

An introduction of the Party School in China with the emphasis on Leadership Education

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Abstrakt

Party schools, known as the Party Schools of the Communist Party of China (CPC), are educational institutions used by the CPC to train party members and cadres. They are mainly responsible for training Party leading cadres at all levels, theoretical research and publicizing Party policies. Party schools are not only a place for cadres to learn important ideas such as Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory, but they are also a place where discussions on important local topics are held (e.g., the development of China's central and western regions, development of mountainous areas, enterprise development, and poverty alleviation topics).

In today's era, party schools play a crucial role in spreading knowledge, fostering a knowledge-based society, and developing leaders with advanced expertise, as emphasized by Xi Jinping during the 90th anniversary of the Central Party School and the 2023 spring semester's opening ceremony.

This emphasis on knowledge and leadership contrasts with the 1980s under Deng Xiaoping, when party schools shifted their focus towards economic development and modernization to meet the country's evolving needs.

In the 1980s, under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the focus of party schools shifted towards economic development and modernization. The emphasis was on correcting ideological misconceptions about market economy, asserting that market mechanisms could coexist with socialism. The famous saying from Deng Xiaoping was „Black cat, white cat, as long as it catches mice, it's a good cat” [1] epitomized this pragmatic approach. The goal was to prioritize economic growth without attaching ideological labels to the methods used.

Comparing 1983 and 2023, both periods underscored the role of party schools in aligning with national priorities. In 1983, the focus was on economic reform and opening up, while in 2023, Xi Jinping emphasized comprehensive cadre training to meet complex global and domestic challenges, maintaining party discipline, and enhancing theoretical and practical skills. Both eras highlight the enduring importance of party schools in adapting to and driving the Party's evolving strategic objectives. Previously, party schools had a role in the development of the economy and in supporting its competitiveness, now they have a role in the development of a knowledge-based society

In China, there are a large number of party schools; as of 2023, there are more than 3,200 party schools at all levels across the country, with each province, city, and county having its own party school. The most famous party school is the Central Party School, located in Beijing and directly under the CPC Central Committee. These Party schools are widely distributed, covering all parts of the country, ensuring the educational and training needs of Party members and cadres at all levels.

The students at the Party Schools are mainly Party members and cadres at all levels of Party and government organizations, enterprises and institutions.

The enter qualification of the cadres studying is different when it comes to different levels of Party Schools. The Central Party School (National School of Administration) mainly trains provincial and ministerial leaders, bureau-level leaders, and county (city) party committee secretaries. The city-level party schools mainly train state-owned enterprise staff in the city and county and village-level cadres.

Specifically, they include government officials at all levels, managers of state-owned enterprises, and party managers of some non-public enterprises. Generally speaking, party schools do not issue degrees in the traditional sense, but rather certificates of completion or certificates of training.

However, in recent years, the Central Party School and some provincial Party Schools have also opened some degree education programs, such as on-the-job master's and doctoral degrees, which are specifically aimed at Party members and cadres with a certain amount of work experience. These degree education programs are different from graduate education in ordinary colleges and universities in that the degree is more oriented to training Marxist theoretical talents as its main goal.

The curriculum of the Party School is based on the teaching target:

The curriculum of the Party School mainly centers on political theory, party education, policy interpretation and practical management skills. The main courses include:

- Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era
- Party Organization Building and Party theoretical, practical Education

Explanation for these terminologies in details: „Party Organization Building” involves strategies such as recruiting new members, enhancing leadership training, and optimizing the management within the party to ensure effective implementation of its policies. It is a continuous process aimed at maintaining the vitality and discipline of the party.

„Party Theory and Practical Education” refers to the theoretical and practical training provided to party members. This includes the study of Marxism, the party’s history, current policies, and how to apply these in practical scenarios. The purpose is to deepen the members’ understanding of party principles and enhance their political awareness and capabilities in policy execution.

- Political Economy and Modern Economic Management
- Policy Research and Public Management
- Legal Knowledge and Rule of Law Construction
- International Relations and Foreign Policy
- Leadership Science and Management Art

In recent years, with the deepening of the reform of state-owned enterprises and the rapid development of the non-public economy, more and more enterprise managers have also begun to participate in the training of party schools. Some large state-owned enterprises even have their own party school, specializing in training party cadres within the enterprise.

For example, for the party school in Sichuan Province, the Sichuan Tobacco Industrial Corporation held a 2024 training session for grassroots Party branch secretaries at the City Party School (Administrative College). This training focuses on President Xi Jinping’s important thoughts on Party building and covers topics such as the general requirements for Party building in the new era, Party constitution, Party rules and discipline, and the construction of the local economic circle in the city. Generally, such training sessions for employees of state-owned enterprises last for one week. For example, a total of 58 grassroots Party branch secretaries from the headquarters and various branches of Sichuan Tobacco Industrial Corporation participated in the training.

Through the party school, these enterprise managers have not only improved their political literacy and theoretical level, but also learned modern management knowledge and corporate governance experience.

To specify the management knowledge:

- **Political Theory Study:** Courses emphasize political theory to ensure that trainees maintain a firm political stance and enhance their political awareness and theoretical knowledge.
- **Management Skills Training:** This includes practical skills such as strategic management, project management, and team management, improving their overall capabilities in enterprise management.
- **Modern Management Concepts:** Introducing modern management concepts and methods, such as lean management and innovation management, to help trainees cope with the complex and changing economic environment.
- **Practical Exercises:** Enhancing trainees' practical skills and problem-solving abilities through case studies and simulation exercises.
- **Collaboration and Exchange:** Encouraging interaction among trainees and with external experts to broaden their perspectives and enhance their overall competencies.

