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EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN BEIJING

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M.Phil

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2010

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EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN BEIJING

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Philosophy

March 2010

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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Abstract

For the thesis titled “**Education for Migrant Children**”

Submitted by **Qi, Ji**

for the degree of Master of Philosophy

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This study is concerned with the necessity for the recognition of education as the most fundamental social protection for rural migrant children in China in light of their current situation in cities. A qualitative approach was adopted; a migrant school was studied and literature on the issue of education for migrant children was reviewed. A schema for protecting the education realization of migrant children was then recommended.

Among the most profound social and economical changes in the reform era must be the massive rural labor migration. Statistics from various resources indicate that the number of migrants fluctuates between 120 million and 200 million. Migrant population gets even bigger since migrant parents started reuniting with their children who used to be left behind in rural hometowns. As the number of migrant children climbs, the issue of how to educate them becomes more and more complicated.

Lacking social security coverage has long been an issue for the Chinese rural population. The continual existence of the *hukou* system with its lingering impact still differentiate migrants from their urban counterparts and deprive them of the basic entitlements and amenities available to themselves and to their family members. Like

their parents, migrant children have also experienced many hardships in cities, among which, the lack of quality education could be the most devastating one.

Migrant children do not have equal access to urban public schools for they do not have local *hukou*. Financial incapability of their families is another major factor resulting in the lack of education for migrant children. Meanwhile, non-financial barriers also prevail, such as the frustrating registration procedures, strict quotas, a supposed shortage of school places, and discrimination acts to exclude migrants from urban schools.

Education is a widely appreciated public service. With an education, migrant children could have a better and a proper place in the mainstream of the society, getting rid of the disadvantages caused by their rural identities, and to escape from the shadow of poverty and exclusion again. To protect their lawful rights to education, this research proposes to see education as the most fundamental social protection for migrant children.

Referred to previous researches, this research puts forwards a social protection framework to observe the various stakeholders involved in the issue, including migrant communities, migrant homes, public schools, migrant schools, local governments, as well as the academic circle, mass media and NGOs. Findings of the three months fieldwork in Beijing, in turn, help to conceptualize the framework against the backdrop of Chinese cities. In view of the vulnerable situation of migrant children, a policy scheme consisting of four types of measures, including protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures, is put forwards.

The study concludes that education is the most important social protection for migrant children, and the policies recommended are practically feasible if implemented carefully and systematically.

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List of Acronyms

ACWF	the All-China Women's Federation
ADB	the Asia Development Bank
BMEC	the Beijing Municipal Education Commission
CCTF	the China Children and Teenager's Fund
CCTV	the China Central Television
CMC	the Compassion for Migrant Children
CYF	the Chinese Youth Foundation
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
IADB	the Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	the International Labor Office
NBS	the National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODI	the Overseas Development Institute
PE	Physical Education
RMS-NBS	Rural Migration Survey of the National Bureau of Statistics
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
UN	the United Nations

PROLOGUE – CLOSING DOWN MIGRANT SCHOOLS

A STORM OUT OF “NOWHERE”

Thirty-seven Migrant Schools Closed Down in Haidian District in 2006

In July 2006, the local Education Commission of Haidian District in Beijing issued a circular ordering thirty-seven migrant schools within its jurisdiction to close given safety concerns and a lack of qualified teachers. As many as fifteen thousand migrant students studying at these migrant schools were affected by the incident. According to the circular, all students were reassigned to nearby public schools and were supposed to resume their studies there. All at once, the “sudden” and “unexpected” closure hit the headlines of various newspapers and websites, catching the attention of the general public. Around the end of August, public attention aroused by the incident reached its peak, as the new semester was at the corner.

A flood of reports were published successively, which were entitled as “Thirty-seven Migrant Children Schools Closed Down in Beijing District” (China.org.cn, 2006), “Beijing: Ten Thousand Migrant Students Drop school” (Li, 2006), or “Migrant Kids Caught in Dilemma on Eve of New Semester” (Tian et al., 2006). The incident also appeared as headlines on various overseas media, the impact of which was too far-reaching and thus hard to evaluate. The event was also intensified by the fact that it took place right before the start of a new semester. According to these news reports, many migrant children would be confronted with an

uncertain future, if the circular was for sure to be carried out. Xinhua News Agency reported on August 25th, 2006 that:

Fifteen thousand migrant children in a northwest district of Beijing are without a guaranteed place in school this coming semester after 37 schools were ordered to close in Haidian District (China.org.cn, 2006).

News reports on this topic also flooded various websites, for instance, the website of China Daily carried the report of Li (2006), saying:

The Beijing Haidian District Educational Committee recently banned more than thirty private schools established for migrant workers' children, leaving over 10,000 students without a place to study.

The news shocked the masses. Their impact had expended much beyond the affected migrants and their children, and reached the whole society, from the bottom to the top. Many of these reports and articles were illustrated with unfortunate pictures of migrant children studying at these migrant schools. Most frequently, children in those photos were either crying helplessly or leaning against the closed school gates, with a trace of sadness and loss on their little faces. News reports had constantly displayed to the public the disheartening hardships faced by migrants in regards to the education for their children and their frustration upon hearing the news of the school closure. Additionally, there were topics such as the reluctance of migrant children to go to public schools and the complaints of migrant school owners on the sudden closure, all of which had caused the local government consequences which were too ghastly for them to contemplate. For example:

The Haidian District Educational Committee has ordered the 10,000 students to resume their studies in public schools near where they live, while the principals of private schools doubt whether the public schools could take in so many new students. In addition, public school tuition fees are much higher than that of private schools, which private school principals believe will be the main obstacle for students whose parents are migrant laborers (ibid).

In a room of a residential area near Taizhouwu, Haidian District, Hebei migrant worker Chen Fu is anxious. The Xinli elementary school where his ten-year-old daughter Chen Jingxin studies, has been closed (ibid).

What Wang Mengcui, a migrant worker from Hebei Province, is concerned most about is that her child may be discriminated against by city students. Her child once told her "I don't want to be with students from the city. They are rich, and always look down on us (ibid).

Zhang Yue was surprised to learn that her school in Beijing had been closed down in July, and that she was assigned to attend a public school, with the start of the autumn semester fewer than 10 days away. "I will not go to a public school even if my school is actually closed," said 12-year-old schoolgirl Zhang Yue from Hongxing School. "My friends at public schools told me the local children don't want to play with them. The local children know we are not from Beijing and that we are not one of them so they treat us differently." "I like the teachers and my fellow students here," she said. "I'm afraid that I might be looked down upon by others in a public school even if my parents can afford the higher fee there" (Tian et al., 2006).

Xie Zhenqing, principal of Hongxing School which receives 1,400 students each year, is ignoring orders to close the school. She has promised parents the school will be open for the first day of the new semester today (China.org.cn, 2006).

People blamed not only the Education Commission of Haidian District who initiated the closure, but also the governments for its negligence and apathy in assisting migrant schools. At the same time, some people also queried the very legitimacy of such kind of official conducts. As a result, the image and reputation of the local Education Commission were adversely affected, and those of the governments at both the district and municipal levels were both damaged to a certain extent in a chain of reactions. To the contrary, migrant schools, rather than only the affected ones in Haidian District, but all of them, had all gained a complete triumph in the battle against the local governments by winning sympathy and support from the vast majority. With the heavy media coverage, they shifted their adverse position to an advantaged one. Rather than being shut down, they now had the public on their side.

Thereafter, parent pressure forced Haidian Education Commission to hold a public meeting to deal with cases of migrant children being turned away by public schools. Later in September, some newspapers and websites reported that the local government confronted with the reality had taken back its order, whereas migrant schools, rather than obeying the official order and being closed down, opened again in the new semester with almost equivalent attendance. The news was reported in a delighted tone, as if this was a victory jointly achieved by the media and the schools.

But, was it a victory? And if it was, whose victory was it?

A STORM OUT OF “SOMEWHERE”

Good Intention, Opposite Outcome, Local Government Left in Awkward Situation

During the past few years, it had no longer been rare to come across news reports or articles on the topic of government closing down migrant schools. In fact records on this topic could easily be found both in archives of various kinds and on websites as well. The intense exposure echoes well the Chinese saying that “good deeds always remain indoor while evil deeds travel a thousand miles”. Closing down migrant schools was one of the evil deeds which usually toured around for a while before it finally quieting down.

But unlike similar incidents that happened before, the 2006 closure had shocked the public to a higher degree than had ever been reached in the past, for the reasons that it not only took place at a inappropriate time, a time when everyone thought that the issue was developing into a better direction, and solutions for the issue of education for migrant children were just about to come up, but also for it had been enforced in such a radical manner, as if it were a surprise attack.

According to the news reports, the closure happened as abrupt and as sudden as a bolt from the blue, and migrant parents were found at a complete loss after it happened:

Along with the school closing notice, another notice for students' parents was sent to the private schools, informing them to get their registered permanent residence books, temporary-stay certificates and other papers ready to send their children to

nearby public schools before July 11. It is now one month past the deadline and only one of the parents interviewed knows about the notice (Li, 2006).

And the arrangement left migrant schools in such a critical situation too, in which their very existence was at stake (ibid):

A number of private schools submitted applications to the Educational Committee, looking for a reconsideration of the regulation, but still haven't received any response.

Little wonder that the closure had annoyed everyone.

But was it really a storm out of nowhere?

Interestingly, in her article published in the book <Blue Book of Education 2006>, Han (2007, pp.237-243) provided another angle to review the very shocking, attention-getting and publicly wrath-incurring incident of migrant school closure in Haidian District. According to her, the widely reported close-down was in fact not as abrupt as described by the mass media, as months before it took place, the local Education Commission had already issued a notice informing the coming action of shutting down “sub-standard” migrant schools. In addition, there was another notice to inform migrant parents to prepare “five required certificates” to enroll their children in public schools. As to the reason why the closure seemed to be a storm out of nowhere was that the notice had not been sent to migrant parents directly, but to migrant schools instead, as the local governments had wrongly expected migrant schools to help them delivering the notice, who apparently had the least intention to

do them such a favor. In the end, most migrant parents had no idea of what was going on until the very last moment when the closure took place. And they missed out on the rare chance to send their children to public schools for free. As clarified later by the local official Mr. L, Deputy Section Director from Beijing Municipal Education Commission, even the required certificates that used to be a must were exempted this time. Migrant parents who were unable to prepare all the five certificates were still welcomed to enroll their children at nearby public schools and no additional fees were charged. The official said that those certificates would still be required in the future (Telephone Interview with Mr. L, June 6, 2007).

Moreover, the point revealed by Han had also been confirmed by Mr. L, as he said:

The government of Haidian District had the good intention to provide public education to migrant children, but it was all ruined by a fatal mistake in their practice. They had wrongly expected the migrant schools to send out the notices to migrant parents, and only a few migrant schools did it, whilst the majority of them did whatever they could to hide the notice, either by ending the semester before the due date or starting the following semester ahead of schedule (ibid).

As a result, the outcome was totally running contrary to the original wish, and the news reports appeared on the various mass media both home and abroad had produced a very negative impact on the government's image. Facing the severe criticism, both the district education committee and the district government as well were as restless as ants on a hot pan. They came forward to explain to the public what had happened.

The Commission said earlier this month that most of the migrant schools, which collect cheap fees and suit the needs of low-income migrant families in the city, were found to have safety problems in an inspection carried out in March, thereby prompting the shutdown (Tian et al., 2006).

Zhu Jianxin, section chief with Haidian Education Commission, said that the Commission had allocated 13 million yuan (US\$1.625 million) to rejuvenate six idle school sites that have not been in operation for years and add 33 public schools for migrant children (ibid).

This year was the right time to close down these unqualified schools, he said, as the district had finally saved enough resources to make the change. Migrant children would be able to study at public schools, instead of the ill-equipped, shabby private schools for migrant children only (ibid).

Media exposures like these were heavy blows on the local authorities in Beijing, as the closure had once again deepened the impression by the public that the local governments could shut down unauthorized migrant schools at will, even at the expense of depriving migrant children of their lawful rights to compulsory education. And the reason adopted by the governments for justifying their radical measures was that these schools were illegal in status, for they could not meet the requirements for running a school. The reasoning appeared to be not convincing enough, and the government in turn was accused for setting the requirements unreasonably high for most migrant schools. Furthermore, the public also attributed migrant schools' failure to meet the requirements to the insufficient assistance rendered by the government in helping them to improve their quality:

According to the Educational Committee, an eligible school should have a startup fund of 1.5 million yuan and a 200-meter-long angular raceway. Chiefly financed by donations and with little, if any, governmental investment, most private schools for migrant workers' children cannot meet these demands (Li, 2006).

In a word, the outcome was ironic. It was the mistake made by the local government that trapped itself into this fierce criticism. So the criticism indeed aroused no mercy. Not any mercy at all, because the uncivilized manner of governments had long been part of the memory embedded in people's mind and to clean the "thought inertia" of the masses just could not be accomplished at one stroke. As remarked by the article, the failure of this official arrangement resulted both from the unrealistically made arrangement and the problematic enforcement procedures as well.

But again, was it really a big triumph over the wrongdoing of the government? Whose triumph was it? Who were the parties that benefited the most from this outcome?

Surely, it was not the affected migrant students, who might have had quality education at public schools for free, but now still had to pay for the less satisfactory education services offered by migrant schools, which in fact, was not as cheap as it had been described. Take the fees charged by the migrant school studied in the research for example. Students from grade one to six were charged 500 *yuan* per semester, while those from grade seven to nine were charged 800 *yuan*, plus 200 *yuan* for the school bus service and around 60 *yuan* per month for school meals (3 *yuan* per meal). In total, a migrant family had to pay as much as 1100 to 1300 *yuan* for one

child for a single semester. And the reality was that there were usually two or three children in one household. After the “*jie du fei*” (*Temporary Schooling Fees*, fees to study at a school away from the child’s registered permanent residence) was finally removed at some public schools in Beijing, compared with those students studying at public schools, those studying at migrant schools might have to pay even more. For sure, this was not at all fair and not in their interests either.

It was pointed out by Han that the mass media, for their own interests, favor dramatic stories (Han 2007, pp.237-243). Stories of children from impoverished migrant families, pictures of crying heartbroken students leaning against closed school gates, as well as appealing expressions of the schools owners asking for the mercy from the government all had added selling points to their publications and helped stimulate circulation. It could not be denied that there were many lofty-minded media who saw voicing out for the poor and striving for their benefits as their “born” social responsibility, and they endeavored to fight injustice and inequality. Nonetheless, some people inside the government felt otherwise. They felt that there was the possibility that some of the not-so-lofty-minded media were working for their own benefit. On second thought, even if they all had lofty ideas and goals, it could also be possible that sometimes the mass media might bang the drum for wrong parties by mistake.

Now and again, the mass media had been banging the drum for migrant schools, and it seemed that the last winner was none other than migrant schools. With public sympathy and support on their side, they survived the moment of life and death and were temporarily relieved (only temporarily relieved, as believed by the researcher). Meanwhile, the reaction of the public had taught the government an unforgettable

lesson that it should have never done anything hastily in the first place. Partially for this, and partially for the necessity to guarantee a harmonious environment for the coming 2008 Olympic Games, which had been the biggest political issue for the past few years, the local government lowered its banner and muffled its drum. Instead, it had on one hand kept on vigorously expanding the capacity of public schools in receiving migrant students and refining its financial system, on the other hand striven to retain a degree of amiability with migrant schools to appease public feelings. What would happen then in the post-Olympics period would be well worth pondering.

The above shows how complicated the issue could be, and it serves as a reminder that when coming to an issue that involves the different interests of various groups, due caution should be exercised in analyzing their relationships and roles. As to the issues of education for migrant children, there were several stake holders whose involvements could be easily identified, which included migrants themselves, the local residents, the government at both central and local levels, the owners of migrant schools, the mass media, the academic circles and the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) serving migrants as well. They all were connected in a thousand and one ways, and they all play important roles in shaping the policies regarding the issues of education for migrant children. They were also to different degrees shaping the way the problem of migrant children education was perceived and debated in social discourse.

Meanwhile, as it is said that facts should neither be considered in isolation from others, nor should they be examined as static. Everything that happens has a cause and effect. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the backdrop against which the closure took place. Equally important is to figure out how the issue had been developing

during the past dozens of years. To understand these issues is of vital importance for examining the issue of education for migrant children. To a great extent, it is also of vital importance to make attempts at exploring possible solutions for the issue, and these are what this research intends.

The thesis, therefore, is based on a case study recently carried out at a famous migrant school located at the edge of a small suburban village in Daxing, Beijing. It is a district where the migrant population concentrates. And the aim of the study is to identify the roles played by the various stake holders mentioned above, and to reveal both the positive and negative impact they have exerted on shaping the changes and development of the issue. In fact, not only the policy outcomes, but also the way how problems are perceived, constructed, understood; and the way how they are handled and addressed are deemed worth pondering in this thesis. Most importantly, the issue studied in the research is not to be examined in an isolated or static manner, but rather it is to be viewed as ever-developing, under an integrated background.

In a research involving the complicated impact of various parties, in order to avoid losing our bearings in the complexities of the issue, the benefits for migrant students is always to be addressed as the principal consideration that carries the heaviest weight in this research. That is to say, the lawful rights of migrant children to compulsory education and development are to be given the absolute priority.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Part 1, “Introduction”, sets the stage for the study. In the Chapter of Background, the need to study the issue of education for migrant children in Beijing is demonstrated against the backdrop of contemporary social changes in the city. Then, there is an introduction to the education system in China, followed by another brief about the Chinese household registration system. The concepts of “migrant”, and “migrant children” used in the study are explained afterwards. Objectives of the study and research questions are also included. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the organization of the thesis. In the next chapter, existing literatures are reviewed, with a focus on the vulnerabilities faced by migrants and their children, followed by an introduction on the situation in Beijing. Policies are presented and analyzed in the third Chapter. Literature on social protection and the social protection framework is to be systematically reviewed in the fourth chapter. Methods employed to collect and analyze data are addressed in chapter 5. The measures adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and ethical issues are emphasized as well.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKDROP FOR THE EMERGING EDUCATION PROBLEM OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Among the most profound social and economical changes in the reform era has been the veritable explosion of rural labor migration and the formation of a large migrant population in the cities and throughout the dynamic industrializing coastal regions (Mallee, 2003, p.136). Starting from the early 1990s, China has witnessed several waves of migrant populations, as millions from the countryside keep swarming into cities looking for better paying jobs. After setting out, many of them never go back to their hometowns. Some settle down and start small businesses, while many others, moving from one place to another, fight for survival. Migrants have formed large migrant communities on the outskirts of cities where life often constitutes a daily struggle. Migrant populations get even bigger since migrant parents started reuniting with their children who used to be left behind in their rural hometowns. As the number of migrant children climbs, the issue of how to educate them becomes more and more complicated. Almost all migrant children have their *hukou* (household registration) in their hometowns. As a result, back to a few years ago, the majority of them used to be kept out of the public

education system of the receiving cities, where permanent local residence was a must for enrollment.

Lacking social security coverage has long been an issue for the Chinese rural population. The problem becomes even more acute when rural residents moving away from rural hometowns and settling down in cities. Being separated from the natural supports they used to have back home, migrant population is exposed to the risky urban environment unprotected, where there is a new form of social risks in urban employment. Similar to the experience of their parents, the migrant children have also experienced many hardships. Among these difficulties, the lack of quality education must be the most devastating one. Statistics from the Beijing Municipal Education Commission (BMEC) reveal that approximately forty percent of the migrant children lived in Beijing in 2006 were not studying at local public schools (Confidential document, dated September 2, 2007). Migrant children do not have equal access to urban public schools for they do not have local *hukou* and thus are not considered eligible to the compulsory education provided by local authorities of the receiving cities.

In recent years, *hokou* has become less of a restriction, at least in principle. Many cities, including Beijing, have announced its policy to allow migrant workers to settle down in cities. As long as they satisfy some residential requirements, they would be granted equal rights and access to some social security measures, social services as well as other social protection entitled to their urban counterparts. However, this has not been the reality for many at a practical level. For the children of migrant workers, the remaining impact of *hukou*, the lack of financial capability, and many other factors are

still blocking their way to schools. Even if they finally succeed in getting a school place either at public schools or migrant schools, they are still being confronted with some difficulties, for example, they are discriminated by urban students. More often than not, migrant children have less opportunity in terms of schooling, the influence of which is devastating as it sets restrictions to their future development. Without quality education, they are about to be left in a disadvantaged situation in this highly demanding urban environment. Rather than moving upwards along the social ladder, they are more likely to follow the footsteps of their parents and continue to be kept at the bottom of the society.

In principle, “compulsory education” is a public service guaranteed to all school-age children by law and legislation. For migrant children, an education that could enable them to compete with urban children for professional work opportunities is the key to preparing them for greater integration and acquiring the cultural capital that could eventually win them cultural belonging and urban social right (Wang, 2006, p.27). Thus, it is an indispensable component of the Chinese welfare system and could be perceived as the most basic form of social security for migrant children, as it not only secures them a fair chance to be educated and to acquire the basic knowledge and skills in living, but also essential for them to have equal right to development. Education fairness therefore serves as the very foundation of social fairness. Without impartiality in education, the country’s efforts to narrow the rich-poor gap, to bridge the rural-urban disparity, to completely tackle poverty issues and to combat poverty more effectively would be all in vain. Therefore, under the current situation of an ever-extending rural-urban migration, both the central and local authorities should be encouraged and supervised to comply with their legal duty, or at least administrative responsibility in providing migrant children

with compulsory education, with urban public schools as the major channel for securing their lawful education rights.

