying in these schools reinforced their Tibetan cultural identity, according to a survey.ⁱ

Challenges faced by Tibetan students

According to a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences report, these schools were successful in imparting education to the students from the TAR. The report says, “data shows the effectiveness of the Tibetan Class in the Mainland in terms of the quantity and quality of talent training, that is, it has cultivated talents at all levels and types that are urgently needed by Tibetan society, and provided strong intellectual support and talent support for the development of Tibet.”

However, not considering the political indoctrination, even in education-related matters, these students had challenges.

According to a research article published by Peking University, “Inland Tibet Class from the Perspective of Multicultural Education” by researcher Nyima Dhondup, the Tibetan language is not counted in students’ total score during the college entrance examination, causing schools to ignore the teaching of Tibetan and students not to have time to take care of it due to the pressure of the college entrance examination.

In the senior high schools, the Tibetan language course is either cancelled completely or reduced to a minor or elective course, as the curriculum is based on the college entrance examination. The college entrance examination for students in the Tibet senior

high school class requires a Tibetan language exam, but it is not counted in the total score when they apply to a college in mainland China.

Students have also said the quality of teachers is inferior to those schools and classes for Chinese students. According to a Tibetan who graduated from the Tibet Class at the senior high school of Shandong University, the textbooks for Tibetan classes are the same as those for the Chinese students, but the classes for Tibetans are taught by less qualified teachers. If there are good teachers in the Tibet class, the school will transfer them to teach Chinese students.

Racist bullying

Tibetan students have also become targets for attack by Chinese students. There are violent incidents in which Tibetan students from Tibetan schools and classes in mainland China become victims.

The most serious such violent incident happened in Chengdu in 2011, when on Dec. 14 and 15, Chinese students besieged hundreds of Tibetan students in the Tibet class at the Chengdu Railway Engineering School. Nyima Dhondup, in his article, quotes a student of the school saying many Tibetan students were beaten and admitted to the hospital, while the Tibetan dormitory and classrooms were smashed. Radio Free Asia reported that the Chinese students in the school, who outnumber the Tibetans there, were questioning “Beijing’s policy of providing preferential treatment to ethnic minorities.”

"You should have seen how they insulted us Tibetans in their internet postings," a Tibetan student told RFA.

Tibetan schools as models for other communities

The Chinese authorities have indicated that the schools for Tibetans in Chinese cities have become a model for ethnic education in China. In a 1999 circular, the State Council said, “Currently, ethnic conflicts continue in some areas of the world. International hostile forces have used national separatist forces inside and outside the country to infiltrate and subvert our country. To further strengthen ethnic education and increase the intensity of talent training in ethnic minority areas is not only related to the economic development of ethnic minority areas and the improvement of national quality, but also related to the country’s stability, unity and national unity. From a strategic point of view, it has special importance and urgency.”

The State Council continued that the schools for Tibetans were “very successful” and “welcomed and affirmed by all quarters,” and the party was evidently drawing lessons from the Tibetan experience when, in the autumn of 2000, classes were started for students from Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan).

Partial list of schools and classes for students from the TAR in Chinese cities

Chongqing Tibet high School, established in 1985

Changzhou Tibet Middle School in Jiangsu Province, established in 1985

Shaoxing County Tibet Middle School in Zhejiang Province, established in 1985

Beijing Tibet High School, established in 1987

Chengdu Tibet High School, Sichuan Province, established in 1989.

Jinan Tibetan High School in Shandong Province, established in 1991

Shanghai Gongkang Tibet High School established in 1998

Wuhan Tibet High School, Hubei Province, established in 2006

Tibet Class at Shanghai Huimin High School established in 1985 (subsequently merged with the Shanghai Gongkang Tibet High School)

Tibet class of Hebei Normal University in Hebei Province

Tibet class in Foshan No. 1 High School in Guangdong Province

Tibet class in Liaoyang No. 1 High School in Liaoning Province

Tibet Class in Senior High school of Shandong University in Shandong Province

Tibet class in Chengdu Railway Engineering School in Sichuan Province

Tibet class in Shanxi University High School established in 1985

Tibet Class in Zhuhai Fourth Middle School in Guangdong Province

Eleventh Middle School of Shenyang City in Liaoning Province, established in 2002

Tibet Class in Liaoyang No. 1 Middle School in Liaoning Province

Tibet class in Zhangzhou No. 3 Middle School in Fujian Province, established in 2004

Guangdong Trade Vocational and Technical School

4th Inland Tibet Class of the High School Affiliated to Yunnan Normal University

Tibet Class in Liedong Middle School in Sanming in Fujian Province, established in 1995

Tibet Class of the Fourth High School of Zhengzhou City in Henan Province

Tibet Class of No. 1 Yueyang City High School in Hunan Province

Tibet Class of Jilin University, Jilin Province

Tibet Class, No. 35 High School, Hefei, Anhui Province

Inland Tibet Class of Jiangxi Metallurgical Industry School

Tibet Class of Hongshan High School in Wuhan City, Hubei Province

Tibet class in Northeast Forestry University, Heilongjiang Province

Tibet class in Jiangyi Middle School in Shunde, Guangdong Province, established in 2017

Tianjin Tibetan Secondary Vocational Class

Tibet class in People's Public Security University of China in Beijing

Tibet class in Zhejiang Police College in Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province

Tibet class of the Chinese People 's Police University

Tibet class of the China Criminal Police College

Tibet class of the Railway Police College



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