Table 1 below shows the training target personnel for further training courses at party schools (administrative colleges) at different levels. There are four levels of party schools: Central Party School, Provincial Party Schools, Municipal Party Schools, and County Party Schools. The Central Party School is the top-level institution, located in Beijing, and serves the entire country. Each province has one Provincial Party School, typically situated in the provincial capital. Municipal Party Schools are found in each city, while County Party Schools exist in each county.

The trainees are categorized into five levels: Provincial ministerial level, Department and bureau level, County Division Level, Township Section Level, and Grassroots Party Members. Provincial ministerial level refers to top provincial leaders, Department and bureau level includes leaders of departments and large organizations, County Division Level encompasses leaders at the county level, Township Section Level consists of leaders in towns and smaller communities, and Grassroots Party Members are the basic-level party members often working at the community level.

For example, only Provincial and ministerial-level leading cadres can attend the Central Party School, while Township section-level leading cadres can be trained at County Party Schools. The table illustrates the hierarchy of schools and the corresponding hierarchy of positions for students and cadres.

Table 1: The Training Target Personnel of Further Training Courses of Party Schools (Administrative Colleges) at All Levels and Training Courses for Young Cadres [2].

	Provincial ministerial level	Department and bureau level	County Division Level	Township Section Level	Grassroots Party Members
Central Party School	Provincial and ministerial-level leading cadres	Leading cadres of departments and bureaus, heads of state-owned enterprises, party secretaries and principals (heads of universities included in the central administration)	County party secretaries, some young cadres at the county level	-	-
Provincial Party Schools	-	Leading cadres at department and bureau level	Leaders of enterprises and public institutions of county-level leading ministries and departments	Township (community) party secretaries, some township young cadres	
Municipal Party Schools	-	-	Leaders of enterprises and public institutions of county-level leading ministries and departments	Township section-level leading cadres township section-level young cadres	
County Party Schools	-	-	-	Township section-level leading cadres enterprise and public institutions leading personnel	Township section-level leading cadres enterprise and public institutions leading personnel

Data source: Regulations on the Work of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Party Schools (Administrative Colleges)

The Regulations on the Work of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Party Schools (Administrative Colleges) further specify the duration of the courses, in particular the duration of the training courses for young cadres.

Table 2 below outlines the academic structure and teaching content of seminars, refresher courses, and training courses for young and middle-aged cadres at different levels of party schools.

The table shows three types of courses: thematic seminars, refresher courses, and training courses. Thematic seminars are short, typically lasting not less than 5 days, and focus on major strategic plans and important work topics. Refresher courses last at least one month, aiming to help participants apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems. Training courses for young and middle-aged cadres offer comprehensive education, including theoretical, party, and capacity-building components.

The length of the training courses varies by the type of party school. Central Party Schools offer the longest courses, usually not less than 4 months, followed by Provincial Party Schools with courses not less than 3 months, City (prefecture) Party Schools with courses not less than 2 months, and County Party Schools with courses not less than 1 month. This variation reflects the level and depth of training provided at each type of school.

Table 2: Academic Structure and Teaching Content of Seminars, Refresher Courses and Training Courses for Young Cadres

Classes	Academic Program	Teaching content
Thematic Seminars	Thematic Seminars are generally intensive, 5-day courses focused on a specific theme. Each day consists of eight hours of study. During these days, students typically stay in the school dormitories.	Focusing mainly on the major strategic plans of the Central Committee of the Party and the important work of local Party committees and governments to identify relevant topics and conduct focused seminars.
Refresher Course	Generally, not less than 1 month	To guide the participants to apply the theories learned to study major real-life problems for not less than one month and to guide their work practice.
Training course for young cadres	-	The training course systematically arranges theoretical education, party education, capacity building and related knowledge.
Central Party School	Generally, not less than 4 months	
Provincial Party Schools	Generally, not less than 3 months	
City (prefecture) Party Schools	Generally, not less than 2 months	
County Party Schools	Generally, not less than 1 month	

Forrás: Regulations on the Work of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Party Schools (Administrative Colleges)

It is interesting and noteworthy that in China, whether it is ordinary middle schools or party schools, city-level schools are higher in rank and generally larger in scale compared to county-level schools. This is also true for Chinese party schools. In contrast, in Hungary, county-level schools seem to hold more importance in public life than city-level schools.

The teaching materials for Party schools are mainly written or finalized by the Central Government to ensure a high degree of consistency with the Party's theories and policies. Commonly used teaching materials include the Outline for the Study of Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the Guidance Reader on the Report of the 19th Party Congress. In addition, Party schools at all levels also produce some local specialty teaching materials according to their own circumstances.

In terms of teaching methods, Party schools focus on linking theory to practice, and use various forms such as classroom lectures, case studies, seminars and on-site teaching. Some Party schools also offer online courses to make it convenient for students to study anytime and anywhere.

China's party schools are important educational and training institutions within the party, undertaking the important task of training party members and cadres at all levels. Although party schools do not issue degrees in the traditional sense, their education plays an important role in improving the theoretical level and practical ability of party members and cadres. Through systematic curricula and diversified teaching methods, the party school has continuously adapted to the needs of the times and cultivated a large number of excellent party and government cadres and enterprise managers.

References

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Notes

[1] The different cats symbolize a pragmatic approach to economic policy, suggesting that the effectiveness of economic methods is more important than their ideological classification. In the context of China's reforms, it meant that market-oriented strategies could be adopted within a socialist framework to promote economic development, emphasizing practical results over rigid adherence to traditional socialist doctrine.

[2] Young cadres in China refer to younger officials or party members who are being groomed for leadership positions. These individuals are typically in their 30s or 40s and are seen as future leaders within the Communist Party of China (CPC). The term emphasizes their potential for long-term service and advancement within the party hierarchy.