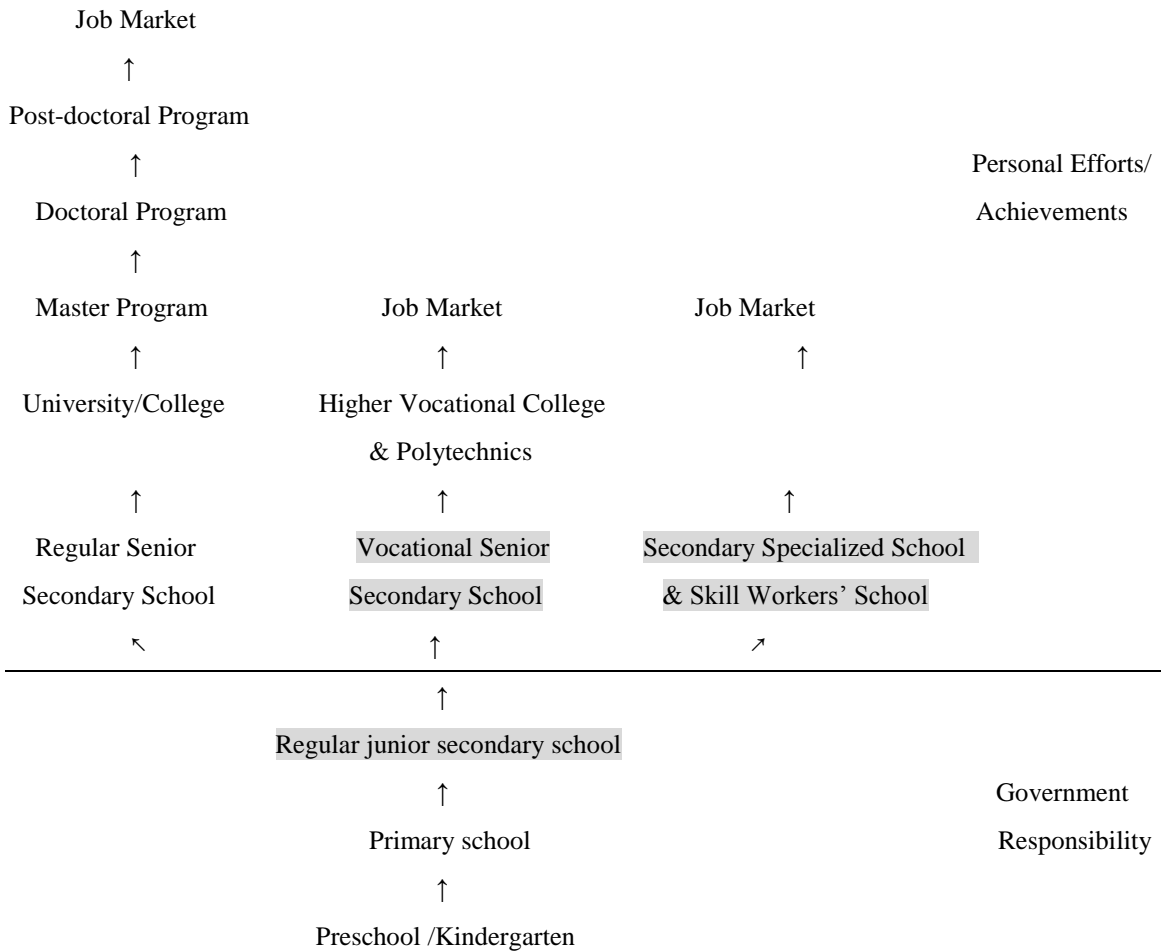
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CHINA

China runs the largest education system in the world (Wang, 2003, p.8). It provides a comprehensive education system of various types at different levels to its population which includes basic education, regular higher education, vocational education, special education, adult education, distant education as well as private education. Demonstrated by Figure 1-1, the regular academic path one might be expected to follow from childhood to early adulthood comprises basic education, regular higher education and vocational education.

Basic education comprises non-vocational public education from preschool through senior secondary school. Primary education is a six-year plan in which pupils study core subjects such as Chinese, Mathematics, English, Arts and Science, etc. Junior secondary school, which lasts for three years, is a continuation of the primary system with students studying almost the same subjects but at higher levels. Primary education and junior secondary education together are covered by the nine-year compulsory education system in China. Then depending on individual academic performance and personal interests, students may pursue the higher level secondary education either at regular senior secondary school or vocational education institute. At the former one, students must

select whether to follow science or humanities curricula and courses are designed to prepare them for the important university entrance examination.

Figure 1-1: Schooling Structure in China



The regular higher education excludes vocational and private institutions but includes short-cycle course or schools, undergraduate courses, and postgraduate programs, all offering training for formal academic qualifications. Short-cycle courses usually take two or three years to confer a college diploma or a certificate related to a specialty. Most undergraduate programs last for four years, with medical courses and a few engineering

programs last for five years. Master's degree programs last for two to three years. Doctoral programs usually take three years to complete (Wang, 2003, p.146). A policy was adopted to enlarge university admission in 1999, when university students only numbered 1.54 million. Since 1999, a steady annual increase of 500,000 has been achieved. It is estimated that by the year 2010, a total of 30 million students will be enrolled in Chinese universities.

Given the second choice, the vocational education system, in addition to the regular secondary education and the regular higher education, is well established in China. The scope of vocational education is large, even at the secondary level and below, providers of vocational education in China are many and varied (ibid). Students enrolled to vocational schools are expected to learn the knowledge of a particular profession or some specific techniques and skills. These technical schools offer several hundred different programs. Their narrow specializations have advantages in that they offer in-depth training, reducing the need for on-the-job training and thereby lowering learning time and costs (Wikipedia, 2008). However, the public have not been very enthusiastic about vocational education which, unlike general education, does not lead to the possibility of higher education. The public's perception is that these schools provide little more than a dead end for their children (ibid), and vocational schools are only a backup choice for students who are academically uncompetitive. Most graduates from vocational schools enter the job market with a less favorable salary. Furthermore, limitation also exists in their accessibility to better vocations. In recent years, the vocational education system in Beijing is withering, as it is experiencing a shortage of local student source (Interview with Mr. S, May 5, 2008).

Among these various institutions, a few are marked with background color. It serves as an illustration of at which stage many migrant children might leave the education system to join the labor market. Under the current circumstance, a migrant junior secondary school graduate, rather than going back to his hometown to receive higher-level education but staying in Beijing, might have very little chance to receive regular senior secondary education in Beijing, unless his academic performance is outstanding, and at the same time, his family could bear the high fees charged by local high schools. Senior secondary schools do not bear the responsibility to educate migrant students, as it is no longer included in the compulsory education. The price of senior high school education is much higher than that charged at the primary and junior secondary levels, as the cost of the education service itself is more expensive. The high fees required by local high schools would defeat many migrant families. On the other hand, the private sector, namely migrant schools owned by different individuals, has not extended their business to cover this stage yet. As a result, after graduating from junior secondary school, migrant students might either go back to their hometown to try their luck for the opportunity for senior secondary education there, or enroll at local vocational secondary schools in Beijing. They might also simply enter the job market at the age of 15 or 16. It is clear how disadvantageously their career lives start, given the fact that the enrollment rate of local students to higher institutes had reached 75.90% in 2008 (People's Daily on Line, 2008). Migrant children, leaving the education system much ahead of their urban counterparts, are left behind from then on.

HOUSEHOLD REGISTRATION SYSTEM IN CHINA

The household registration (*hukou*, in Chinese) is the system that the Chinese government implemented to control rural-urban migration (Wu, 2002, p.27), which started taking shape in 1951. Over the 1950s, China witnessed rapid urban growth as a result of high levels of migration from the countryside. Confronted with the economic crisis and famine in 1960 as a result of the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the Chinese Government opted sharply to restrict entrance into the cities, implementing the *hukou* system since the early 1950s' (Mallee, 2003, p.137), and the dual social structure that prevented the rural population from entering cities was eventually institutionalized.

It was through the reinforcement of the 1958 Household Registration Stipulations that Chinese peasants were turned into what Potter (1983) called "birth-ascribed" rural *hukou* holders. By requiring every Chinese citizen to register at birth with the local authorities as either an urban or rural *hukou* holder of a particular fixed place, this system divided the entire Chinese population into two different kinds of subjects with asymmetric power. Rural *hukou* holders were prohibited from migrating into the cities and were not entitled to receive state-subsidized housing, food, education, medical care, and employment; these were reserved for urban *hukou* holders only (Zhang, 2001, pp.25-26). Cut off from urban employment, guaranteed food supplies, subsidized housing, and other benefits of the city, peasants were anchored in the countryside for decades with virtually no spatial mobility. In the following two decades, non-state-directed population movements were largely eliminated from China's social landscape (ibid: p.26). In his research of the inequality in Post-Socialist urban China, Wang (2008, p.43) referred to the situation of

Shanghai. As the largest metropolis of China, Shanghai was also the city with the most effective migration control that was implemented during the planned economy era, whose total migration rate (including both those moving out and moving in) dropped from 10 percent in the late 1950s to less than 3 percent in the 1960s and 1970s.

In addition, *hukou* is primarily a “fixed” or “basically unchangeable” status because for most people it is inherited from their parents, and can seldom be changed during their lifetime. According to China’s *hukou* registration, children born from rural families hold a rural *hukou* at birth, and children born in urban families hold an urban *hukou* at birth (Wu, 2002, p.69). Transfer of registration required official approval, and, with the exception of state-initiated transfer, this was rarely forthcoming, particularly in case involving migration from the countryside to urban areas or from smaller to larger urban places (Mallee, 2003, p.138). Mobility between the two groups was thus extremely low under the strict restriction of the registered dual status system. The peasantry had few opportunities to enter into cities from the 1960s, except for extremely limited opportunities such as entering school, joining the army, or being recruited into urban entities (Research group for social structure in contemporary China, 2005, p.91). Due to effective control, from 1949 to 1985, the average internal migration rate of China was only 0.24, compared with the world average of 1.84 from 1950 to 1990. With the implementation of the rigid *hukou* system, China entered an era featured by low internal migration.

Coupled with an urban-biased developmental policy, such strict control over population movement only exacerbated rural underemployment and poverty (Wang, 2008,

p.43). In the process of China's industrialization, in order to accumulate capital quickly, the government arbitrarily set low prices for agricultural products and high prices for industrial goods. By doing so, the state was able to reap a huge profit of about 714 billion *yuan* from 1952 to 1989 in total. And despite the huge volume of capital accumulated from peasants, little was spent on the development of rural areas. Infrastructures were much better developed in urban areas than in rural areas (Wu, 2002, p.31). And the gaps between the two groups in economic interest and opportunities that were endowed by institutions were huge (Research group for social structure in contemporary China, 2005, p.91). It could be said that China's primitive accumulation of capital for economic development was achieved by sacrificing the interests of its rural residents, which does not sound a bit less harsh than the primitive accumulation that took place in its capitalist counterpart, if not more.

At the end of the 1970s, about 16 percent of the total population was labeled as "non-agricultural" and was eligible for state benefits, while the great majority of Chinese fell in the "agricultural" category (Mallee, 2003, p.138). The situation changed gradually in the late 1970s, when the government initiated the *Comprehensive Economic Reform* program. Since then the *hukou* system has been incrementally dismantled. The first step towards dismantling came with the introduction of identity cards in the late 1980s, which allowed persons to travel around China without showing an official "permission" letter from his/her local government. The next step was the abolition of grain rationing coupons in the early 1990s. These coupons were the means by which people obtained food rations which could only be used in their place of origin. With the abolition of the coupons, individuals could get food wherever they were. The third step occurred in 2001, when

residency in small towns and townships was open to all rural workers who were legally employed and had a place to live. At roughly the same time, medium-sized cities and some provincial capitals eliminated ceilings on the number of rural workers who could apply for permanent residence status.

There was another form of transfer which involved the trading of urban citizenship. In the late 1980s, small-sized cities started selling permanent registration, and later the practice was introduced to the big cities in early 1990s. The price of urban registration fluctuated in accordance to the social, economic and political status of these cities. Beijing, Shanghai and other large cities were considered the most attractive destination, and they were also the most difficult places to move to. After them came in order the medium sized cities, large towns, county towns and small county towns. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the villages (Davin, 1999, p.6). According to Davin (ibid: p.45), a *hukou* of small cities cost thousands of *yuan*, whereas ten times of the amount would be charged for a *hukou* in a suburb of Beijing, twenty times or even more for a *hukou* in Beijing city proper. The high price of the Beijing *hukou* would not deter those who really wanted to move. Beijing is the capital city of China. Living in Beijing is more than a mere residential arrangement, because it is also connected with status and the various resources exclusively available to its residents. Therefore, despite the higher charges, the new rich coming from other provinces have been resettling in Beijing.

Although the relaxation of *hukou* could no longer prohibit rural labor migration, it still restricts their access to social welfare enjoyed by urban employees. As summarized by Table 1-2, the benefits received by rural and urban residents differ in several

fundamental ways. As to the issue of education for the children of migrant workers, they are still being negatively influenced by the remaining impact of their rural *hukou*.

Table 1-1: Comparison between Rural and Urban *hukou*

Items	Rural	Urban
Income & consumption	Low	High
State-supplied food, grain and subsidies	Not eligible	Eligible
Housing	Self-built	Provided by work units with free or low rent
Job	Primarily in agriculture, some in non-agricultural temporarily in reform era Relying on children's support	Guaranteed and assigned in industrial and service sectors by government, permanent and stable
Retirement insurance	No	Pension paid to males after age 60, and female after age 55
Medical insurance	Restricted	Yes
Education opportunity		Favored

(Source: Wu, 2002, p.62)

MIGRATION, MIGRANTS, MIGRANT CHILDREN

Who are those being referred to as “migrants” or “migrant population” in this thesis? And who are those children being defined as “migrant children”? And last but not least, what kind of school is the so-called “migrant school”? Before heading to a detailed description and discussion in the following part, a clear explanation of these subjects of the study is necessary.

Migration

There is an endless debate on the definition of migration. In his research, Qian (1996, pp.23-25) summarized some of the definitions of migration made by previous researchers:

Lee defines every act of migration as involving an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles no matter how short or how long, how easy or how difficult. Eisenstadt, otherwise, defines migration as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering another and different one. Hagerstrand uses the term “migration” for the change of residence of an individual from one parish or commune to another.

It is clear that these definitions either view migration as an act or emphasize the changing of surroundings or settings involved in the processes. Nonetheless, none of them seems to cater to the migration taking place in the special context of China. Based on the comparison of different definitions, Qian (ibid) proposes to have this social activity examined within the framework of the social sciences and take migration as a human behavior with social consequences. And therefore, Qian considers the movement of those who leave the countryside for the purpose of gaining better social-economic opportunities in the cities (including towns at the county level) as rural-urban migration.

This definition of migration obviously matches the special situation of China. Migrant population here is composed mainly of people from the rural areas, where the social and economic condition is much worse than that of the cities. Quite a proportion of the rural population is living under poverty. At the same time, the lack of resources in the countryside has seriously hindered their development prospect. Their children's future development will also be greatly hindered. Therefore, rural-urban migration in China has its distinct feature, that is, it is driven by the desire to have a better life, stimulated by the fact that there are many more opportunities in cities, and is made possible for the economic reform has gradually pushed forwards the elimination of those obstacles preventing human migration.

Migrants

It is imaginable that every different definition of migration leads to a distinct explanation of the people involved on the move. This results in a diversified definition of migrant. For example, under Qian's definition, migrants are those who leave the countryside for cities aiming to gain better social-economical opportunities. Though the definition caters for one of the motivations of rural-urban migration, it fails to capture the impact of the unique household registration system, which in the context of Chinese society is too important to be neglected. In fact, the system of household registration has not only served to inhibit and shape migration in modern China, it profoundly affects the way migrants are viewed, and thus the terminology used to discuss them (Davin, 1999, pp.21-22). Therefore the best way to define migrant is to have it examined under the household registration system in China.

Under the household registration system, migrants are commonly categorized into two groups. Some discussions use the word "migrant" (*qianyi renkou*) only to refer to those who have crossed an administrative border with permission, transferring their *hukou* with them. These migrants may also be referred to as formal, legal or official migrants, while the unofficial migrants who move without permission are referred to as the floating population (*liudong renkou*) (Hoy, 1996, pp.8-9). The former group is also distinguished as "permanent" migrants, as after the official transformation of the *hukou*, they are not expected to go back to their origins. As mentioned, official migrants include the trained and educated workforce, such as university graduates and government employees, and the economically advantaged are also included. The latter group, namely

the less-educated, unskilled and semi-skilled labor with rural origins, is also defined as “temporary” migrants, as they are neither given a legal status to stay in cities, nor expected to stay there for long. They moved simply because of the economic push factors of the countryside and the pull factors of cities. They moved without possessing the administratively sanctioned “license” to move. Previously, they had no possibility of moving, but since the gradual collapsing of the *hukou* system, their “moving” became more possible and difficult to be “controlled” merely by administrative measures.

However, the distinctions made between migrants are generally inexact and inconsistent. The terms often convey the speaker’s attitude towards the group discussed rather than the characteristics of the migrants (Davin, 1999, p.22). By the words such as “migrants”, “migrant population”, or “migrant workers”, the thesis means to address the absolute majority of the rural labor migration, namely those who come from the lowest level of the social and economic ladder. Usually, this type of rural migrants is called “farmer-turned-worker” (*nongmingong*). But as a matter of fact, though this phrase is often heard and commonly used to refer to this type of migrants, it could be misleading. This is because not all migrants have turned out to be workers, as quite a number of them are employed by the tertiary industry and some others are still engaging in agricultural activities at the urban fringe. Therefore, the actually meaning of the phrase “farmer-turned-worker” is rather broad compared to the literal meaning. By calling them farmer-turned-workers, the researcher means to refer to those rural migrants who come from and are still being kept at the bottom of the society.

Having different rural origins and being engaged in different businesses in cities, farmer-turned-workers are not a unified entity, but they share so much in common. For instance, they were either unskilled or semi-skilled workers who were only needed for manual jobs; local legislation had excluded them from taking government employment or other high-status jobs; they had been underpaid, and some were required to work around the clock; the current social system made them the “cheap labor force”, but not “permanent” members of urban society; their various social needs generated in cities or springing from urban living had been neglected, sometimes, even for particular reasons, so as to maximize the interests of the cities.

Usually, they were looked down upon by urban residents for their attire, mannerisms, living habits, and accents in speaking *Putonghua*, as well as for their low educational level, low status employment, and poverty (Kwong, 2006, pp.163-167). Not only were they not socially accepted by many urban residents, they were also not even considered members of the urban community. Due to their lack of urban *hukou*, migrants used to be officially excluded from taking government employment or other high class jobs (ibid: p.166). Though unequal policies of such might have been relieved a little bit today, given their comparatively low or even “insufficient” education background, migrants are still being employed as cheap manual labors. The lack of urban *hukou* also prevents migrants from being recognized by the public service and welfare systems offered to urban residents. In other words, when coming to cities, migrants would not only be detached from the supports they used to depend on in the countryside, but would also be exposed to new potential hazards in the urban environment. For migrant families which have

children moving together with parents, they are sooner or later faced with the difficulties of securing education for their children.

Three main groups of migrants in major cities were identified by Mallee (2003, p.149) based on their occupations: the largest group consists of construction workers. Virtually all unskilled and semi-skilled construction is done by rural migrants, mostly young males, organized in teams along native place lines. Many teams are run by or associated with the authorities at origin. The construction workers work long days and usually eat and sleep at the construction site. Their daily lives are often highly regimented, with strict rules about leaving the site. A second major group consists of industrial workers, not only in the large cities, but also in industrial parts of the countryside, townships or urban fringes. In some industries, such as textile and electronic factories, young migrant women predominate. Larger factories usually offer accommodation and meals, and most industrial workers lead disciplined and isolated lives. The third major group consists of self-employed migrants and those working in small enterprises and households. This includes peddlers, traders operating market stalls or counters in shops, garbage collectors and waitresses, as well as domestic workers and sub-contractors of agricultural land on the outskirts of the cities.

Migrant Children

It is understandable that every distinctive definition of migrant population leads to a corresponding explanation of who are the so-called migrant children. Generally speaking,

the phrase “migrant children” could be understood in two different ways, a broad and a narrow sense. In its broad sense, the term “migrant children” refers to both children with rural origins who are on the move with their parents and those who are left behind at their rural hometowns and looked after by their relatives. Whereas in its narrow sense, the term is used only to address those children who migrate to other places with their migrating parents. For clarity consideration, the term “rural left behind children” is to be distinguished from the term “migrant children” as the latter are really “migrating”, or “moving away”, with their families.

Therefore, the phrase “migrant children” in this thesis is being used in its narrow sense. To be exact, it is used in an even narrower sense, as it only used to address those children whose parents are “temporary” and “unofficial” rural migrants, who belong to the third group identified by Mallee as self-employed migrants who are usually working as peddlers, traders operating market stalls or counters in shops, garbage collectors and waitresses, as well as domestic workers and sub-contractors of agricultural land on the outskirts of the cities. Migrants belonging to the first two groups and working as construction or industrial workers need to live on the construction sites or in the dormitories provided by their factories. Their living pattern decides that they are more isolated and thus are less likely to be accompanied by other family members. Furthermore, more often than not, many young migrant workers are the second generation of rural migrants themselves. It is less likely for them to have their own children, in particular, to have their children raised on the working sites. In contrast, those migrants who are self-employed are those who are most likely to move with their other family members, like their spouses and children. Therefore, to study the education

provision for migrant children, it is the children from these families who should be given full attention.

