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## China issues strict new regulations on out-of-school training, restricting language classes and other subject-related courses

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In late July China's central government issued new regulations on training institutions providing out-of-school training for students in compulsory education (up to age 15), prohibiting for-profit companies from offering courses in a range of subjects and adding new restrictions on course content, delivery models and class times. Some of the restrictions also affect companies offering courses to high school students.

The announcement from the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council - titled "Opinion on further reducing the burden of homework and after-school training during the compulsory education stage" - will initially be implemented in 9 national trial cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu before being extended to the rest of the country at a later date.

Rules set out in the announcement include:

- New out-of-school subject training institutions for students at the compulsory education level (ages 6-15) and for pre-school students will not be approved, nor will new subject training institutions targeting high school students
- Existing out-of-school subject training institutions offering classes for these students must be converted to not-for-profit organisations
- Subject-related training may not be offered on weekends, national holidays or other school holidays for students at the compulsory education level, or at any time for pre-school children
- Online training may not be offered for pre-school students, and may not be offered after 9pm for students in compulsory education
- Subject training may not be based on foreign curricula or on local school curricula in advance of the student's current school year
- Out-of-school subject training institutions are prohibited from hiring foreign teachers to provide teaching from outside of China's borders
- Out-of-school subject training institutions are not allowed to seek financing by listing on the stock market, and foreign capital cannot obtain a controlling interest (including control via indirect means such as Variable Interest Entities)

Guidance from the Ministry of Education defines "subject training" as teaching covering nine school subjects, including foreign languages such as English as well as ethics and law, Chinese, history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. The MoE guidance does not draw any distinction between the national

English curriculum and other forms of English teaching such as conversational English classes. Subjects which the MoE notes are not covered under the definition of "subject training" include PE and health, art, music, integrated practical activities, IT, and technology education.

Aside from the restrictions on training institutions, the new regulations also specify that schools should limit the amount of homework they issue and may not issue homework that requires students' parents to be involved, and that schools should also offer additional after-school activities for students. School teachers are also banned from offering additional paid classes to students.

#### British Council analysis

Implementation has been delegated to the local level so the exact effect of the new regulations is not yet clear and will likely vary by region, but it is obvious that the new rules will have an enormous effect on companies providing after-school training across China, including language schools. The regulations will have a particularly strong effect on online language training companies that rely on teachers abroad to teach Chinese students, which have become very popular over the last few years but whose business model is now banned.

It is important to note that these regulations mainly apply to out-of-school training institutions and do not affect schools, including private schools. Courses for adult learners are also outside the scope of the new rules and will not be directly affected, while the regulations are ambiguous regarding the extent to which they apply to high school students and this will likely vary by region.

From the perspective of UK education institutions one possible effect of the new regulations could be a drop in the English proficiency of Chinese students due to the restrictions on out-of-school English classes – although the regulations aim to address this by encouraging schools to provide after-school learning support for students and promoting free online education resources. This will particularly affect spoken English which is not strongly emphasised in Chinese school classes. On the other hand there could be a positive impact on demand for short-term English language training courses in the UK among school-age Chinese students, particularly in summer schools due to the ban on courses offered in China during school holidays.

Another possible indirect effect could be related to several major agents in China being branches of large out-of-school training providers. Less exposure to these providers may make students less likely to consider overseas study. As with any effect on English proficiency, the largest effect would be on students currently in junior high school and below who would not be expecting to study a university course until at least 2025.

Sources:

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[http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xgk/moe\\_1777/moe\\_1778/202107/t20210724\\_546576..](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/202107/t20210724_546576..)

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