BEIJING – LOCATION OF STUDY

Beijing, the capital city of China, is the locality for carrying out the research. Beijing is selected for this study for the following reasons: first and foremost, Beijing has always been one of the most important magnets for migrants. It is estimated that there are six million migrant workers staying in Beijing in 2006. Official statistics revealed that the number of migrant children in Beijing had reached 400,000 already in that year, and the number could even be higher. According to the webpage of the China Children and Teenager's Fund (CCTF), statistics show that there are over 500,000 migrant children living in Beijing, all of whom are in desperate need of education and emotional support. The scale of the issue is large enough to be worth studying and gain policy attention. The experience of the migrant population in this metropolitan area provides a glimpse of the situation of migrants living in other big cities; and the conclusions to be drawn here may be applicable to other big cities facing the same phenomenon.

Secondly, statistics and estimations provided by different sources on the issue of education for migrant children are very inconsistent, which always results in an incomplete picture of the overall situation. Statistics from official sources surely could let us know more about the general situations of migrant children and their schooling. Yet the clarity and accuracy of data are not always that easy to ascertain. Beijing, as the

capital city of China, is always the model for other cities to follow. Its centrality in public attention also makes it adhere more with some formally given rules and administrative procedures. Beijing as the capital city could be regarded as most representative as policies always originate there. It is therefore perceived as most suitable to be selected as the focus for this study. Therefore, this thesis aims at exploring the situation of Beijing so as to better understand the reality of providing schooling for migrant children in China.

Some existing research shows that for several years when many other places, such as Shanghai, were making progress, Beijing's leadership was evidently more careful and cautious. This "less radical" approach to the issue seems to illuminate some firmly held ideas and perception on the issue. As the political centre of China, Beijing also best shows the direction where the nation is heading towards. Besides, it is obvious that Beijing is also the place where the highest expectations are concentrated. Thus, how does the local authority perceive and handle the problem? How does it react to the heightened demand for proper policy to deal with the issue? All these are essential questions that might have local as well as national implications worth studying.

Last but not least is the accessibility. As it is known, migrants are often in the margins of the society. So to reach them and to study policy arrangements for them would be encountered with a lot of obstacles, though not all unsolvable. Connections with certain people and assistance from them will facilitate this study. As a local citizen, the researcher had more resources to rely on in Beijing. For instance, the headmaster of the migrant school studied in this research provided the author with a rare opportunity to teach and live at the school. Officials from Beijing Municipal Education Committee and

Xuanwu District Education Committee rendered assistance to the researcher due to the personal relationships established before. All of these had paved the way for the author to the potential interviewees whose opinions were extremely needed. Without these indispensable points of view, the thesis would not have been as complete as it is now.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Education for migrant children seems to be an issue of great uniqueness and pressing importance, otherwise it would not have attracted such enormous attention from both home and abroad. The issue has also developed into a favored topic in academic circle. It could be said that the total number of research papers during the past ten odd years had been increasing in a way similar to the ceaselessly expanding volume of migrant population. Together with media exposure, publications of researchers from various organizations had not only helped to bring this issue into public attention at the early phase, but had also made consistent efforts to look for solutions to the problem all through its developing stages. They had contributed incredibly to the improvements achieved so far. However, it is undeniably that only in the last few years diversified viewpoints stemming from social sciences had been adopted by researchers to examine the issue, whereas most of their predecessors used to stop at descriptive levels.

To fill the remaining knowledge gaps and to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the issue of education for migrant children in Beijing, this thesis, based on a case study recently carried out at a famous migrant school located on the edge of a

small suburban village in Daxing District, aims at identifying the roles played by the various stakeholders involved, and to reveal both the positive and negative impact they have exerted on shaping the relevant policy discussion and outcomes. Moreover, it also targets at having the problem viewed in an ever-developing and integrated manner. To achieve these goals, this research pursues the following objectives:

1. Exploring the social, economic and political factors still impeding or facilitating reasonable education policy and educational facilities provision as well as development for migrant children in Beijing;
2. To identify the various stakeholders involved, and to have their negative or positive impacts on the arrangement of education for migrant children analyzed;
3. To investigate to what extent the idea of guaranteed education is perceived as the most basic social right which is unalienable to children of migrant workers.
4. To develop a framework for restructuring and reforming the existing education facilities arrangements so as to ensure better prospects on education for migrant children;
5. To propose policies and measures to deal with those factors hampering the proper realization of social right of education for migrant children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the above mentioned objectives, the following questions bear significance in the study:

1. Under the existing economic and social conditions, what obstacles are impeding proper policies to securing education for migrant children?
2. In what way and to what extent is education for migrant children as basic right and basic social protection adopted as a policy objective by the government, accepted and understood by local residents and recognized by migrant children as well as by their families?
3. What policy options are available to improve the existing situation in term of the following:
 - i. Increasing government's policy initiatives to secure education opportunities for migrant children.
 - ii. Improving the existing situation by better integrating different types of schools to provide a comprehensive education networks to suit migrant children's needs and to take care of their special attributes.
 - iii. Promoting and advocating the ideas of education as a basic right and

social protection for migrant children

- iv. Arousing public concerns and spreading the idea that to integrate migrant children in the local formal education system is necessary and desirable

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of three parts, namely “Background to the Study”, “Presentation of findings” and “Discussion and conclusion”.

The brief introduction to the background of the study, as presented above, is the beginning of Part 1. In the following second chapter of Part 1, there will be a review on existing literatures. The literature review will serve as a conclusion of existing research findings and lead to the identification of research gaps. The Third chapter will be a study on social policies on education for migrant children issued both at local and national level. A theoretical framework will be developed in the Fourth chapter of Part 1. The framework will facilitate an integrated and dynamic exploration of the personal and social factors influencing the issue of education for migrant children. The presentation of the research methodology will be the focus of the Fifth chapter. Ethical issues will also be addressed in this chapter.

Part 2 of the thesis will be the presentation of findings. Findings of the study will be presented from chapter 6 to chapter 11, among which, chapter 6 is on migrant communities and migrant homes visited in the research. Then, each of the following five chapters will focus on one of the stakeholders involved, with migrant schools, public schools, migrant parents, local officials and academic circles, foundations and NGOs discussed respectively.

The discussion of findings will be in the Part 3. Chapter 12 is to conceptualize education as a social protection provision against the backdrop of Chinese cities. While, based on the findings of part two, policy recommendations are to be put forwards in chapter 13. Chapter 14 will be devoted to some closing remarks and several suggestions concerning future researches.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: VULNERABLE MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE UNWELCOMING URBAN CONTEXT

China has witnessed unprecedented population mobility in the past two decades. Since migrants tend to move from the countryside to urban areas, from economically less developed regions to more advanced settings, and from the Midwest to east coast, large-scale geographic mobility of the population has changed population distribution between urban areas and the countryside, and across regions (Zhai & Duan, 2006, in Yang & Duan, 2008, p.3), which has yielded multiple social consequences at the national, household, and individual levels (Yang & Duan, 2008, p.3). Being exposed to the urban environment unfamiliar to their rural experience, migrants and their children become extremely fragile, as if they were snails losing their protective shells. In the first two sections of this chapter, literature on the vulnerabilities of migrants and their children are to be extensively reviewed, followed by the last section focusing on the situation in Beijing – locality of this research.

VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANTS

Recently, the National Bureau of Statistics issued the Studies on Chinese Migrant Workers' Quality of Life, in which 17 indexes—which covered income, consumption, housing, health and medical care, work time, social welfare, and rights and interests—were used to measure the quality of migrant workers' lives. All of the workers involved in the survey worked in urban areas in 2006. The purpose of the index system was to reveal the differences between the quality of urban and rural residents' lives, by comparing the urban and rural indexes. The results indicated that the average index of the migrant workers' quality of life was only half of the index for urban residents (Tong, 2006). Many reasons contribute to this phenomenon. To explore the causes of their vulnerabilities against the urban backdrop, therefore, is fairly important.

Basic Information of Rural Migrants

Statistics from different resources regarding the number of migrant workers vary greatly. According to the figures provided by the National Bureau of Statistics, there were some 120 million rural labors employed and living outside their townships for over three months in 2004; their numbers reached 132 million in 2006. Whereas, Nielson and Smyth (2008, p.3) support the idea that the number of migrants fluctuates between 120 million and 200 million. Statistics also indicate that over 80 per cent of rural migrant workers stayed in the cities together with some family members and nearly 20 per cent had moved with their whole families. It should therefore be noted that the total number of

rural migrants is even larger than the number of rural migrant workers, as there is an obvious rising tendency for rural migrant workers to move with their families. With this trend considered, Li estimated that the total number of migrants is around 160 million (2008, p.5). However, due to the absence of an efficient monitoring system, there is lack of accurate statistics concerning rural migrants. Still, estimations like these could offer some general idea of how big the scale of the issue could be.

Li (ibid: p.6) identified that the number of rural migrant workers from each province is largely proportional to the size of its rural population. But some provinces such as Sichuan, Henan, Anhui, Shandong – all of which have large rural populations – provide more rural migrant workers to urban areas, compared to less populated provinces such as Qinghai. A survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicates that Henan and Sichuan had over 10 million rural migrant workers who had migrated to seek employment in 2004, with that figure continuing to increase in the two years that followed (ibid).

Migrant workers account for a large proportion of the work force in manufacturing and construction. The 2000 Census data indicate that 68 per cent of all jobs in the manufacturing sector and 80 per cent in the construction sector were filled by rural migrant workers (Research Office Project Team, 2006, in Li, 2008, p.9). Meanwhile, in the services sector, rural migrant workers accounted for 52 per cent of the work force in 2000, and the percentage is believed to have been kept rising since then (Li, 2008, p.9).

One major characteristic of rural migrant workers is their low educational attainment. By examining the data collected in the Rural Migration Survey of the National Bureau of Statistics (RMS-NBS) of 2004, Li (ibid: p.11) found that 65 per cent migrant workers were lower-middle school graduates, while 18 per cent had an educational level of primary school or below. This means that at that point, 83 per cent of all migrant workers had completed no more than nine years of schooling. In rural China, compulsory education is in principle also nine years since 1986. It is therefore quite likely that those rural residents aged 40 or above were not able to receive 9 year compulsory education when they were at their school age. Yet it is widely understood that even for those now aged below 40, who are assumingly entitled for 9 year free education, could still have left schooling at an earlier age. It is also true that all along the last two decades, the enrolment rate of rural dwellers in upper-middle school (school years 10 to 12) is relatively low, although it has been increasing slightly recently. This comparatively low education attainment may not be significant for them to stay working in the villages, but coming out for urban employment is another story, the low educational attainment of rural migrant workers indicates that they are enter the labor market as unskilled workers, and most could just fill up jobs that are low-skilled, low income, and most likely under relatively harsh working conditions.

Low Income and Excessive Working Hours

As pointed out by Zhu (Zhu et al., 2009, p.7), low income levels, unequal pay, and excessive work overtime are important characteristics of the rural-urban migrant situation

in China. Engaged in 3-D jobs (dangerous, dirty and demanding) that local residents do not want to take (Du, 2008, in Zhu et al., 2009, p.4), migrants have made tremendous contribution to both Chinese and world economy. But their share of the pie is pitiful. According to national statistics, the net income of rural residents accounted for only about 10% of GDP, while the wages of migrant workers is less than 10% GDP. In other words, the rural population with no urban residential status (including those staying in the countryside and those moving out to make their living in urban but still with rural *hukou*) accounts for nearly 80% of China's population but shares less than 20% of GDP (Kelly, 2008, p.23).

The average income of migrants in Beijing in 2000 was 900 *yuan* a month while the city's average was 2,000 *yuan*. In Shanghai, their average monthly income was 680 *yuan*, about two-thirds that of the average in the city (*ibid*). To compensate for the decline in real wages, rural migrant workers accepted ever longer working hours (Li, 2008, p.12). A research conducted in 2002 show that 80 per cent migrants worked seven days a week. One third of migrant workers had to work 9 to 10 hours per working day, almost one quarter 11 to 12 hours, and 12 per cent 13 or more hours per day (*ibid*: p.14). In recent years the relaxed enforcement of *hukou* has provided migrants with more opportunities to establish themselves in cities. However, the continual existence of the *hukou* system with its lingering impact still differentiate migrants from their urban counterparts and deprive them of the basic entitlements and amenities available to themselves and to their family members who come out along.

Obviously, rural migrants come out for a reason, and cities take them up also for a reason. They are supposed to take up jobs most urban residents are no longer willing to take up. The social system of today treats migrants as cheap labor force open for exploitation, but not real members of the society.

Lack Equal Employment Opportunities

Migrant workers also do not have equal access to employment opportunities in the cities (Zhu et al., 2009, p.4). There used to be an institutional basis for such a disadvantaged position of rural-urban migrants, which was laid down in “The Interim Regulations Regarding the Management of Employment of Inter-provincial Rural-urban Migrants” released by the then Ministry of Labor in 1994. The key guidelines of this document included the principles of “local job seekers first, migrants second” in dealing with employment issues in the destination cities of rural-urban migration (Li, 2002, in Zhu et al., 2009, p.4). Under these guidelines, many local governments of migrant destination cities released regulations to set aside certain industries and occupations for local residents and restrict migrant access to them in the 1990s (ibid).

In her research, Kwong (2006, p.166) pointed out that “*hukou*” excluded migrants from taking government employment or other “better” jobs and made them a marginal labor force, and sometimes, merely cheap and temporary labor force. In Beijing, they used to be restricted to 200 job categories that include the lowest and dirtiest blue-collar jobs. Similar measures have been taken in Shanghai. As a result of these administrative

limitations, about 57 per cent of the Anhui migrants in Beijing are construction workers doing carpentry, bricklaying, cement work, painting, electrical installation, and cleaning, the rest work in restaurants or as domestic helpers.

In addition, rural-urban migrants were required to obtain an “employment certificate” for employment, and such certificates were not easily available to them, unless the employment need could not be met by the local residents (Zhu 1999, in Zhu et al., 2009, p.4). In recent years, governments of different levels have taken measures to ease the various burdens of migrant workers. However, Du (2008, in Zhu et al., 2009, p.4) found that there are simply still many problems in the implementation of such measures, and it is still a pending issue to secure the rights of equal employment for migrants in the cities.

Discrimination and Exclusion

Rural migrants stand apart from the urban population in the receiving cities. Given their lack of economic and political power, they belong to the lowest social stratum and are looked down upon by the majority or dominant group (Kwong, 2006, p.164). Over two-thirds of the migrant respondents in a 1994 survey conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan felt being discriminated against by the city people and did not want any contact with them (ibid). Kelly (2008, p.26) attributed the disadvantaged situation faced by migrant workers to the exclusion caused by their ambiguous status, saying that:

The emergence of the minggong (rural migrant workers) created a pool of people with even lower status and citizen rights. They are liable to be technically excluded from both village and urban community citizenship on the basis of residence. This pariah status is structurally induced and is at the root of the discrimination they face in making their livelihood, even though it is their labor which drives the export processing industries to which China owes its high rates of economic growth.

This form of institutionalized discrimination has been reinforced by the *hukou* system, which, as aforementioned, was originally designed to control the flow of resources between urban and rural China during the planned economy. Nonetheless, the impact of *hukou* goes well beyond simple registration. What are associated with an urban *hukou* are various kinds of hidden entitlements to better social security, better employment and pay. While holding a rural *hukou*, migrants are deprived of protection by various labor laws and regulations; they are excluded from getting to a higher position along the occupational ladder, even if they accumulate relevant experiences; and, they are likely to be “fixated” at the lowest rank of the social stratification.

In addition, family members, including rural kids, coming along with migrant workers share these adverse living conditions. For children in particular, they used to be excluded from getting access to compulsory education they were originally supposed to be entitled to. Even with recent change in policy and the call for better protection of children’s right to education, concrete practices are still trying to drive them away. It is therefore not uncommon that the assumed “unalienable” right to education has been deprived. Getting accustomed to the privileges offered by an urban *hukou*, urban

residents usually see migrants through colored spectacles, believing that migrants are merely inferior members of the society, given their poor economic situation, weak education background and their lack of manners. School authorities of migrant receiving cities, as well as parents of local families, are constantly excluding migrant children from the education system subtly or even explicitly.

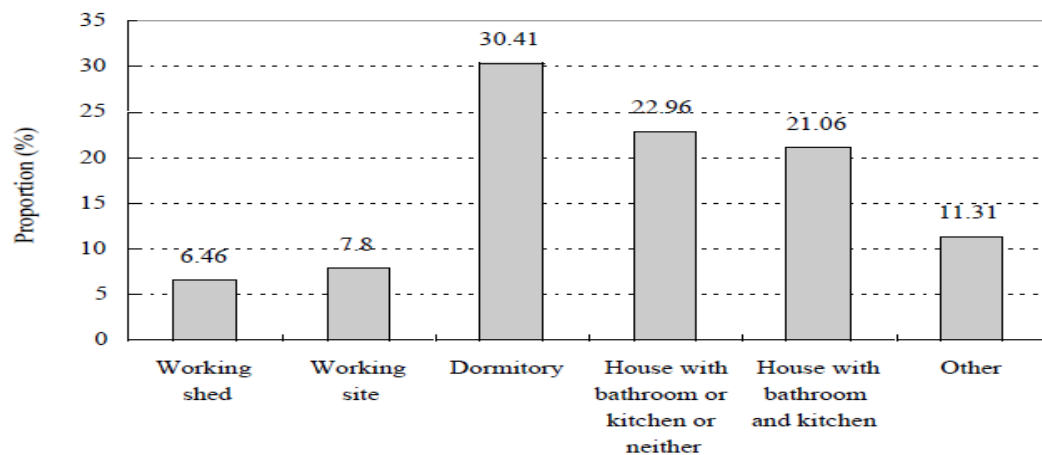
To date, the government has introduced numerous regulations to facilitate the movement of rural residents into towns and cities. However, it simply sought to modify, rather than to abolish the *hukou* system. With the *hukou* system still in existence, rural migrants and their children would never be fully recognized as members of the urban community. As a result, migrant children's right to education is constantly being challenged.

Housing Conditions

According to Zhu et al. (2009, p.7), housing is another important aspect of basic needs for rural-urban migrants in the cities. However, such needs have been largely neglected in most destination cities in China, especially in social housing provision of these cities. The disadvantaged situation of migrants is first reflected in the fact that they are excluded from all sources of government subsidized housing provision, and have very few choices in meeting their housing needs in the destination cities (ibid).

Many studies reveal that the most common housing choice for rural-urban migrants is rental housing, followed by dormitories provided by their employers (ibid). According to a survey on migrants conducted by National Bureau of Statistics in 2006, 6.5 per cent of migrants live in working shed, 7.8 per cent live in working site, 30.4 per cent live in dormitory, 23 per cent live in house without bathroom or kitchen and only 21 per cent of migrants live in house with both bathroom and kitchen. The remaining 11.3 per cent of migrants live in other places (See Graph 2-1):

Graph 2-1: Housing Arrangements of Migrants



(Source: Wang, 2008, in Cai et al. 2009, p.17)

Moreover, since migrants usually follow their friends, relatives or family members when moving out, they usually form their own communities at the outskirts of cities, which more often than not are both geographically and socially apart from the urban society. Usually, migrants from the same neighborhoods are engaged in similar businesses, and have very limited communication with local residents. Due to this, a cultural and social environment that similar to the one of their rural origins has been

transplanted and reserved in cities. Though to a certain extent, living in a compact community helps migrants to build up a supporting network, it also excludes them from entering the mainstream and further intensifies their isolated situation, for the reason that the prevailing social, economical and cultural situation of migrant communities is very much different from those valued in urban value system.

As pointed out by Zhu et al. (2009, p.7), the above situation shows that the current system of urban housing provision in China takes little of the housing need of rural-urban migrants into account, making it difficult for them to settle down in the destination cities, or even live decently in the cities on a temporary basis. Concerning migrant children, the housing condition, the community context as well as the accommodation pattern of migrants are all creating some disabling elements for them to integrate into the mainstream of the urban societies.

Lack of Social Security

In addition, most migrant worker could hardly get access to social security coverage for them to face up to the hazardous aspect of urban living. In fact, because of the policy orientations and the administrative arrangement of social policy in urban China, the majority of migrant workers is without any social security coverage at all (Kelly, 2008, p.24). In urban areas, local residents are covered by a social safety net, although not a very complete one; their children are guaranteed nine-year compulsory education; in some cities they have access to low-income housing; they are covered by various types of

labor protections; they could also get access to social security, such as the minimal social protection, minimum wage payment, old age pension contributions, and etc. To the contrary, very few migrants participate in social insurance schemes (Nielsen & Smyth, 2008, p.4).

At a workshop organized by the National Social Insurance Administration in Beijing, in 2006, Pi Dehai, the Deputy Director General of the Social Insurance Administration Centre, stated that as of June 2006, 16 million migrants were participating in industrial injury insurance; 11 million migrants were participating in pension insurance and 10 million migrants were participating in medical insurance nationally. Based on the most conservative estimate of the 120 million migrants in China, these figures represent only 13 per cent of migrants participate in industrial injury insurance; 9 per cent of migrants participating in pension insurance and 8 per cent of migrants participate in medical insurance (Nielsen & Smyth, 2008, p.4). Compared with the statistics of urban residents, it could be said that the social security coverage of migrant workers is simply too thin.

With little social security, migrant workers are in an extremely dangerous situation in the demanding and uncertain urban environment. According to one report, migrants account for more than 90 per cent of the deaths due to workplace injuries and 50 per cent of those with occupational diseases (Xinhua Net, 2006, in Nielsen & Smyth (ed.), 2008, p.5). Approximately 15 to 20 per cent of migrant workers living in the urban areas live below the poverty line (Solinger, 2004, p.6). They are often denied payment for their labor, with a total of 360 million hit by unpaid wages (ibid: p.16). With great sympathy, Chung (2004, pp.281-292) commented that when coming to cities, migrants would not

only be detached from the informal, natural and indigenous networks they used to depend on and they will also be exposed to new potential hazards on top of the common human life crisis they have to face in living. Without taking the life risks they are exposed to, social protection measures are only offered to their local counterparts, which is the disappointing and unfair situation those migrant workers have to accept without bargaining. This group of people is in fact a group of orphans from social security protection.

As commented by Kelly (2008, p.24), such poor treatment of the migrant workers originates in the rules of the social contract: they have no direct share in the social entitlements of urban government's rent-sharing. What they need to maintain their family living in the city can be dismissed when determining their wages. Obviously, with most social security provisions and social services entitlements primarily linked to local residency, it is difficult for migrants to arrange education for their children, so that their children, like they themselves, are also trapped in a disadvantaged position in cities.

VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

Statistics from the fifth national census, conducted in November 2000, indicate that China had nearly 20 million migrant children. In 2002 and 2003, the National Working Committee on Women and Children, under the State Council, and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) conducted a survey among 12,000-plus migrant workers and more than 7,800 migrant children in nine of China's largest cities—including Beijing,

Shenzhen, Wuhan and Chengdu (Tong, 2008). Most of those migrant children come to the cities because they have to join their parents who have already been working in the urban areas.

For many migrant parents, bringing their children to the cities and enrolling them in local schools seemed the best way to provide their children with a chance to pursue their ideals of a good life. However, in a majority of cities, migrant children were unable to attend state schools without paying several kinds of miscellaneous fees. According to the research of ACWF, 9.3 per cent of the children were totally unable to attend school, and nearly 50 per cent of the children failed to go to school when they reached appropriate school age (ibid). For many migrant children, moving to cities brings about great changes to their schooling.

Financial incapability of their families is a major factor resulting in the lack of education for migrant children. While means should not be a factor to deprive schooling of children has been held high by the government and by the society, the real life practices working another way round are always “understood”, “tolerated” or simply “accepted”. Meanwhile, non-financial barriers also prevail, such as the frustrating registration procedures, strict quotas, a supposed shortage of school places, and discrimination acts to exclude migrants from urban schools. Most schools authorities and even local governments have their “good” reasons for keeping these discriminating and excluding practices in place.

Administrative and Institutional Barriers to Education

Firstly, large numbers of children of migrant parents living in cities are being denied the right to education due to the restrictions imposed by the *hukou* system.

Recent studies of migration in China have highlighted the importance of *hukou* in determining the life chances of internal migrants (Solinger, 1999, in Liang & Chen, 2005, p.30). Also, it has been widely recognized that their lack of urban *hukou* has dramatically reduced migrant children's chances to attend public schools in cities, where two criteria are important for schools to admit students. First, students must reside within the local school district in the city; and secondly, students must be registered in the school district as well. The reasoning behind these regulations is that since the education budget is allocated through local governments, if temporary migrant children are allowed to attend local schools, it actually increases the financial burden (Liu et al. 1998, in Liang & Chen, 2005, p.30). Under the *hukou* system, local governments in cities have no obligation to invest locally mobilized education funds in educating migrant children, who are by definition outsiders.

Although the central and local governments regularly issue regulations spelling out how migrant children ought to be admitted to local schools, in reality these regulations address only the situation of officially registered migrant workers, who represent a minority of the total number of migrants living in most big cities (HRIC, 2002, p.3).

Secondly, in addition to *hukou*, in order to enroll their children in local public schools, migrant parents also need to go through cumbersome and costly procedures (ibid) to obtain various kinds of documents required for registration.

According to her observation, Goodburn (2009, p.497) pointed out that migrant parents who did not have at least the required identification card, temporary residency permit and work permit, or whose children had been born “out of plan” (unauthorized by state population planning polices), were unable to enroll their children in any public school. All the public schools she visited emphasized the need for the correct documents. Two of the schools even required a total of eight documents from the parents before a migrant child could be enrolled, including identification card, temporary residence permit, employment permit, health certificate of the parent, population planning certificate, social insurance certificate of the child. As remarked by her, given the large proportion of migrants who did not have these documents, many children were thus excluded from education even before the affordability of education is considered.

In view of these rigidly applied administrative and institutional barriers, Human Right in China (HRIC, 2002, p.3) estimated that hundreds of thousands of children might have already been deprived of their right to education under Chinese and international law. Over the next decade, millions of children may suffer in this way.

Discrimination in Public Schools

Even if some migrant children could break-through the barriers and be admitted to local public schools, not all of them ended up happily there, as discrimination in public schools might pose another serious problem to these children.

Firstly, the state education system itself reinforces discrimination against migrant children. For instance, unlike their urban peers who are automatically in, migrant children must first take the entrance examination arranged by the schools they apply for. It may be more exact to say that this arrangement is primarily serving to “screen-out” but not “screen-in” migrant children. Even if some migrant children could perform outstandingly in this examination, school authorities may still choose not to let them in. Moreover, migrant children quite often do not carry along with them relevant records on schooling performance, or simply they do not have officially recorded schools files and grades when they were in the village.

Secondly, for many migrant children, even if they could get through the gate of local public schools, they may still be exposed to unfair treatment. For example, in most schools, migrant students have no right to take part in the selection of “triple-crown students” (an honor given to students who are good at studies, work and physical training). In fact, many schools fail to treat migrant workers’ children the same way that they treat urban students when choosing successful candidates and selecting participants for extracurricular activities (Tong, 2008). In some cases, the school authority may even not to make proper official records on migrant children’s school performance.

Wen, a bright girl who studies at another Beijing primary school, has achieved excellent grades. However, she has never made the list of the “triple-crown students”. She has complained to her parents. “I outperform most of the urban students in both studies and performances, but why don't they choose me? Is it because I come from a rural area in Sichuan?” (Tong, 2008)

Thirdly, though expenses remain an important factor, discrimination from the urban peers is another reason why some migrant children have voluntarily given up their chances to study at local public schools. In their opinion, urban students, who apparently don not share any common interest with them, are so different from themselves, given which, urban and rural children find it hard to understand and communicate with each other. A research in Beijing reveals that, the relationship between rural and urban students is not satisfactory enough, as about 58.3% migrant children do not like local kids, who seemed to be too arrogant (Ban & Yu, 2006, p.11). Recently, a reporter from Women of China interviewed some local students at a primary school in Beijing. Responses from local students revealed the existence of this gap (Tong, 2008):

Fan, a fourth grader, said, “Last semester, a boy from a rural area of Anhui Province came to our class. Every day during the noon break, he went out to buy a steamed stuffed bun. When someone asked him why he didn't have lunch at school, as most of us did, he said he liked eating buns. In fact, we all know he wants to save some money, but we wonder why his parents cannot afford a few hundred yuan (dozens of US dollars) for his lunch every month?”

Sixth grader Yuan said, "Many rural children in our school look dirty, and they wear shabby clothes. They seldom talk or play with us."

When the reporter asked some migrant children if they liked their schools, most said "no." They gave various reasons, such as "some urban children like bullying us," "they often laugh at us because of our dialects," and "they look down on us."

Fourthly, in addition to the discrimination within schools, migrant children are discriminated against by the urban residents. As a result, many of the children suffer from emotional trauma. Pun Ngai's work (1999, in Goodburn, 2009, p.498) on migrants in Shenzhen clearly demonstrates urban opinion of migrants' behavior as "peasant-like", "dirty", "untrustworthy" and "ignorant". Migrant communities in Beijing are seen predominantly as sources of crime and disorder. Migrant children are not free of these associations. According to Goodburn (ibid), migrant children were commonly perceived by local residents as being "out of control", "not disciplined", "dirty", and "ignorant". A public school teacher confessed that many local parents do not want their children to sit in the same class as migrant children. Some of the state school teachers also seemed to share these attitudes. An expert remarked that this kind of discrimination might leave them coping with lifelong emotional trauma (Tong, 2008).

Financial Obstacles

The government regulations stipulate that students who attend schools in places other than their place of household registration to pay enrollment fee of 480 *yuan* per semester (Cao, 1997, in Liang and Chen, 2005, p.30). This, it turns out, is a much-discounted price given what the local governments have to finance. Instead of denying access to education entirely for temporary migrant children, many schools in cities actually allow temporary migrant children to attend but their parents must pay “education endorsement fees”, which are as high as 2,000 *yuan* for elementary school and 50,000 *yuan* for high school per year (ibid). To some extent, according to a high school principal, the central government is shifting financial responsibility to local governments, which are in turn shifting it to schools. According to Han, an expert in this area, (Xinhua Net, 2004), the insufficient central investment is the fundamental cause for the financial difficulty faced by migrant families:

That’s where problems arise... When they cannot receive enough funds from the government, some of the schools accepting migrant children have to ask the students for money.

The total fees varied widely among schools, and ranged from 1,200 to more than 8,000 *yuan* per term for primary school education, with junior and senior high school levels costing more again (Goodburn, 2009, p.498). Of the 5,065 respondents participating in the Studies on Chinese Migrant Workers’ Quality of Life, nearly 50 per cent had submitted the “temporary schooling fees” and “supporting fees.” The per capita

cost was 1,226 *yuan*. Although many local governments have issued policies prohibiting the collection of such fees, implementation of the policies has been less than satisfactory, due to the lack of effective intervention by relevant departments (Tong, 2008).

In 2000, public primary schools in Beijing charged migrant children an extra “enrollment fee” of 600 *yuan* and the charge for junior high schools was 1,000 *yuan* per semester (Han, 2001, in Sa, 2004, p.7). Besides, individual schools could demand an “education endorsement fee”, which ran between 2,000 *yuan* and 5,000 *yuan* annually for a primary school and 5,000 *yuan* for a junior high school (Liang & Chen, 2002, in Sa, 2004, p.7). Adding all these up, the expenses for migrant children to attend a public school in Beijing in 2000 were at least ten times that of a rural school. With few exceptions, the extra fees charged to migrant children were beyond the affordability of most migrant parents who typically worked at low-paid jobs (Sa, 2004, p.7). According to the research of Han carried out in 2003, 20.2 per cent of 31,000 migrant families surveyed were living on 500 *yuan* or so a month, 43.2 per cent on 500-1,000 *yuan*. Based on the research, she concluded that:

Public schools in Beijing are financially off limits for the children of migrant workers (Xinhua Net, 2004).

To make it even worse, some school authorities may require migrant parents to settle the extra fees charged for migrant children on a “one-shot” basis, the amount will be the number of expected remaining years of schoolings times the annual fees level. In her research, Goodburn (2009, p.498) found that, before enrolling in a government school,

any child without a residence permit in Beijing was required to pay two official government sets of fees, an “education compensation fee” (*jiaoyu buchang fei*) of 1,000 *yuan* a semester and a “temporary schooling fee” of 680 *yuan* a semester. These were in addition up to 15 different other fees, levied by the individual school. She was told by the teachers interviewed that migrant parents were always asked to pay all these fees before the child could begin school. Practices like these apparently did not suit the situation of migrant families, as they were not only short of money but also might need to move around after working opportunities. It is therefore not unfair to speculate that all these “unreasonable” practice were with the hidden intention to drive migrant children away.

Evidently, the cost of schooling at public schools is far more than affordable for most migrant families. Not to mention fees, many migrant parents just could not pass those non-means hurdles. As a result, quite a number of migrant parents gave up enrolling their children at public schools. An alternative for those migrant parents was to send their children to migrant schools, which usually were unlicensed and in poor condition. Some may argue that this offers a way out for migrant children education. As long as their right to education is materialized, are migrant schools not doing something positive for migrant workers? If the issue of quality and long term implications are taken into consideration, this optimistic and understanding air could hardly be confirmed.

Private Solution – Migrant Schools

In response to the demand for education for migrant children and the difficulties of enrolling in local schools, there is an emerging phenomenon in many large cities: schools that cater particularly to migrant children (Liang and Chen, 2005, p.31). Migrant schools were all privately owned, usually by the schools' principals, and operated for profit (Goodburn, 2009, p.498). As they have limited or no access to public schools, migrant workers turn to the private schools established for their children. However, many of those schools are encountering a lot of problems (Tong, 2008).

First of all, conditions in unlicensed migrant schools were generally very poor (ibid). The study by Liu et al. (1998, in Liang and Chen, 2005, p.31) provides a portrait of a typical story for migrant schools in big cities: delayed age at school enrollment, low socioeconomic background of parents, high mobility among students, and problems with teachers' qualification and school infrastructure. According to the observation of Tong (2008), there are harsh conditions at many private primary schools for migrant children in Beijing, and some of those facilities are located near dumps or construction sites. It is common for a dimly lit, 20-square-meter classroom to be filled with 50 students. Based on her observation at a migrant school, Goodburn (2009, p.497) wrote that:

The school had neither water nor electricity: there were no lavatories for the children and the classrooms depended on the open door for light. The classrooms were heated during the coldest part of the winter with coal bricks, while the door was kept open for light and to let out the smoke. The children wore padded coats and hats in class.

Secondly, most schools were unable to offer the full state curriculum, as only a few teachers have a higher education and relevant teaching experiences. In particular, teachers for music, physical education, Natural science and English courses are always in short supply (Tong, 2008). According to Goodburn (2009, p.499):

Many migrant class teachers had an educational standard only slightly above that of their pupils and little or no training as teachers. A teacher admitted that she could not understand the English lessons she read from the textbook to her class. Neither she nor the students were able to copy accurately words from the textbook onto the blackboard.

Thirdly, migrant schools are lacking teaching resources. The Education Supervision Office of Beijing's municipal government discovered, during a recent investigation, that teachers, in many of the private schools for migrant children, lacked proper resources. In fact, many did not have teaching aids for music, art and physical education classes. Although some schools had some teaching materials, they were put away due to lack of space. Many of the schools either had very small playgrounds, or none (Tong, 2006).

Despite these disadvantages, migrant parents still feel content that their children are receiving an education. In addition, some special features of migrant schools make them more than mere backups for those who are rejected by public schools.

For instance, the ethnic and geographical mix of children at migrant schools was much more varied than that in most public schools in Beijing. The diversified background

of students helped to prevent discrimination and bullying in the schools, making them much more welcoming than public schools (Goodburn, 2009, p.499). Moreover, migrant schools were much appealing to migrant parents for their lower charges. Extra fees were not usually levied for uniforms, trips, extra tutoring and so on. Therefore, sending children to migrant schools became a far more affordable option for low-paid migrants. Finally, many migrant schools also waived or reduced fees for students whose parents are too poor to pay. Arrangement like this would mean a lot for those families with more than one child.

In light of their cheaper charges, flexible operation, as well as management catering to the particular needs of migrant families, it can be said that migrant schools indeed have their advantages in this market.

Official Closure

On the other hand, most migrant schools were technically illegal, since they were not registered with local authorities. Migrant schools had to develop their own strategies to survive in the gray area. As described by Goodburn (2009, p.499):

Some schools paid a regular fee to the police for them to turn a blind eye to their operations. Others would regularly shut down and reopen in a new location to avoid the attention of the authorities. Still other schools relied on their inconspicuous appearance and out-of-the-way locations to evade inspection

It was difficult for migrant schools to make improvements to their teaching and facilities, not only because of their very limited resources but also because of their vulnerability to closure by the government without warning. Unlicensed schools could be closed down by local government departments at any time. Migrant schools in Beijing were thus constantly under threat of closure, which usually happened with no warning, and with no attempts to ensure that children's schooling was not disrupted (ibid: p.497). The shutting down of 50 schools by the local authorities in Fengtai district in 2001 and of 37 schools in Haidian in 2006 are examples of this kind of school closure.

The uncertainty waiting ahead stopped many operators from investing more to improve their schools:

School principals were thus left facing a serious contradiction: they were unable to improve the quality of education and facilities while under constant threat of closure because of their perceived low quality. Not only did a lack of state support or investment make it difficult for migrant schools to provide migrant children with a decent learning environment of the sort that local children enjoy, but the state's efforts to eradicate such schools lowered the quality of migrant education still further (ibid).

Even though abrupt migrant schools closing-downs were often accompanied by official promises that migrant students affected would be assigned to near by public schools, with cheaper or even no charges. However, not often could promises like these be eventually realized. In face of the high charges collected by public schools, some

migrant parents had to send their children back to the countryside. To conclude, there are simply too many uncertainties concerning the education for migrant children.

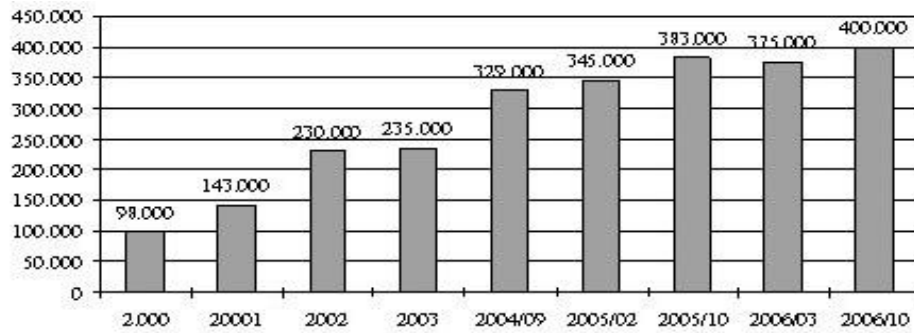
EDUCAITON FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN BEIJING

The previous section, while outlining some previous studies and discussion on the vulnerability of migrant children, particularly in education, has already described some common situation encountering migrants. Some of those evidences are concerning the situation of Beijing as well as many different migrant taking cities and towns. For Beijing in particular, some specificities could also be added.

Large Number of Migrant Children in Beijing

The situation of education for migrant children in Beijing can be best demonstrated with an official document offered by a government official from Beijing Municipal Education Commission. According to the document, the number of migrant children in Beijing was increasing rapidly from 98,000 in 2000 to roughly 400,000 by the end of 2006 (See Graph 2-2):

Graph 2-2: Number of Migrant Children in Beijing since 2000



(Source: Confidential Document from BMEC, dated February 9, 2007)

Among the 400,000 migrant children, 62.5% were admitted by public schools, 11.7% of them attended private schools, and the rest 25.8% went to migrant schools (See Graph 2-3).

Graph 2-3: Migrant Children Attending Different Types of Schools in Beijing

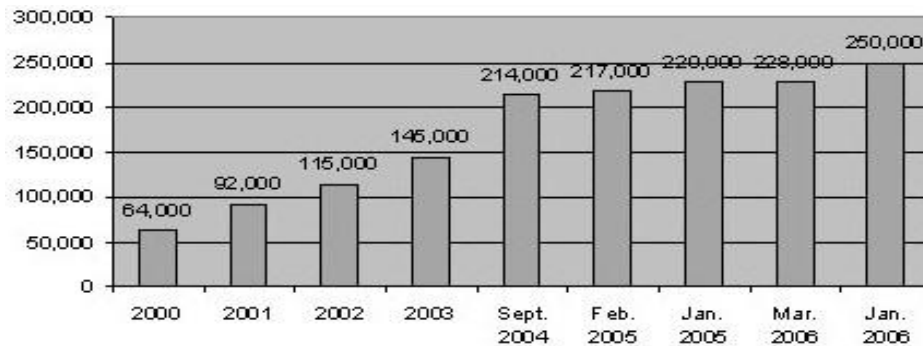


(Source: *ibid*)

The paper signaled the possibility that during the last few years, capacity of public schools and civil-run schools in receiving migrant children had witnessed a stable increase. To a certain extent, this improvement could be attributed to the efforts made by

local government, for it had been further expanding the capacity of public schools in receiving migrant children (See Graph 2-4).

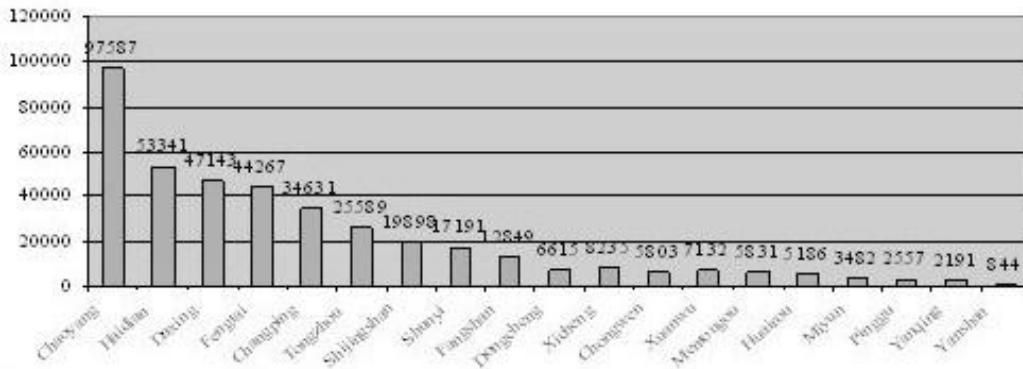
Graph 2-4: Migrant Children Attending Public Schools in Beijing



(Source: *ibid*)

In terms of distribution of migrant children in Beijing, an unevenly distributed pattern could be identified, that is, four districts in the city proper and six districts or counties in the outer suburbs only hold 12 per cent school-age migrant children, whereas, nine districts in between hold 88 per cent. This distribution pattern suggests that nine districts on the outskirts are faced with more pressure in educating migrant children (See Graph 2-5).

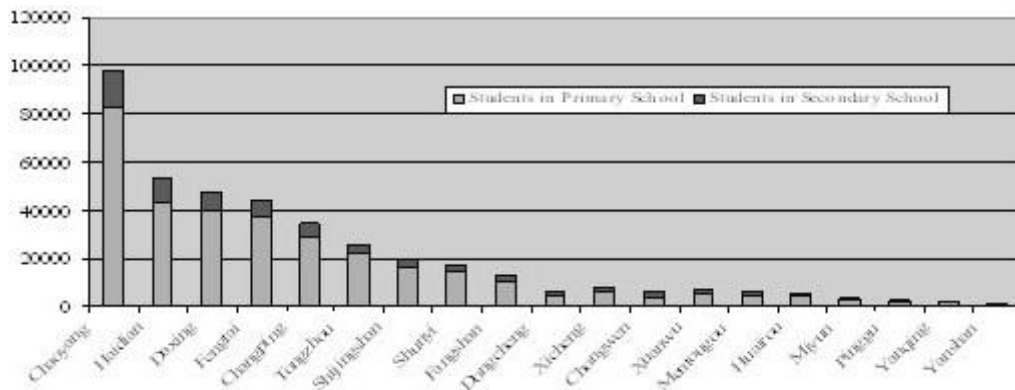
Graph 2-5: Migrant Children Living in Different Districts in Beijing



(Source: *ibid*)

Statistics also suggest that the number of migrant children attending primary schools far exceeded that of students attending junior high schools, with the former reaching 82.9 per cent and the latter standing at 17.7 per cent. It is predictable that with these children growing up, junior schools in Beijing are going to see an increasing pressure in meeting the education needs of migrant children (See Graph 2-6).

Graph 2-6: Distribution of Migrant Children in Different School Periods



(Source: *ibid*)

The researcher is always cautious on figures provided by officials as the reliability of those data is sometimes questionable due to various reasons. However, it may still manifest how the problem is being conceptualized by those in position to deal with it. Moreover, it has to be admitted that statistics collected from other sources are also inconsistent or fragmented.

Slow Action

It seems that different cities have adopted different approaches to deal with the issue of education for migrant children. Apart from their individual social and economical conditions, Kwong (2004, p.1080) attributed the reason to the policy of decentralization:

With the decentralization a major policy in the 1980s, secondary and primary education came under local jurisdiction. The central government no longer dictated its decisions to the localities. Instead it made suggestions: admit the children into public schools, build new government schools, help enterprises build migrant children schools, and promote private schools. These suggestions accommodated the heterogeneous interests of the local governments and gave them much room to maneuver.

Kwong (ibid) pointed out that this flexibility allows local governments to put different weights on different parts of the policies and regulations issued by the central government, depending on their orientation and situation, and to pass their own

regulations with regard to the governance of these migrant schools. Some unsympathetic local governments felt no responsibility to educate migrant children. Contrary to the spirit of the central directive of encouraging private schools to cater to these children's needs, they focused on their regulatory role and closed the schools for violation of educational regulations. On the other hand, sympathetic local governments who recognized the migrant workers' contribution to the economy have been willing to accommodate their children's needs. Based on their observation, the HRIC highly praised the proactive actions adopted by Shanghai and Tianjin:

The Shanghai government selected Pudong New District, Xuhui District and Minxing District as pilot areas, all of which have a high concentration of migrants, and set up a study group to examine the problem of schooling for migrant children and young people in these areas. The Municipal Education Commission also conducted seminars at district and county levels to investigate the problem. Pudong New District published and distributed a booklet "Ensuring the Schooling and Education of Migrant Children and Young People in Accordance with Law", and organized talks and activities to promote the education of migrant children.

The party leaders of the Tianjin Municipality explicitly stated that the schooling problem for migrant children is to be dealt with by the government of receiving areas. The government also set up a special experimental study group at both district and county level to study the issue of education for migrant children and explore ways of running schools... Tianjin Municipality includes the schooling for migrant children in

the work of “nine year compulsory education”, and specific state personnel are appointed to carry out the job at both district and county.

However, unlike Shanghai, Tianjin or other cities which took immediate action to make provision for these children, the Beijing municipal government was slow to act on the issue. For instance, after the 1998 Provisional Measures were issued, Beijing only publicized a discussion paper, entitled “Beijing’s Plan towards School-age Children and Youth”, this is a document not very sympathetic towards migrant children. According to the paper, only a few migrants who had made long-term contributions to the city were qualified to send their children to public schools. It was only in August 2002, four years later, that the city government passed the temporary regulation on the education of migrant children (Kwong, 2004, p.1081). Zhou compared the measures employed by several cities in response to the 1998 Provisional Measures and found that Beijing did not formulate any local regulation, not to mention any real practice (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1: Numbers of Migrants and Their Children, Proportion of School Drop-outs, and Local Supporting Policies

	Number of Migrants	Number of Migrant Children	Proportion of School Drop-outs	Support Policy 1	Support Policy 2
In General	80 – 120 m	7%-10%	-	Yes	-
Beijing	3.29 m	80,000 ¹ 160,000-200,000 ²	62.5% ¹ 30% ²	No	No
Shanghai	2.37 m ³	190,000 ³	39.25% ³	Yes	No
Guangzhou	2 m	150,000	30%	Yes	Yes
Tianjin	0.6 m	7000	-	-	-
Wuhan	1.5 m	500,000 moved with households	-	Yes	Yes

(Source: Zhou, 2001)

Note:

- 1 Based on the statistics collected in the 1994 sample survey on migrant population in Beijing. Figures only refer to children aged between 6 and 14.
 - 2 Based on the statistics collected in the 1997 migrant population census.
 - 3 Based on the research of Zhou and Yang in 1997 research on migrant population in Shanghai.
- Supporting Policy 1 refers to the formulation of policies at local level under the direction of the central government in 1998.
- Supporting Policy 2 refers to the implementation of the policy in real practice.

For this, local governments in Beijing have long been criticized for their negligence and apathy in assisting migrant children:

In Beijing, where there are more rural migrants than in many other Chinese cities, the city's municipal government has been particularly unsympathetic to migrants...The city authorities have allowed public schools to charge uncapped extra fees and have focused on enforcing the closure of private schools which do not meet minimum standards (Goodburn, 2009, p.503).

Improvement was only achieved by those cities which had employed a more proactive approach in dealing with the issue. For those with an ambiguous stance, coping strategies adopted by them would never be efficient enough to guarantee the education rights of migrant children. Different situations in different cities show that good policies indeed could facilitate the development of the issue.

Different Districts, Different Approaches

In addition, decentralization has affected the lowest levels of government. Even district governments in Beijing have not implemented this city regulation in the same way. Beijing is divided into ten districts and eight counties; each local government has enforced different parts of the central policies, adopting only strategies that coincide with its own interests (Kwong, 2004, p.1081). For example, Fengtai district has taken a particularly firm stance against unlicensed schools while, at least since 2001, failing to provide public school education for the children affected by school closures. By contrast, Xuanwu District and Shijingshan District had each, by 2002, set aside two state-funded schools solely for migrant children (Goodburn, 2009, p.503). The number of students admitted was not large because of the many restrictions imposed on the children for admission. Nonetheless, these schools represent the first positive step taken by the district governments in the education of migrant children (Kwong, 2004, p.1082).

Such sympathetic action is the exception rather than the rule. The projected excess educational facilities in Beijing are not located in districts with high concentration of migrants, and district and county governments where the floating populations cluster are not willing to use their resources to educate migrant children. They see the migrant community as a source of trouble and believe that because the parents brought the children to the urban areas, the children are the parents' responsibility and not the urban government's (ibid). In addition, as to the four districts in the city proper (Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chongwen and Xuanwu), their apparent advantage also lies in their flourishing

local economy. In consequence, they are able to allocate more financial resources to cater for the needs of migrant children (see Table 2-2).

Table 2-2 : Uneven Distribution of Migrant Children and Different Approaches Adopted by District Governments

District/ County	number of migrant children	Public school	Authori zed migrant school	Unauthorized migrant school	
				Number of school	Number of student
Dongcheng	6615	6241	374	0	0
Xicheng	8235	7899	336	0	0
Chongwen	5803	5803	0	0	0
Xuanwu	7132	6458	100	1	574
Chaoyang	97587	47796	2804	80	46987
Haidian	53341	38579	3544	28	11218
Fengtai	44267	39274	3124	2	1869
Shijingshan	19898	9705	1657	9	8536
Mentougou	5831	5831	0	0	0
Yanshan	844	844	0	0	0
Changping	34631	14472	11960	31	8199
Daxing	47143	18285	12208	22	16650
Fangshan	12849	8166	3006	9	1677
Tongzhou	25589	14516	7355	6	3718
Shunyi	17191	13400	18	16	3773
Huairou	5186	4800	0	1	386
Miyun	3482	3480	2	0	0
Pinggu	2557	2557	0	0	0
Yanqing	2191	2012	179	0	0
Total	400372	250118	46667	205	103587

(Source: Confidential document from BMEC, dated February 9, 2007)

Moreover, local governments in Beijing are usually blamed for shifting its responsibility to migrant schools. However, a closer look at the above table seems to offer some counter-arguments. Official figures revealed that nowadays most migrant children benefit from the preferential policies issued during recent years. If this is true, criticism of such could be regarded as over-generalizing the specific situation of some

districts to all, and thus overlooks the improvement achieved by other districts. Moreover, by simplifying the various causes of a complex social issue to one single aspect, the accuracy of this critical remark is also questionable.

Still, many studies could not agree with the optimistic air of government officials. According to Goodburn (2009, p.497), for example, although the Beijing Municipal Government has decreed that migrant children “fulfilling the conditions for attending schools on a temporary basis” will be able to enroll in state schools in the neighborhoods where they reside, provided that they obtain an “approval permit for temporary schooling” (*jiedu pizhun shu*), in practice it seems that many migrant children in the capital are still excluded from state schooling through a variety of official and unofficial mechanisms.

SUMMARY

Arguments and contradictions like these seem to be inevitable for several reasons. Given the scale of the issue, as well as the ongoing internal population movement from rural to urban, issues relating to migrant workers, and the problem of migrant children’s education in particular, are likely to linger for an extended period.

With the changing scale and ever changing characteristics of rural migrants, policy and services have to keep evolving if this group of people is to be properly managed and if the various issues related to them are to be duly handled. It is always possible that

policy has not been evolving accordingly until problems arise. It is also not uncommon that policy is made inappropriately and failed to attain the desired ends. It is also possible that implementation of policy is not capable to live up to expectations. Moreover, policy development is always restricted by resources constraints as well as structural constraints within the mentality of policy makers and frontline officials as well.

Education is expected to play an increasingly important role in individual mobility and life chances (Liang & Chen, 2005, p.30). In China, people dwelling in the vast rural sector have long been hit by economic backwardness and underdevelopment. Economic reform since 1978 has opened up new opportunities for this impoverished sector on one hand, but the social disparities have also become more visible when rural dwellers come staying and working in the city. Education for migrant workers' children, if delivered properly and equally, could really uplift the living standard of the rural population, to foster their integration into the urban area, and to narrow the urban-rural gaps. Fundamentally, moral principles as well as legal stipulations have already recognized education as an unalienable right for children.

It is therefore necessary to look into how policy has evolved with the changing scenario of the rural-urban migration and the changing needs of migrant workers. This is what will be discussed in the coming chapter.

CHAPTER III

POLICY REVIEW: CHANGING STRATEGIES

CONTESTING EVOLVING PROBLEM

In this chapter, policies and regulations pertinent to the issue of compulsory education for migrant children, issued both at the central and local levels, are to be summarized and analyzed, in accordance to the frame of “three stages” put forwards by Zhou (2007, pp.35-38). Rather than a mere chronological summary of these policies and regulations, this chapter aims at having their effects analyzed against a broader social backdrop, that is, in their special time context and social contexts upon which the issue of migrant children education has been developing.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In his research, Zhou (ibid) applies the concept of social control in a historical review on the policies and regulations on this issue. He identifies distinguished characteristics of several different periods, based on which he concludes that there are three different stages in regards the development of social control over migrant children. These stages, including “the stage of pre-controls”, “the stage of limited resistance”, and “the stage of acceptance”, are separated by the years 1996 and 2003 respectively. With the idea of “three stages”, he traces the changes occurred in official attitude towards the education of migrant children, supported both by the pertinent

policies, regulations and measures of the state. Some other researchers, holding a similar opinion, also pointed out that 1996 and 2003 are the two turning points. In addition, findings of this research are also in accord with Zhou's idea. Therefore, the idea of "three stages" is borrowed here as a frame guiding following discussion.

The Stage of Pre-controls

"The stage of pre-controls" started from the early 1990s and ended around 1996 (Zhou, 2007, p.36). Prior to 1996, there was not a single set of policies or regulations, systematically designed by the state over the issue of education for migrant children. Usually, it was the local governments and the schools admitting migrant children who exercised social control over the issue (ibid). As a result, the lack of pertinent policies and regulations placed the urgent education needs of migrant children into a vacuum.

Dominating law of this period was the former *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, which was put into effect in 1986. Even though the law shows the country's resolve in universalizing compulsory education by saying that "all children who have reached the age of six shall enroll at school and receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race", it could not protect the interests of migrant children in effect. This was because it was formulated based on the precondition that students would stay in their origins but not move around, as it requires the local governments of the children's origins to take up the responsibility of educating them. Therefore, it not only could not cope with the new phenomenon of massive rural-to-urban migration that occurred later, but also became an institutional obstacle severely and ironically

violating migrant children's rights to compulsory education. The lack of policy protection gave rise to numerous difficulties confronting migrant children, making them into forced school-leavers.

According to Zhou (ibid), characteristics of this stage include:

Firstly, the number of migrant children was increasing at a relatively rapid speed.

Secondly, public schools either treated migrant children with an exclusive attitude or charged them with various kinds of high fees. Also, public schools discriminated against migrant children in many ways in activities, examinations, or performance evaluations.

Thirdly, migrant schools, which were operated by the informal, or non-state sector, sprung up like mushrooms. However, at these schools, the safety of school buildings, sanitation of food and drinks as well as the quality of teaching practice all could not be guaranteed. All of them were by nature unauthorized and illegal.

Fourthly, in face of the paradox, the government adopted an indifferent attitude and a drifting management manner in dealing with those unauthorized migrant schools.

In all, disorder and chaos were the two features of this stage. Lacking pertinent policies and regulations, no party nor governmental ministry stood out to take up the responsibility of protecting the education rights of migrant children. At the end of this stage, academic circles started doing research on this issue. However, in this starting

stage, only a few of them were involved, yielding limited outcomes (ibid). Most of their research focused on the originality and the complexity of the issue. It was not until late 1990s or early 2000s that the issue finally caught extensive attention from academic circles, making it a hot topic for social studies.

The Stage of Limited Resistance

“The stage of limited resistance” started around 1996 and ended in 2003. During these years, a series of policies and regulations were formulated and implemented by both central and local governments, indicating a new stage of state intervention on the issue. As a matter of fact, the earliest attention from the state can be traced back to 1995, when the Ministry of Education listed the issue on its working agenda. Immediately, the Office of Compulsory Education under the Department of Basic Education carried out research on the schooling problems of the children of migrant workers (Fang et al., 2008, p.11). Important policies and regulations issued by the government within this stage can be summarized as follows.

Policies and Regulations Issued

In 1996, the Ministry of Education issued *Chengzhen Liudong Renkou zhong Shiling Ertong Shaonian Jiuxue Banfa (Shixing) (Trial Measures for the Schooling of School-age Children and Youth among the Floating Population in Cities and Towns)* (hereafter “*the 1996 Trial Measures*”). This *1996 Trial Measures* is the first set of regulations promulgated by the state in regards to the issue of education for migrant

children (Zhou, 2007, p.36). Only Beijing, Shanghai, and several other provinces and municipalities were chosen for the pilot programs of this first set of trial regulations (Sun et al., 2008, p.154).

Based on the experience gained from implementing *the 1996 Trial Measures*, on March 2, 1998, the State Education Commission and Ministry of Public Security promulgated the *Liudong Ertong Shaonian Jiuxue Zanxing Banfa (Provisional Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Young People)* (hereafter “*the 1998 Provisional Measures*”). Fengtai District of Beijing, Pudong New District of Shanghai, Haizhu District and Tianhe District of Guangzhou were among the areas selected to operate pilot programs in implementing these new rules (ibid).

In 2001, the State Council carried out the *Guanyu Jichu Jiaoyu Gaige yu Fazhan de Jueding (Decisions on the Reform and Development of Fundamental Education)* (hereafter “*the 2001 Decisions*”). Article 12 of it points out that the issue of education for migrant children should be addressed with due concern, with major responsibility shouldered by the governments of receiving areas and by full-time public schools. A variety of approaches should be employed to guarantee the lawful rights of migrant children to compulsory education (Fang et al., 2008, p.11). Issued by the State Council, the 2001 Decisions clearly emphasized the responsibility of local governments (ibid).

Later, in 2002, the document *Guanyu Jinyibu Zuohao jincheng Wugong Jiuye Nongmingong Zinv Jiaoyu Gongzuo de Yijian (Suggestions on Further Improving the Education Provision for the Children of Rural Migrant Workers Working in Cities)* was released. It proposes to make solving this problem a criterion for assessing the

performance of local governments, so as to raise local concern on educating migrant children (Du, 2008, p.44).

Then, in January 2003, the General Office of the State Council announced the *Guanyu Zuohao Nongmin Jincheng Wugong Jiuye Guanli He Fuwu Gongzuo de Tongzhi* (*Announcements on Better Managing and Serving Rural Migrants Working in Cities*). Article 6 of it states that the governments of migrant receiving areas should adopt various approaches to facilitate migrant children's enrollment in local full-time public schools. In the process of registration, migrant children and local children should be treated equally. Meanwhile, more assistance should be offered to those simplified migrant schools operated by the private sector, so as to finally cover them with the development scheme and the unified management of the local education system (Fang et al., 2008, p.11).

Among these policies and regulations, the *1996 Trial Measures* and the *1998 Provisional Measures* are of special importance, as together with *the 2001 Decisions*, these policies helped the state set up a system of controls over the education provision for migrant children (Zhou, 2007, p.36). In the following section, the *1996 Trial Measures* and the *1998 Provisional Measures* will be examined in detail.

From the 1996 Trial Measures to the 1998 Provisional Measures

The 1996 Trial Measures, which were to be applied only in designated areas of particular cities, require that the governments of receiving areas create the conditions and the opportunity for school-age migrant children to receive compulsory education

(HRIC, 2002, p.19). For instance, Article 4 stipulates that the people's governments of receiving areas (including governments at municipal, district and township levels) should *create* conditions and opportunities for the compulsory education arrangement of school-age migrant children and teenagers. Education departments of the receiving areas should take specific responsibility of providing compulsory education to school-age migrant children and teenagers in cities and towns; schools, classes or study groups organized for school-age migrant children and teenagers in cities or towns should not go after profits, or violate pertinent regulations of the state by means of collecting miscellaneous fees from migrant students; safeguard the appropriate rights of school-age migrant children and teenagers in schools, treating them on an equal footing in award and punishment, performance evaluation, application for the Young Pioneers and the Communist Youth League, and recreational activities as well (Zhou, 2007, 36). Based on all these, it can be said that *the 1996 Trial Measures* made a gratifying progress, though not as obvious as the *1998 Provisional Measures*, as the latter shows more concrete content and stronger resolve.

Under *the 1998 Provisional Measures*, the authorities of the receiving areas and the children's places of origin have distinct responsibilities regarding the provision of compulsory education to them, as do the children's parents and guardians (HRIC, 2002, p.20). Article 4 provides that the people's governments of receiving areas (including governments at municipal, district and township levels) *should create* the conditions and opportunities for the compulsory education arrangements of school-age migrant children and teenagers. Education departments of the receiving areas should take the specific responsibility of providing compulsory education to school-age migrant children and teenagers in cities and towns. *Migrant children should be guaranteed to complete the compulsory education as long as it is mandated by the people's*

governments of their home districts; schools or classes (or study groups organized) affiliated to full-time state-run primary and secondary schools for school-age migrant children and teenagers all should not go after profits, or violate pertinent regulations of the state by collecting miscellaneous fees and high charges; safeguard the appropriate rights of school-age migrant children and teenagers in schools, treating them on an equal footing in award and punishment, performance assessment, application for the Young Pioneers and the Communist Youth League, and recreational activities as well (Zhou, 2007, p.36).

As pointed out by Zhou (2007, pp.36-37), from the above policies and regulations, it could be found that, in this stage, the state started attempting to practice full-scale intervention and controls over the issue of education for migrant children. In view of the problems of the previous stage, such as the dropout of migrant students, the miscellaneous fees and high charges collected from them, as well as the discrimination against them, the state carried out reorganization, which, to a certain extent, had helped to highlight the policy goal of offering protection for the education rights of migrant children.

However, at the same time, Zhou also felt that these regulations were not without flaws.

Flaws in the Policies and Regulations

In his paper, Zhou (2007, p.37) wrote that restricted by the current social and economical development during that specific time context, guaranteeing migrant

students' rights to education was achieved by sacrificing some of their other rights. As to which, he had two primary concerns:

Firstly, what had been protected by the state were the rights of migrant children to "enter schools", rather than their rights "to receive regular compulsory education";

Secondly, the collection of a certain amount of extra fees from migrant children was allowed by the state.

It turned out that, as early as 2002, in their report composed from a similar perspective, the *Human Rights in China* (HRIC) had already criticized the disappointing flaws of these two sets of policies.

According to their research, the *1996 Trial Measures* states that local governments in the children's places of origin are required to "strictly control the movement of students who are already enrolled in schools" in the areas within their jurisdiction, so as to prevent school-age children from accompanying their migrant parents (HRIC, 2002, P.19). Also, it is stated in the *1996 Trial Measures* that those students who "can be" cared for in the place of their *hukou* registration must receive education there, and only those who "could not" may receive compulsory education in the receiving areas (ibid). These two articles imposed strict restrictions on the move of rural children, which was a clear example of the narrow-minded ideology of localism prevailed in the society.

Article 8 says that the schooling of migrant children and young people should rely primarily on "temporary schooling" (*jiedu*) in the full-time state-run schools in the receiving areas. Where the "conditions do not exist" for such children to attend

full-time state schools, they may receive informal education in supplementary classes or study groups (Zhou, 2007, p.37). The third solution is for areas in which pupil numbers in primary schools are declining to use some of the facilities to set up “people-run government-support” (*minban gongzhu*) boarding schools (HRIC, 2002, p.20). Moreover, Article 15 also says that public schools, supplementary classes and study groups of the receiving areas could charge a certain amount of fees from migrant parents or other guardians of migrant children (Zhou, 2007, p.37). These three articles not only recognized those migrant schools sprung all around, but also gave permission to the collection of miscellaneous fees at public schools. Both of these were about to severely infringe the interests of migrant children, as so proved later.

Moreover, Zhou and the HRIC also had pertinent remarks about the *1998 Provisional Measures*.

Article 5 of the *1998 Provisional Measures* provides that the schools of receiving areas should offer “temporary student” status to the migrant students in their schools (HRIC, 2002, p. 20). In addition, *the 1998 Provisional Measures* requires migrant parents who wish to send their children to school in the receiving area to get a permit before enrolling their children in school, either from their home area or from the education department in the place where they are living (Article 8) (*ibid*). By these, the *1998 Provisional Measures* set up a legal base for the unequal treatments migrant children received in their pursuit of public schooling. Discrimination caused by their status and hardship introduced by the frustrating procedure all significantly dampened the initiative of migrant students to study at local public schools.

Moreover, in similar fashion to the *1996 Trial Measures*, the *1998 Provisional Measures* provides that the education of migrant children is to rely mainly on temporary schooling (*jiedu*) in full-time state-run schools, but can be supplemented by other forms of schooling, such as civil-run schools, classes and study groups affiliated to full-time public schools, as well as simplified migrant schools (Article 7) (Zhou, 2007, p.37). Article 9 provides that with permission from county-level education administration departments in the receiving areas, “enterprises and institutions, social organizations and other social groups or individuals can run civil-run schools (*minban xuexiao*) or simplified schools (*jianyi xuexiao*) specially for migrant children and young people (HRIC, 2002, p.21). By these two articles, separate and unequal schooling arrangements for migrant students were permitted. In particular, simplified migrant schools were officially recognized. Evidently neither the *1996 Trial Measures* nor the *1998 Provisional Measures* managed to expand provision of public school places to accommodate migrant children.

Most importantly, just like the *1996 Trial Measures*, the *1998 Provisional Measures* entirely failed to address the fact that migrant children were generally required to pay fees that were not imposed on “local” children, despite the requirement in the Compulsory Education Law that compulsory education be free of charge (*ibid*). Under Article 11, full-time public primary and secondary schools, in accordance to relevant rules, could charge temporary schooling fees from migrant students every school term (Zhou, 2007, p. 37). Although Article 13 provides that fees should be reduced or waived for students whose families suffer economic hardship, this provision is vague and there are no specifics as to how it may be invoked (HRIC, 2002, p.21). Since local public schools’ act of charging high extra fees was legalized, millions of migrant children were shut out of school because of financial difficulties.

In all, policies and regulations legislated within this stage, in particular the *1996 Trial Measures* and the *1998 Provisional Measures*, partially filled the vacuum of policies on the issue of education for migrant children. Aimed at improving their schooling, these policies and regulations were made out of goodwill. However, meanwhile, they tolerated to a certain extent the unfair treatments associated with migrant children's status, and resisted the migration of school-age rural children to cities.

The Stage of Acceptance

In 2003, "the stage of acceptance" started. And ever since then, it has been continuing onwards. This is a period of time demonstrating more acceptance towards migrants and their children. Prior to 2003, major strategies adopted by the state were implemented through management and controls. The government was against and resisted the coming of migrant children to cities. However, from 2003 to 2004, official attitude showed a shift from exercising control to offering services. Gratifyingly, the government not only recognized the lawful rights of migrant children to compulsory education, but also admitted that safeguarding the interests of this special group was the obligation of people's governments at all levels. In 2006, compulsory education was further recognized as a principal component of public services, symbolizing the final transformation of their attitude from exercising management to offering public service. Documents issued in 2007 showed the consolidation and strengthening of the service philosophy of the government, revealing its reflection on its own roles (Lv, 2008, p.21). Zhou (2007, p.37) attributed these changes to the official realization on the hazardous consequence of their

attempts to keep the migrant population under control, as in the previous stage, namely the stage of limited resistance, the contradiction between the contributions made by migrants to the urbanization process and their own tragic situation in cities, though increasingly sharpened, had long been kept under suppression. In the long run, this was about to harm the stability of the whole society. The changes of official attitude could be best illustrated by the policies and regulations summarized as below.

Policies and Regulations Issued

In January 2003, the General Office of the State Council put forward the *Jinyibu Zuohao Nongmingong Jincheng Wugong Jiuye Guanli He Fuwu de Tongzhi* (*Notices on Further Improving the Management and Services of Rural Migrants Working in Cities*)> (hereafter, “*the 2003 Notices*”). *The 2003 Notices* require that migrant children, studying at full-time public primary and secondary schools, should be treated equally upon admission. Schools should not violate pertinent laws and charge extra fees from migrant children. Also, authorities of receiving areas should further assist those simplified schools operated by the private sector, so that they can be integrated with the development scheme of the local education system. Moreover, local governments should allocate specific funds for the schooling of migrant children (Zhou, 2007, p.37). *The 2003 Notices* showed the attention given by the state to this issue and emphasized the necessity of equal treatment for migrant children.

Later that same year, in September, with the approval from the State Council, the General Office forwarded the document *Guanyu Jinyibu Zuohao Jincheng Wugong Jiuye Nongmin Zinv Yiwu Jiaoyu Gongzuo de Yijian* (*Opinions on Further Improving*

the Work of Providing Compulsory Education to the Children of Farmer-workers in Cities> (Fang et al., 2008, p.) (hereafter “*the 2003 Opinions*”), jointly composed by six departments, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the National Development and Reform Commission, as well as the State Commission Office for Public Sector Reform.

The most significant contribution of *the 2003 Opinions* is that they bring forwards the idea of “*liang wei zhu (two main strengths)*”, by which it means that the governments of receiving areas and public primary and secondary schools are the two main strengths to educate migrant children. They also call for the establishment of a funding mechanism for the compulsory education for migrant children, and require financial departments of receiving areas to provide subsidies to local schools with a relatively higher percentage of migrant students. Besides, *the 2003 Opinions* encourage better cooperation between the governments of the receiving areas and of the children’s origins (Fang et al., 2008, p.12). Given its important implications, the announcement of *the 2003 Opinions* was the symbol of entering another stage.

Later, in 2004, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Guanyu Jinyibu Jiaqiang He Gaijin Weichengnianren Sixiang Daode Jianshe de Ruogan Yijian (Suggestions of Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Further Strengthening and Improving the Moral and Ethical Construction of Minors)* (hereafter “*the 2004 Suggestions*”) was promulgated. It calls for extensive attention on the issue of compulsory education for migrant children. Also, it states that the governments of receiving areas should establish regulatory system and improve their mechanisms, so as to safeguard the rights of migrant children to

compulsory education (ibid). The *2004 Suggestions*, from the perspective of protecting migrant youths, once again stressed the importance of ensuring compulsory education for migrant children.

In 2005, the documents *Guanyu Shenhua Nongcun Yiwu Jiaoyu Jingfei Baozhang Jizhi Gaige de Tongzhi (Notices on Deepening the Reform of the Security Mechanism of the Funds of Compulsory Education in the Rural Areas)* (hereafter “*the 2005 Notices*”) were issued, which provides that, in rural areas, students receiving compulsory education are to be exempted from miscellaneous fees, so as to free all rural families’ financial burden in sending their kids to schools (Du, 2008, p.44). *The 2005 Notices* demonstrated the start of government’s efforts in improving the compulsory education provision in China’s rural areas.

In January 2006, the *No. 1 document - Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Guanyu Tuijin Shehui Zhuyi Xinnongcun Jianshe de Ruogan Yijian (Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Pushing forwards the Construction of the New Socialist Countryside)* (hereafter “*the 2006 Opinions*”) was promulgated, which clearly points out that the local governments of receiving areas should include the vocational trainings of migrants and education of their children into their regular financial budget. Later, the Ministry of Finance issued pertinent regulations to implement the No. 1 Document, in which, it states that, by eliminating miscellaneous fees charged under the names of temporary schooling fees, school-choosing fees or donation fees, migrant children studying at urban primary and secondary schools only pay as much as local students (ibid). In addition, *the 2006 Opinions* also state that, based on the actual number of migrant students they serve, subsidies are to be offered to public schools (Fang et al., 2008,

p.12). This series of documents are all very meaningful to the development of education for migrant children and kids from China's countryside, as they finally came up with concrete solutions for the sensitive funding issue. Only with more financial assistance from the government could public schools be motivated and assisted to better serve migrant children.

Then, the *Compulsory Education Law* was amended in June 2006, increasing the number of articles from 18 to 95. The draft amendment has two focuses. Firstly, it emphasizes the equalization of education, by which it means that "key classes" or "key schools" should be abolished, by equally allocating education investment. Secondly, it calls for a mechanism ensuring education investment and clarifies the role of the government as the chief investor. According to a piece of news (Li (Ed.), 2006), the draft amendment also has a specific provision to ensure the rights of migrant children to compulsory education, which states that for those school-age children, whose parents or other legal guardians working and living in places rather than the places of their *hukou* registration, are entitled to receiving education at the places where their parents and guardians work and live. On September 1 of 2006, the new *2006 Compulsory Education Law* was put into effect, which, from the legal perspective, clarifies the duty of local governments in educating migrant children and safeguards these children's rights to compulsory education.

Characteristics of this stage

Up till now, with the pertinent laws, policies and regulations put forwards by the state, a system of laws and regulations that safeguards the lawful rights of migrant

children to compulsory education has basically taken shape (Fang et al., 2008, p. 12).

Zhou identified two features for this stage of acceptance:

First of all, the government starts paying attention to the quality of the compulsory education received by migrant children. Local governments, for the first time, are ordered to include migrant schools into their development scheme and their education system. Meanwhile, supervision over migrant schools is required to be strengthened, and more assistance to be offered (Zhou, 2007, p.38). From these, it can be seen that, after years of confrontation and resistance, the government has finally realized that, under the current circumstances, it has to co-exist with migrant schools, until local public schools are capable enough to take up every migrant child. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the government approves every respect of migrant schools, in particular, the quality of education of these schools is the prime concern. Therefore, so far, the best it can do is to enhance the quality of migrant schools, strengthen the supervision over them and increase the assistance offered to them so as to uplift their quality.

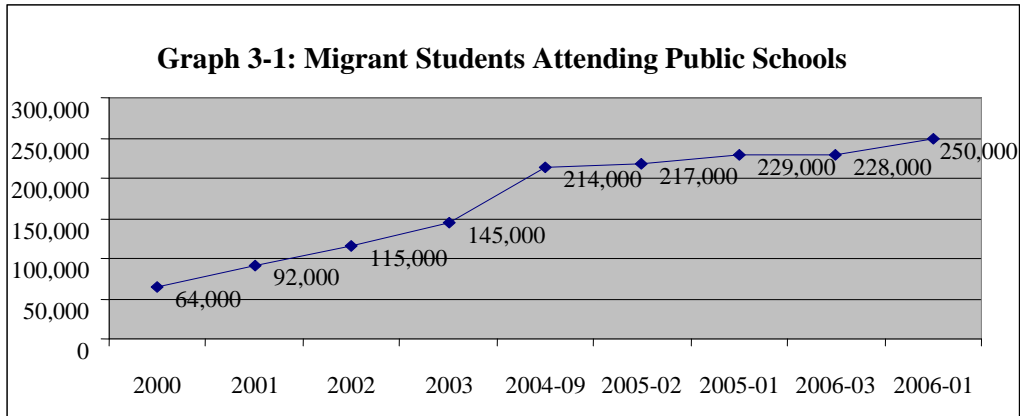
Secondly, from “arbitrary charges against state regulations were not allowed” to “migrant students should not be charged more than urban students”, and finally to “eliminating all kinds of miscellaneous fees, including the ‘temporary schooling fees’, ‘the school-choosing fees’, and the ‘donation fees’, and etc.”, it can be seen that the government starts looking for investors who can take over the costs of compulsory education from migrants and their families (ibid). With the old practice, education resources and funding were primarily the responsibility of the township level governments. With a significant portion of productive members working outside the locality, their contributions to local government in form of taxes and levies were in

effects “drained out” from their places of origin to their place of temporary residence, therefore not offering additional resources, or even draining resources away, for education development for villages. One of the distinguish achievements of the *2006 Compulsory Education Law* is to elevate the original “township based” funding to “provincial based”, so as to make pooling of resources possible on a larger territorial base and to take care of local needs more effectively. This elevation of resource pooling to a higher level of administration, believed by Zhou (ibid), could offer a more effective platform for tackling the problem of resource inadequacy of some local communities.

From these policies and regulations, it can be found that integrating migrant children to the public education system is in tune with the general trend. Migrant children, rather than objects of controls, are now beneficiaries, if not at all consumers, of public education services.

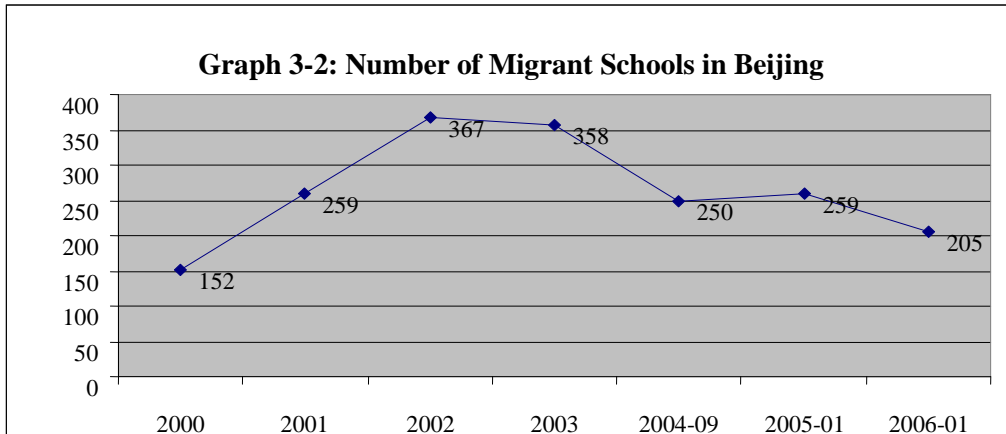
POLICY OUTCOMES

In recent years, owing to the implementation of new policies and regulations, more and more migrant children are attending local public schools. Statistics show that in the autumn of 2003, 61 per cent of the 130,000 school-age children in Wuhan were receiving compulsory education. In 2004, 380,000 migrant children are studying at local public schools, making up 66 per cent of their total (Wang, 2008, p.31). According to the confidential document from BMEC, the situation in Beijing is also improving (See Graph 3-1).



As the above chart shows, the number of migrant students attending public schools jumps from 64,000 in 2000 to 250,000 in October 2006, a roughly four-fold increase within six years. Under the impact of *the 2003 Opinions*, the number of migrant students attending public schools increased by a large margin in between 2003 and 2004.

Also noticeable is the number of migrant schools, which declines from a record high of 367 in 2002 to a record low of 205 in 2006. These figures show that while local public schools were expanding their capacities to take in more migrant children, local governments of Beijing were also busy reorganizing the private market (See Graph 3-2).



Moreover, progress can also be reflected by the increased investment in the education services for migrant children. According to the research of Tao and Yang (2007, p.62), in 2004 and 2005, local governments of Beijing allocated 68 million and 69 million respectively to expand the capacity of public schools. In 2005, it spent another 7.5 million building up five movable migrant schools in Chaoyang, Fengtai, Changping and Daxing Districts. Then, in 2006, together with the district and county governments, the municipality invested another 80 million to improve the conditions of migrant schools.

Meanwhile, fees charged from migrant students can also mirror the changes taken place. As told by Mrs. Ma, headmistress of the public school visited by the researcher, migrant students were charged 1,000 *yuan* as sponsor fees in 2001, as so required by the Municipal governments. Then, the fees were reduced by half in the next semester, and eventually, they were completely abolished in 2002. Headmistress Ma said that it was from the idea “*liang wei zhu*” that they eventually saw clearly where the issue of educating migrant children was heading towards (More information about the school is available in Chapter 8).

POLICY GAPS

However, on the other hand, the release of pertinent policies and regulations does not necessarily mean that they would all be thoroughly implemented, as the influence of various interest factors in reality will affect their implementation and hamper their desired results (Fang et al., 2008, p.12). Some major barriers in the implementation of these policies and regulations are summarized as follow.

The Mismatch between Administrative Responsibility and Financial Power

First of all, there is a mismatch between the administrative responsibilities and the financial power of the grass-roots governments. By providing public goods and services needed in everyday life, local governments serve the public directly. Targeting at local residents, their goods and services seldom outflow to people from other localities. Therefore, in principle, the administrative responsibilities of the grass-roots governments are easy to be defined. When they can make decisions on their own about what to do and how to do it, without being subject to the orders of the higher level authorities, their administrative power match their administrative responsibilities. Otherwise, they are mismatched, which in our country, usually happens to the local governments. Relatively speaking, it is the administrative responsibility and the administrative power of the governments in the middle (such as the provincial governments or the municipal governments), that usually blur (Hou, 2009, p.41).

In real practice, mismatch often exists between financial power and administrative responsibilities. Governments of higher levels are in possession of more taxing power which, considering their administrative responsibilities, exceeds their needs. However, governments of lower levels, given their less taxing power but heavier responsibilities, cannot be self-sufficient financially. Whenever this happens, the governments of higher levels should strengthen the financial power of the governments of the grass-roots levels through financial transfer and payment, so as to maintain the balance between various levels of the governments and enable the latter to have more financial power and more room for maneuver. Problems will come to the surface when the financial transfer and payment from the higher level authorities is insufficient, or the authorities in between cut it off in name of “administrative power”, and shift their own responsibility to lower level authorities in name of “administrative responsibilities” (ibid: p.42).

China’s compulsory education system relies on local governments for its management and funding. Since the country reformed its taxation system in 1994, however, regional governments’ financial conditions have been weakened while little has changed with regard to their jobs and responsibilities. In such a situation, the heaviest burdens of compulsory education are now on the weakest shoulders (China Daily, 2006). From the perspective of mismatched financial power and administrative responsibility, Ge (2007, p.36) severely criticized the idea of “*liang wei zhu*”, saying that, the central government not only transferred laterally the education responsibility from the governments of the children’s origins to those in the receiving areas, but also shifted its own obligations to the lower level authorities, so as to exchange for its own legitimacy. To a great extent, the mismatch between financial power and

administrative responsibility has given rise to the negligence and apathy of the local governments.

The lack of Supporting Policies

No matter how wonderful a policy is, if it can not be thoroughly implemented, it can hardly help to solve the problems. At present, a predominant obstacle that holds back the development of the issue is the lack of supporting policies and regulations, which severely reduces the operability of the pertinent laws, policies and regulations (Du, 2008, p.46). In their real practice, governments at the grass-roots level often feel that there is little reference for them to rely on. In order to cope with the requirements of the higher authorities, they have to come up with their own methods. No wonder that, even in the same city, the attitudes and strategies adopted by different districts can vary greatly.

Take the draft Compulsory Education Law for instance. It states that China will provide free compulsory education to every school-age child. However, the State Council has not drawn up a concrete plan to make this a reality. According to a news report, some members of the National People's Congress Standing Committee have complained that the law fails to map out exactly how all tuition fees for compulsory education will be scrapped. They have called for the law to offer clearer instructions in this regard (China Daily, 2006). Compulsory education should be made free. However, why is this draft law so ambiguous when it comes to the implementation? A sensible explanation for this is that a supporting mechanism to realize free compulsory education has yet to be established. Furthermore, according to the same new report

(ibid), in recent years, the central government has increased its financial supports to regional governments through large amounts of transfer payments. However, as pointed out by the Auditor-General Li Jinhua, this transfer system itself is riddled with problems. A great deal of this money simply failed to reach its intended destinations.

The Unevenly Distributed Resources between the Receiving Areas and the Children's Origins

With large amounts of transfer payments, the central and provincial governments have increased their supports to the compulsory education system in rural areas. However, the transfers themselves are still based on the outmoded *hukou* system. Public education resources are firstly assigned to schools, and then distributed among students. Hence, a student himself is unlikely to obtain his share directly from the government. By which it means that, under the current education system, in order to be entitled to a share of education resources, one has to stay at the place where his *hukou* is registered. For migrant children who are on move, while they are excluded by the urban public education system, owing to their lack of local *hukou*, the governments of their origins are still receiving financial supports from governments of different levels, because the children's *hukou* are registered there. This puts the children into an embarrassing situation (Fang et al., 2008, 12). On one hand, their lawful rights to compulsory education are violated when they migrate to cities. On the other hand, the governments of their rural origins have, undeniably, a vested interest which makes them less critical with the current arrangements. Considering the lack of channels for equal dialog between them and big cities, they simply choose to be

“voluntarily aphasic” (ibid). However, not all the cities are willing or capable to take over the responsibility of educating migrant children, at the cost of their interests. Therefore, unless the connection between the financial transfer and payment and the *hukou* system is broken, the education rights of migrant children are less likely to be fully protected.

To conclude, without further improving the management and funding mechanism, existing laws, policies and regulations in the interest of migrant children can hardly be implemented in an appropriate manner. Therefore, to specify the responsibility shouldered by governments at all levels, and to straighten out the relationship between financial power and administrative responsibilities for them are of vital importance to the final realization of free compulsory education for migrant children.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, policies and regulations pertinent to the issue of compulsory education for migrant children were presented and analyzed, in accordance to the frame of “three stages” developed by Zhou. Then, there was a brief introduction on the outcomes achieved, focusing on the changes taken place in Beijing. Lastly, there was a summary of the three major gaps remaining in the policy domain, which identified the mismatch between financial power and administrative responsibilities faced by the grass-roots governments, the absence of supporting policies and regulations, as well as the unevenly distributed resources between the receiving areas and the children’s origins.

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EDUCATION AS SOCIAL PROTECTION

For those children from the remote countryside of China, an education can be the difference between a life of crushing poverty and the chance for a better future. If they can only get far enough with their studies, they will be about to escape from the dual burden of a harsh, desert soil and a strictly agricultural community. For migrant children, more or less, it is the same. With an education, they could have a better and a proper place in the mainstream of the society, getting rid of the disadvantages caused by their rural identities, and escape from the shadow of poverty and exclusion again. This chapter, by discussing education, this widely appreciated public service, under the social protection framework, intends to stress the importance of education in promising migrant children a brighter future.

CHOOSING A SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

According to Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, “social protection is an agenda primarily for reducing vulnerability and managing the risk of low-income individuals, households and communities with regard to basic consumption and social services” (2003, p.5). It has a strong focus on poverty reduction and on providing support to the poorest. It seeks to address the cause of poverty, and not simply its symptoms. It is

based on the view that “a primary cause of poverty is to be found in the constraints faced by the poor in taking advantage of economic opportunity arising from their vulnerability to the impact of economic, social and natural hazards” (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p.4). In this section, a social protection agenda that suits the context of China is to be proposed for analyzing the relevance of education for this end.

Conceptual Understandings on Social Protection

As pointed out by Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003, p.5), social protection remains a confusing term mainly due to the range of existing definitions and the variety of ways it is interpreted by policy-makers implementing social protection programs. This is because the conceptual underpinnings of social protection can be placed either in a rights perspective to human development, or in the context of the satisfaction of basic needs, or even, in the context of lifting the constraints to human and economic development posed by social risk.

To illustrate the point, for instance, the International Labor Office (ILO) understands social protection as arising from human rights. It is defined by “entitlement to benefits that society provides to individuals and households –through public and collective measures – to protect against low or declining living standards arising out of a number of basic risks and needs” (van Ginneken, 2000, p.34). Therefore, the ILO refers social protection as associated with a range of public institutions, norms and propagandas aimed at protecting individuals and their households from poverty and deprivation, which broadly, can be grouped under three

main headings: social insurance, social assistance, and labor market regulation (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p.3).

By contrast, the United Nations (UN) defines social protection as “a set of public and private policies and programs undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; to provide assistance to families with children as well as provide people with basic health care and housing”. It is underpinned by shared “fundamental values concerning acceptable levels and security of access to income, livelihood, employment, health and education services, nutrition and shelter. This approach extends the role of social protection to securing basic needs as a precondition for human and economic development (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p.5). This definition put forwards clearly the idea that education for children is a basic component of the social protection package.

In turn, the Social protection Strategy Paper from the World Bank moves beyond “traditional” social protection in defining a “social risk management” framework by adding macroeconomic stability and financial market development to typical social protection programs. The emphasis on risk assumes that vulnerability to hazards is significantly constraints economic and human development, and that efforts to reduce the likelihood of hazards, or to ameliorate their effects on living standards are essential to growth and development (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p.5). Based on these, Box 4-1 provides a comparison of the different interpretations of the three agencies. In fact, organizations like the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Asia Development Bank (ADB) also have their own definitions on “social protection”.

Box 4-1: Definitions of Social Protection

ILO

- Definition: The provision of benefits to households and individuals through public or collective arrangements to protect against low or declining living standards.
- Conceptual emphasis mainly in terms of insurance and extension of provision to those in the informal sector (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, p.5).

UN

- Definition: Public and private policies and programs undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; to provide assistance to families with children as well as provide people with basic health care and housing.
- Conceptual emphasis on fundamental values concerning accessibility and security of basic needs (ibid).

World Bank

- Definition: Public measures intended to assist individuals, households and communities in managing income risks in order to reduce vulnerability and downward fluctuations in incomes, improve consumption smoothing and enhancing equity.
- Conceptual emphasis on risk management which frames social protection as both safety net, and spring board through human capital development.

Diverse these definitions may appear, the essence of “social protection” still pops up clearly. To conclude, the focus of any one agency or actor depends on a variety of factors related to the mandate of the agency, the position of the agency in relation to other actors and the path-dependent way in which the social protection discourse has emerged in that agency (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, p.5).

Why “Social Protection” but not “Social Security”?

It is important to explore the different conceptual underpinnings of the different policy frameworks that agencies and individuals proposed, as these determine what practical actions are (or are not) emphasized in the framework (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008, p.5). When they are translated into policies and actions, Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003, p.5) identify a common range of public programs of assistance, insurance and benefits emerge, which include:

- ***Social insurance:*** *Combines a large number of similarly exposed individuals or households into a common fund, thus eliminating the risk of loss to individuals or households in isolation.* Formalized programs such as pensions, health insurance, maternity benefit, and unemployment benefits are financed by contributions that are either earnings related or collected through payroll taxes. Non-state (or informal) mechanisms, such as savings clubs and funeral societies also function on the same principles.
- ***Social assistance:*** *All forms of public action which are designed to transfer resources to groups deemed eligible due to deprivation.* Formal programs are usually financed from tax revenues and include targeted resource transfers – disability benefit, single-parent allowances, and “social pensions” for the elderly poor that are financed publicly. Non-state provision may be in the form of extended family support, religious support, or borrowing from friends.

Upon seeing this, questions like these might be asked:

- *Aren't these measures all included in the traditional package of social security in practice?*

- *Why is social protection needed, when we already have social security?*

Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (2003, p.7) help to answer these questions by pointing out the so-called “transformative element”, which is exclusive to social protection and makes it outstandingly meaningful:

While we certainly recognize the importance of social assistance, insurance and emergency responses in the face of various shocks, we add the “transformative” element to the current discourse around social protection. This additional “transformative” element of social protection is overlooked in both the social risk management framework of the World Bank and the ILO framework. “Transformative” here refers to the need to pursue policies that relate to power imbalances in society that encourage, create and sustain vulnerabilities over time and space. The term “transformative” also enables us to move away from viewing social protection as merely a form of dependent security towards a rights-based approach where security becomes a process of gaining rights through negotiation of the social contract.

Then, Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2008, p.69) point out that “social protection” could be achieved, not necessary through the transfers of money, but by delivering appropriate social services and implementing measures to modify or regulate behavior towards socially vulnerable groups.

If a person's needs for social protection are defined in a narrow "safety net" sense, as mechanisms for smoothing consumption in response to declining or fluctuating incomes, then the focus of interventions will logically be on targeted income or consumption transfers to affected individuals. In our view, the range of social protection interventions should be extended well beyond social transfers – and the resources transferred should be broader than cash or food, to include redistribution of assets that will reduce dependency on handouts and enable some of the poor to achieve sustainable livelihood. Targeted social transfers provide "economic protection" in response to economic risks and livelihood vulnerability. Other forms of "social protection" would address distinct problems of "social vulnerability", not necessary through resource transfers, but by delivering appropriate social services and implementing measures to modify or regulate behavior towards socially vulnerable groups.

By this, measures adopted by "social protection" have been dramatically expanded from conventional conceptualization of "social security". And it increases the possibility of carrying out social protection programs when the most conventional resource – payment transfers from the state – is limited. Yeasts (2003, p.55) shed light on the importance of these "other forms of social protection", saying that the conventional idea of social security usually specifies only statutory provisions. Social protection is therefore perceived as having the advantage to draw attention to the broad range of non-statutory welfare arrangements and institutions that individuals and households turn to meet their income need.

Non-statutory welfare is extremely relevant to the situation in China. After comparing the idea of social protection and social security against the context of China, Chung (2004, p.95) drew the conclusion that:

Obviously, the idea of “Social Protection” and the “Social Protection Framework” are generally perceived as a more inclusive form of social security that suit the reality of developing countries and agricultural communities in particular. Government and local governments in developing countries and agricultural communities are usually less able to provide statutory social security in scale comparable to other industrial countries. The social protection framework offers a guide to the need of a balanced interplay of statutory and informal provisions in these regions; it also offers directions for allocating the limited social security resources to aim partly for protection, and partly at support for development.

In present-day China, migrants and their children are hardly protected by any statutory social security measure, not to mention a well-established social security network. For rural migrants and children, conventional social security program is but an empty shell. In contrast, it is the inclusive, extensive and flexible social protection program that suits their interests best.

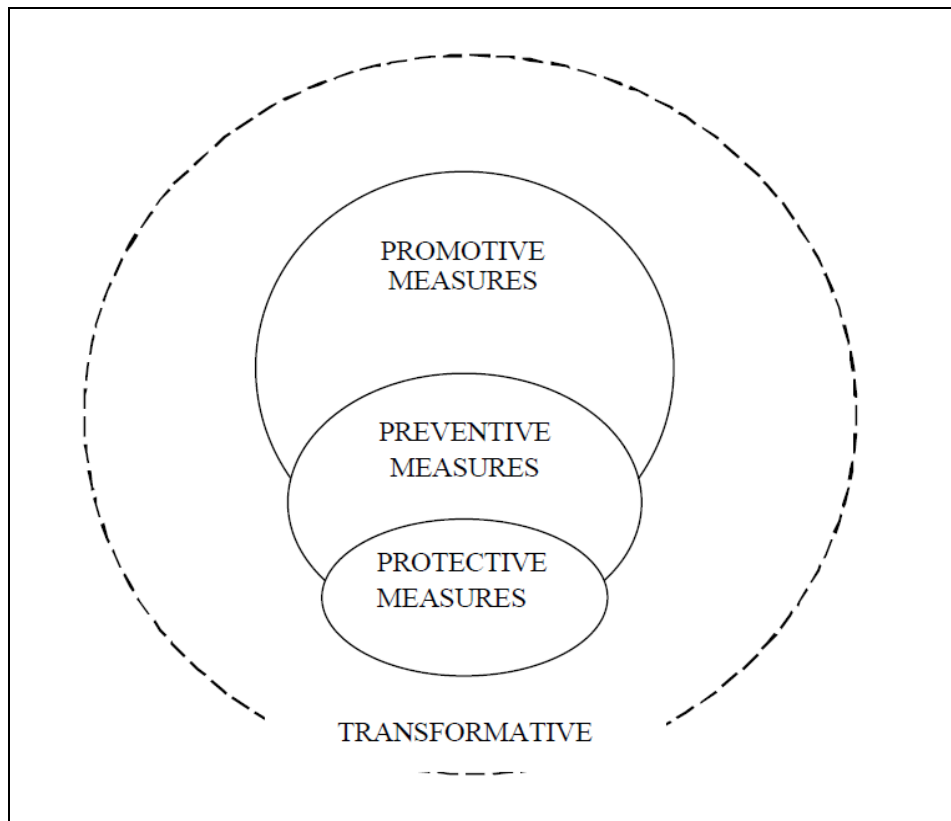
Defining Social Protection

Sabates-Wheeler & Waite (2003, p.8) summarized the following elements of social protection (See Figure 4-1):

- *Promotive* measures, which “aim to improve real incomes and capabilities”. These may include macroeconomic, sectoral and institutional measures relevant to poverty reduction, such as improving primary education, reducing communicable diseases and facilitating access to land or sanitation.
- *Transformative* measures, which aim to alter the bargaining power of various individuals and groups within society such that social equity concerns are addressed, and people are protected against social risks such as discrimination or abuse. A “transformative” view extends social protection to arenas of equity, empowerment and “social rights”, rather than confining the definition to targeted income and consumption transfers or insurance mechanisms.
- *Preventative* measures aim to “avert deprivation in specific ways”. These typically refer to both state and non-state social insurance provision.
- *Protective* measures are even more specific in their objective of “guaranteeing relief from deprivation”, which are narrowly targeted safety net measures aiming to provide relief from poverty and deprivation to the extent that promotional and preventative approaches have failed to do.

While protective and preventative measures play the role of the “safety net”, transformative and promotive measures aim at empowering the individuals and finally lift them out of the vulnerable situation.

Figure 4-1: Conceptualizing Approaches to Poverty and Vulnerability



(Source: Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, p.10)

With these four elements of social protection in mind, they defined social protection as follow:

Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups (Devereux, Ntale and Sabates-Wheeler, 2002, in Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, pp.10-11).

This research aims at recommending policies to strengthen the bargaining power of migrant children through better education provision. The above mentioned discussion highlights the “non-state” element as one specific attribute of social protection. According to this conceptualization, it is understandable that, in addition to the state government, other stakeholders who have the potential to contribute are involved, and may have different weight and roles in the total constellations of social protection in a specific context. The measures they might take include both money transfers and other forms of social transfers achieved by delivering appropriate social services and implementing measures. In this sense, the definition of social protection proposed by Sabates-Wheeler and Waite fit well the purpose of this research.

Social Protection Framework of the Asia Development Bank

In the 1990s, social protection underwent a significant transformation, especially in the context of developing countries. Against a background of economic crises, structure adjustment and globalization, social protection increasingly defines an agenda for social policy in developing countries (Barrientos & Huilme, 2008, p.3). In 1999, the ADB cooperated with the World Bank to host the Manila Social Forum, in which, the ADB put forward its Social Protection Framework, which later, with a revised definition of “Social Protection” as “*the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people’s exposure to risks and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption of income*”, was directed to more specific service contents (Webpage of the ADB; Chung, 2004, p.92-93):

- **Labor market** policies and programs designed to facilitate employment and promote the efficient operation of labor markets;
- **Social insurance** programs to cushion the risks associated with unemployment, health, disability, work injury, and old age;
- **Social assistance and welfare service** programs to provide a floor to the most vulnerable groups with no other means of adequate support;
- **Micro and area-based schemes** address vulnerable and marginalized rural or urban communities.
- **Child protection** serves the needs of children and youth to ensure their health and productive development.

The first three elements are included in any social security system throughout the world. The remaining two respond to the specific needs and priorities of the poor in the informal sector and those in the rural areas. Structured social insurance, labor market policies and universal child protection programs will reach households in the formal sector. Those in the informal sector are more likely to be reached by other labor market policies, social assistance, child protection, micro-insurance, social funds, and other community-based programs (Webpage of the ADB).

This research advocates the “Social Protection Framework”, because, in the first instance, it employs a more developmental perspective on social protection and extended the realm of social security to include even more policy options for a

comprehensive coverage against different aspects of social change (Chung, 2004, p.93). Secondly, the proposed policy items are pertinent to the issue of education for migrant children, as micro and area-based schemes address vulnerable and marginalized rural or urban communities, and child protection serves the needs of children and youth to ensure their health and productive development. The Social Protection Framework provides a better platform to examine the counteracting effect of education on poverty, so does it unfold the connection between education and a better future development.

LOCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

Locating migration within the social protection literature is interesting as it can be conceptualized in a variety of ways depending upon the unit of analysis (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, pp.10-11). Conceptualizing vulnerability as a characteristic of the migrant individual or group can help us focus on the migrant's access to social protection after the migration process (ibid). Alternatively, attention can be given to the fundamental causes of vulnerability that affect migrants and their families.

Migration-Specific Vulnerability

Sabates-Wheeler and Waite (ibid: pp.11-15) propose to examine four categories of vulnerabilities that migrants are especially prone to: temporal, spatial, socio-cultural and socio-political:

- **Temporal determinants of vulnerability** factor largely in migrants' lives. In a static sense the migrant faces different vulnerabilities associated with different points in the migration process.
- **Spatial determinants of vulnerability** apply to spatial dislocation associated with mobility, both in terms of geography and in terms of access to basic services such as health and education. Spatial vulnerability also interacts with vulnerabilities related to environmental hazards.
- **Socio-political determinants of vulnerability** refer to the institutional constraints facing migrants and typically reflect the lack of political commitment from the destination government/society to the migrant. Also, governments may actively discourage legalization of certain categories of migrants so that the economy is able to benefit from access to cheap (exploited) labor.
- **Socio-cultural determinants of vulnerability** reflect differences in the norms, values and customs which constitute local constructions of the "migrant". These constructions are often interwoven with culturally-held notions of race, gender and illegality which can constrain the nature of migrants' participation in labor markets.

Then, they summarized the vulnerabilities of migrants and their families in line with different stages of migration, namely the “migrant at origin”, “migrant in transit”, “migrant at destination” and the “migrant’s family at source” and find that (see table 4-1):

Table 4-1: Migration-Specific Vulnerabilities by Determinant of Vulnerability

Determinants of Vulnerability	TEMPORAL: Stages of the Migration Process
<p>SPATIAL/ ENVIRONME NTAL</p>	<p><u>Transit:</u> Environmental hazards: especially in the case of undocumented migrants. Risks associated with dangerous climate/geography/remoteness from points of help; health risks (HIV/AIDS).</p> <p><u>Destination:</u> Re-location constraints: unfamiliar with surroundings (especially international migrants); problems in acquiring adequate housing. For undocumented migrants: constant need to remain hidden and “unidentified”, leads to exclusion from livelihood promoting possibilities. Hazards associated with work environment; dirty, dangerous, demeaning work. Health risks. “Ghettoisation” of immigrant communities (e.g., urban informal settlements).</p> <p><u>Family at Source:</u> Remoteness from main income earner. Possible decline into poverty over the longer term if remittances are not forthcoming.</p>
<p>SOCIO-POLIT ICAL</p>	<p><u>Transit:</u> Exploitation; lack of legal representation (illegal); lack of legal protection.</p> <p><u>Destination:</u> Lack of representation (illegal); lack of rights to formal institutions due to restrictive legislation; lack of access based on discrimination; exploitation; more prone to injustices; discrimination and disadvantage of some groups to education, social services and</p>

	<p>economic opportunities; unequal distribution of resources; denied participation in political life; lack of rights due to illegal status.</p> <p><u>Family at source</u></p>
SOCIO-CULTURAL	<p><u>Transit:</u> Social exclusion based on ethnicity or illegal status; cultural devaluation disadvantage (Kabeer, 2000, p.6); isolation; marginalization; exclusion from participation in social life. Exclusion of certain groups more than others (women, men; children, elderly...); harassment.</p> <p><u>Destination:</u> (as above); language and cultural barriers, especially in the case of international migration.</p> <p><u>Family at source:</u> Children may drop out of school in response to the drop in family labor; the elderly may not obtain as much care; burden on family members' time at source is likely to increase.</p>

(Source: ibid: p.14)

Vulnerability of Migrant Children in China

Drawing on the enlightenment of the above table, this research comes up with a summary of the specific vulnerabilities and potential risks faced by Chinese rural migrant children in cities (see Table 4-2) (Changes have been made accordingly).

Table 4-2: Specific Vulnerabilities of Migrant Children in Beijing

Determinants of Vulnerability	TEMPORAL: Migrant Children at Destination
SPATIAL/ ENVIRONM	Re-location constraints: unfamiliar with surroundings; Problems in acquiring adequate housing;

ENTAL	Hazards associated with dirty, dangerous living environment; Health risks; Impoverished migrant communities; Undesired influence of new neighborhoods;
SOCIO-POLITICAL	Lack of legal representative; Lack of rights to formal institutions (e.g., public schools, public health service) due to restrictive legislation; Lack of access to education based on discrimination (e.g., discriminative policies in urban education system); More prone to physical and psychological injures; Unequal distribution of resources; Denied participation in political life; Potential exposure to neglect (as parents are busy working); Potential exposure to problematic education;
SOCIO-CULTURAL	Culture Shock; Language and cultural barriers. Social exclusion based on migrant status; Cultural devaluation disadvantage; Isolation; Marginalization; Exclusion from participation in social life; Exclusion; Discrimination; Harassment.

In addition, vulnerability and insecurity have implications for downward spirals into poverty (ibid: p.12). In light of all these, there is a very strong need for implementing social protection policies to protect migrant children against the adverse social, economical and political consequences of their vulnerability.

Education as the Most Important Social Protection Provision for Migrant Children

In the last half of the twentieth century, much of the world embraced two new fundamental human rights: the right to development and the right to education (Chabbott, 2003, p.1). Like development, education was included as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 Covenant on Social, Cultural, and Economic Rights (ibid: p.57). In her research, Chabbott (ibid) analyzed the educational development discourse embraced by the international society, and discovered the different themes of different periods of time.

In the 1950s, government investments in education were targeted to develop skilled manpower sufficient to fuel the drive to industrialization and modernization. In the 1960s, investing in human capital was to produce dramatic increases in labor productivity and national economic growth. In the 1970s, education was to increase individuals' abilities to contribute to growth in the agricultural or industrial sector and to ensure their ability to meet minimum standards of living. In the 1980s, education was key to incorporating more of the historically disadvantaged and women – as the primary caregivers for children and as household income contributors – into the benefits of development. Throughout this time, the status of education as a human right came increasingly to the forefront of its justification. By the 1990s, that right had become institutionalized.

Rights to compulsory education were institutionalized in China by the former Compulsory Education Law issued in 1986. In the law, Article 5 states that: “all

children who have reached the age of six shall enroll in school and receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race.” By viewing its content, one can easily identify three essential elements of compulsory education:

- **Basic** – compulsory education is the foundation of the country’s educational system, and is regarded as the foundation and pre-condition for higher levels of education arrangement;
- **Universal** – education is provided to ALL irrespective of their gender, religious, ethnicity and other factors;
- **Compulsory** – attending school is regarded as a basic right for children and no one, not even the parents, could deprive them of their basic rights.

However, when the different components of the state machine show more collisions given the unprecedented rural migration, the goodwill of the Compulsory Education law, both the former and the revised versions, fail to protect fully the fundamental rights of migrant children. If put in another way, with the current legal system of education, though the rights of children to education are recognized and vowed to be protected, there is a lack of specific financial mechanism and implementing policies to back up their realization. In order to truly empower migrant children and lift them out of the disadvantaged situation, this research proposes to highlight the primacy to safeguard the education rights of migrant children by perceiving it as the most important social protection provision for these children. With

the framework of social protection, concrete policies and plans thus can be recommended accordingly.

Moreover, there are several reasons which explain why, given the current situation in China, guaranteeing the education rights of migrant children became so indispensable.

Firstly, the primary argument in justifying education is based on its direct economic effects. The most obvious link between educational outcomes and adult opportunities and behaviors is through employment opportunities and earnings potential (Maynard & McGrath, 1997, p.129). In their research Maynard and McGrath (ibid) found that increased levels of education are associated with higher employment rates, higher wage rates among those who are employed, and significantly higher family incomes. Median earnings of high school graduates are more than 25 percent higher than earnings of dropouts, while college graduates earn nearly 50 percent more than high school graduates do. The income effects of education are immensely important (Behrman, 1997, p.18) for migrant children, as it helps to increase their earning potential and enlarge their chance of going out the shadow of “structural”, “chronic” and “inter-generational” poverty.

Moreover, benefits of education spread much beyond direct economic effects into the social domain.

For instance, those who tend to see education as the basic policy tool to develop the “commonness” of society argue that education is perhaps the most salient factor affecting the integration of migrant people with the mainstream society. Applying this

to the migrant population, besides their ethnicity, age, skills, length of stay, and other personal characteristics, education is perhaps the most often cited and the most salient factor affecting their integration and accommodation into the society. In her study, Kwong (2006) found that those with higher levels of education integrate more easily into their new urban lives than do the less educated ones. Xu (in Gerard, 2006, p.168) complemented this by stating that rural migrants with higher levels of education are more economically integrated, having more opportunities to mix with the local people and make local friends, so that they are more satisfied with their new environment. By applying this to the issue of education of migrant children, it could be found that in order to integrate migrant children into the urban environment gradually, it is very desirable to first provide them with better education.

Besides, among various factors that affect social mobility, educational capital that is represented by educational background provides significant supports in the attainment of social status. The study of the research group from the Institute of Sociology of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has demonstrated that educational level is a variable that constantly affects the attainment of social status. Although its influence has varied in different periods, the influence that the educational level determined the rank of people's social status is always tenable (Research Group for Social Structure in Contemporary China, 2005, p.239). According to their findings, education is an important channel of upward social mobility. In particular for modern society, universal education enables most people to obtain opportunities to move up to higher social status.

Lastly, to remind, as pointed out by Maynard & McGrath (1997, p.125), in addition to the benefits accruing to individual students, education also offers a variety

of benefits to the society at large, which include a more-educated and better informed electorate, lower rates of crime and violence, lower rates of poverty, better health and nutrition, and generally, a more smoothly functioning society.

In light of these, the social protection function of education is highly apparent, and this explains why this research proposes to see education as the most important social protection arrangement for migrant children.

Framework for Fieldwork

It is true to say that the government always has a very important role in shaping education policy, in mobilizing resources for education, and in regulating the operation of the education system. Yet it is also true and more exact to say that quite a number of stakeholders are also actively involved in education. Education is a process in which there are many inputs, some of which reflect choices of individuals, families, and communities. In their research, Maynard and McGrath identified three parties vigorously involved in the educational domain, which include (1997, pp.125-138):

Family – Not only does the socioeconomic status of the family have a significant influence on the educational success of children, but so does the family’s choice of school and community.

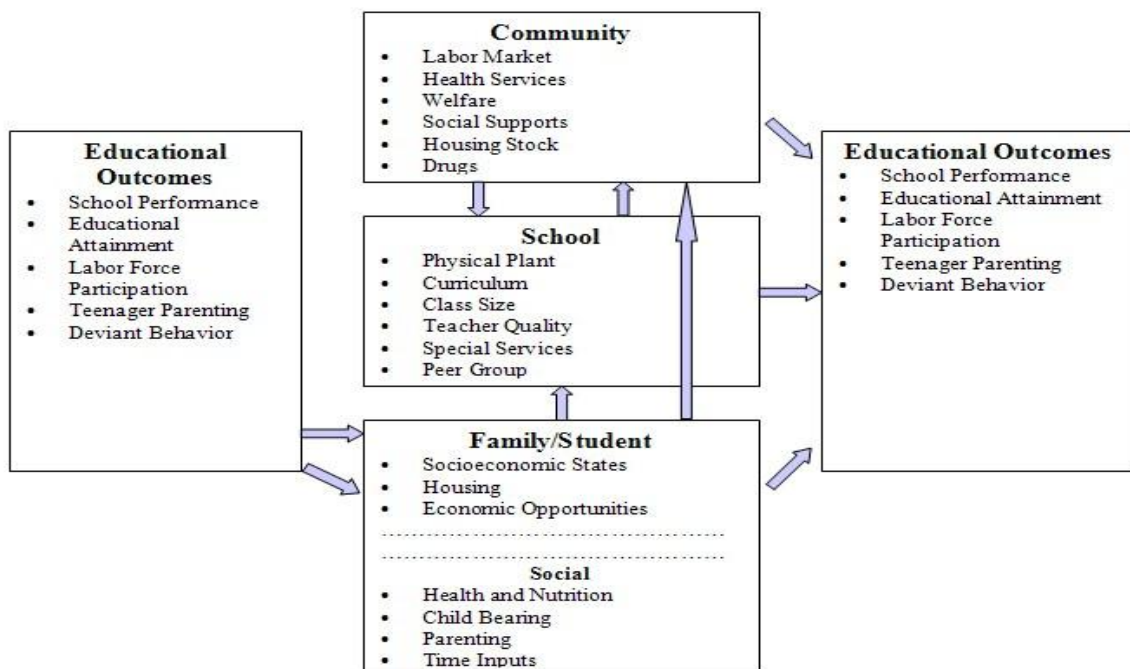
Public School System – The public school system, together with the family, is the main institution for socializing children. For a variety of reasons, in recent years,

schools have shouldered an increasing share of responsibility for children’s social development and welfare in addition to their educational achievement.

Community – In many respects, trends in communities mirror those in families. What is striking about community trends is how much more homogeneous communities have become in terms of both their strengths and their problems.

Based on their research, they develop an illustrated model indicating the links between these three parties and their impacts on the educational outcomes of students (see Figure 4-2):

Figure 4-2: An Illustrated Model of the Social Benefits of Education



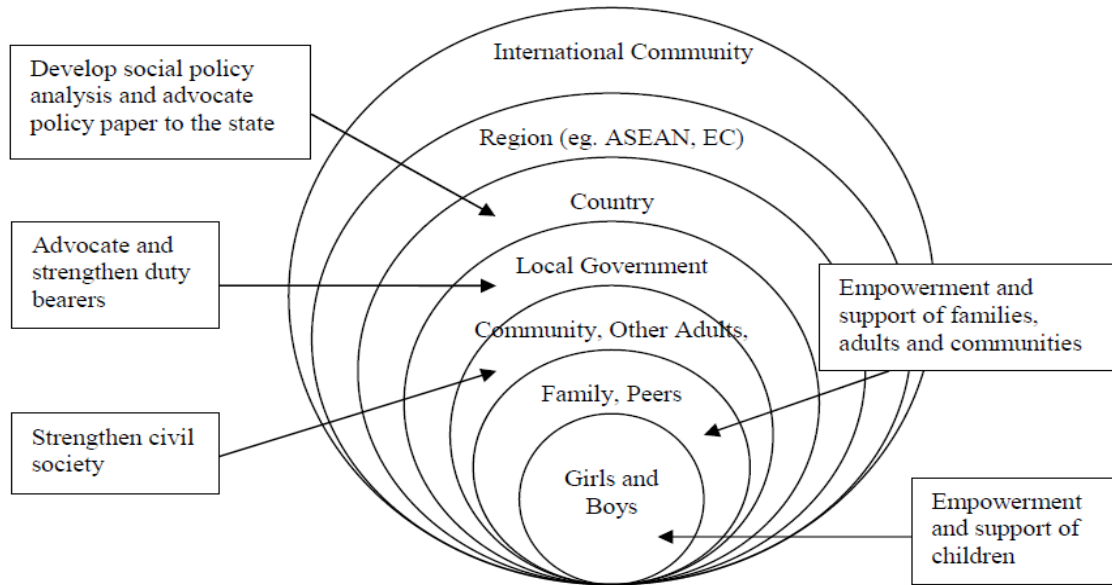
This model is perceived to be highly relevant to this study as it has taken a very sensible angle to address the issue by examining the interplays of these different parties in shaping the educational outcomes. This model, together with the discussion

and understanding on the social protection perspective, are therefore adopted as a basic theoretical framework for the forthcoming discussion.

In addition, many major international organizations have now adopted rights-based approaches to their program development. According to Ray and Carter (2007, in Suharto, 2007, p.4), *child rights-based approaches* are particularly important when working with children in the poorest and most difficult situations. These authors argue that the dynamic that excludes them from participating equitably in society are generally reproduced in the course of welfare approaches to development. Child rights-based approaches, with their emphasis on inclusion and non-discrimination, require specific efforts to be made to identify children most at risk, facilitate their participation and address their particular issues (ibid).

As shown in Figure 4-3, child centered rights-based approaches view children in the context of their relationships with their families, peers and the wider society. As shown in the diagram, each of the different actors are having complementary rights and responsibilities and playing their roles in the realization of children's rights. Viewing children in the poorest and most difficult situations in the context of their relationships and wider society is particularly important (Ray & Carter, 2007, in Suharto, 2007, p.4). Many children live without the support of parents and in societies in which their exclusion is systematic and institutionalized. It is therefore necessary to understand the roles of different actors and institutions in these children's lives.

Figure 4-3: Child Centered, Rights-based Approaches



(Source: Adapted and modified from Ray and Carter (2007, p.40), in Suharto, 2007, p.5)

To put the Illustrated Model of the Social Benefits of Education and the Right-Based Approaches together into the context of this research, which is accordingly against the backdrop of China and the unique social realities of migrant communities in Beijing, some specific stakeholders could be analyzed in a finer categorization. For instance, “schools” in the above model could be further divided into “local public schools” and “migrant schools”. It is obvious that these two broad types of schools have diverse interests when addressing the issue of migrant children education; they are also acting and reacting differently to the existing order and to policy changes.

On the other hand, apart from the “local community”, which denotes that group of people with local status of the migrant receiving region, here in this research the community of Beijing local residents, the “migrant community” is also of significance in shaping the changes and handling of the issue. In many parts of Beijing, as in other

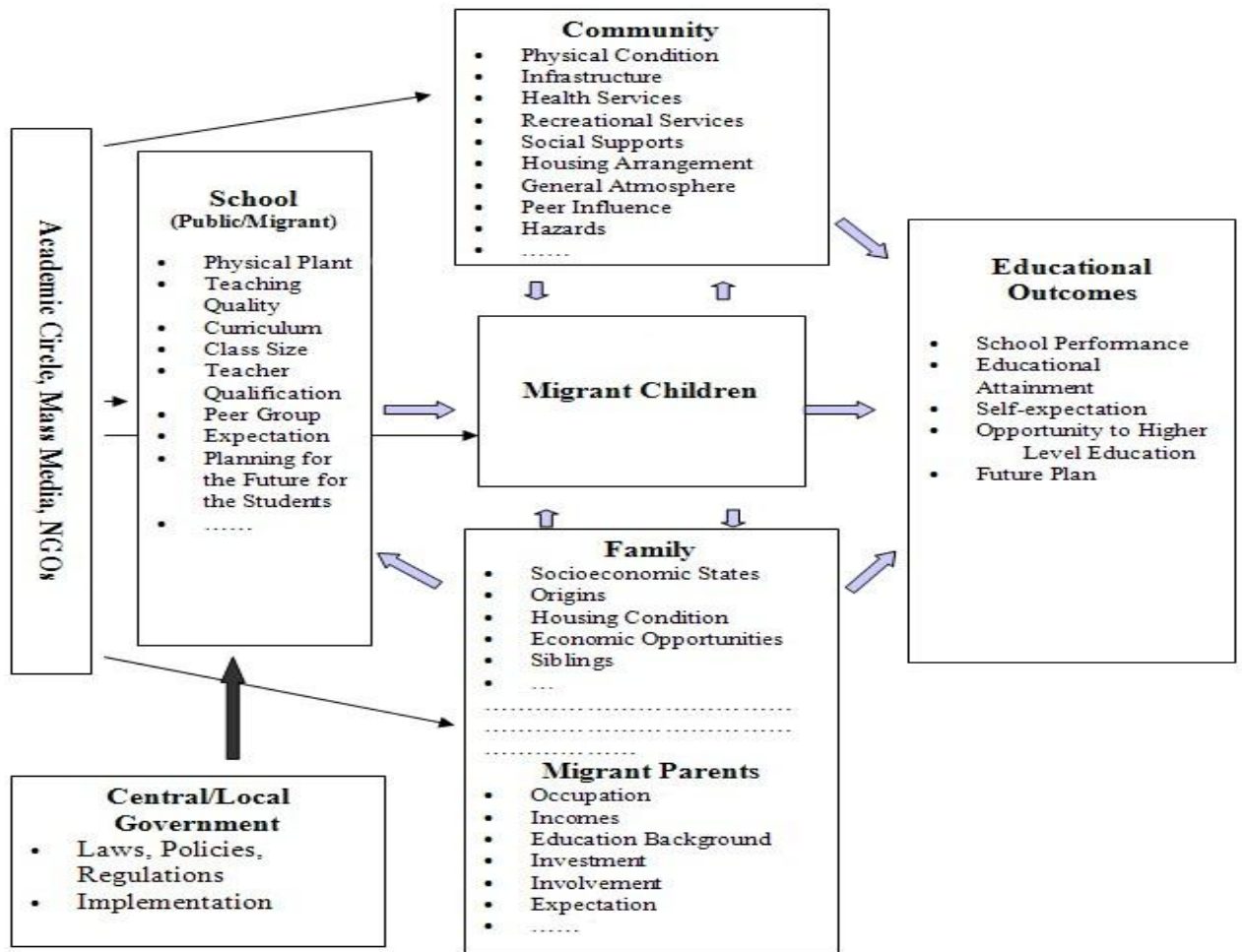
migrant receiving cities as well, rural migrants tend to agglomerate in selected localities to make themselves a community within a hosting local community. Not only in territorial terms, the migrant community constantly exerts social pressure calling for a local response to their children's education needs; they may also develop their own way of education calling for local attention. In finer detail, migrant children themselves may have diverse interest with their families as the latter may frustrate the fulfillment of the former's education needs in different ways while eagerly moving around for a living.

Moreover, as this chapter describes the development and changes in policy and legislation relating to compulsory education to rural kids, the constant tensions and diverse foci of the local government and the central government has been unfolded. Not only in term of resourcing, certain differences in administrative orientations may exist to make policy reactions to migrant children education not at all in line for different levels of governance. In this regards, local government and central government are not at all in congruent and have to be analyzed respectively.

In addition, as manifested in what had been described in the prologue of this thesis, the mass media, some NGOs serving migrant communities and their children, as well as research effort from academic circles have contributed to the understanding, public discourse, value accounting and option sorting for proper handling of the issue of education for migrant children. These parties, or stakeholders, are, therefore, going to be analyzed in the upcoming chapters.

Based on this understanding and incorporating the ideas of the Rights-Based Approaches, the Following (Figure 4-3) is developed as the framework for further study and analysis:

Figure 4-4: Targets for Observation in this Research



SUMMARY

To conclude, Chapter 4 sorted out three reasons contribute to the adoption of the social protection perspective in this research.

First of all, as mentioned, the promotive and transformative measures make social protection an approach more than a mere troubleshooter, solving problems when they emerge. It is more about how to empower the poor, removing the root causes trapping them into poverty. Therefore, compared with traditional social security, the social protection approach is more comprehensive and more proactive to target the roots of poverty and exclusion. As to the issue of education for migrant children, covering migrant children with the public education system alone is not a sufficient approach to raise them from the bottom of the society, because in many different ways they are being discriminated, marginalized and excluded. Whereas the social protection approach, on top of basic public services, also provides migrant children with assistances that might promote their social position and encourage a gradual transformation to lift them upwards.

Secondly, the social protection approach calls for the involvement of a range of different players to play in the field, which not only effectively enhances the overall strengths that can be devoted to the vulnerable groups, but also diversifies the services to suit their various needs. In contrary, the traditional social security emphasizes the overwhelming role of the state. The limitation of this approach is apparent, because whenever the state fails to recognize or offer services to some particular vulnerable groups, these groups would end up in a very undesirable situation. Compared with the governments, NGOs usually act in a more prompt manner to cater for the special needs of the vulnerable. Their contributive roles are better recognized by the social protection approach.

Lastly, the concept of the social protection is well accepted in the international community. International organizations like the UN, the ADB and the World Bank all

have their own understandings towards this concept, with concrete policies recommended for real practice. This means that while applying the idea of the social protection to the specific situation of the education for migrant children in China, their rich experiences in dealing with poverty and social exclusion as well as a variety of existing social protection measures could be referred to, which can effectively facilitate the conceptualization of the education rights for migrant children as an indispensable part of the social protection package for kids from the rural who are prone to be excluded from the mainstreams of social security in the urban setting.

In addition, on the basis of the illustrated model of the social benefits of education and on the model of child-centered, rights-based education, this research put forward a framework to guide the fieldwork, in which the following parties, including migrant communities, migrant homes, public schools, migrant schools, local governments, as well as the academic circle, mass media and NGOs are to be studied in detail in the fieldwork.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research method has been employed in this study to achieve the objective of the study. In the following sections, reasons for adopting a qualitative approach, specific strategies of inquiry, sampling process, data sources and methods used for data analysis are to be explained in detail.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Several reasons explain why qualitative approach is more relevant to the subject matter of the present study.

First of all, as stated by Chung in his research (2004, p.112), a qualitative approach, by providing more detailed and in-depth observations about a social phenomenon or by soliciting direct quotations and case documentation from fewer cases or people, allows a more holistic perspective in understanding the situation. Whereas, in contrary, structured questions demanding yes-or-no answers, or simply providing a few choices would be less effective to account for these. Rather than merely providing oversimplified data or presenting findings in tabulations of figures, the field study approach could offer richer essence on details. It will also offer opportunities to look into the dynamics from the process of ethnographic analysis.

This study aims at understanding the situation of education for migrant children in the context of Beijing and exploring the existing education difficulties faced by migrant children. Qualitative strategy primarily employing field study method in observing and interpreting selected cases is therefore considered more relevant in every respect, as it could provide opportunities for in-depth observations on migrant children, their family and school lives in the context. Also, the qualitative research method could facilitate the observation of the interplay of institutional factors in shaping their life and living in Beijing.

The second reason for favoring qualitative strategy in this research is because in-depth unstructured interview and field observation would likely provide new insights on the issue (Chung, 2004, p.114), as qualitative approaches enable the researcher to take an open-ended, exploratory approach where little is predefined or taken for granted. The dynamic of social changes could be understood and the possible impacts of policy intervention could be more accurately assessed (ibid).

For the issue of education for migrant children in Beijing, many conventional beliefs and assumptions still prevail. For instance, some people assume that migrant schools suit the needs of migrant children, as studying with peers from a same background effectively reduces the possibility for migrant children to be exposed to discrimination. However, migrant schools could be perceived as some marketable products to fill policy and service gap is also a valid argument, and this has been largely overlooked in the debates on migrant education in the last few years. Meanwhile, local public schools are being constantly blamed for not taking in migrant children, while their embarrassing position caused by the lack of official support has been mentioned less frequently. It is upon this that the research adopts an interpretive

orientation, and to unfold different viewpoints from different stakeholders' angles, as well as to look into clues constituting the unexplored dynamic underlying the development of the issue, so as to confirm, revise and redefine the existing knowledge with more convincing evidence.

The third reason for adopting a qualitative method is to allow more room for the researcher to identify policy options which have been proposed, or policy measures which have been piloted, or even to design options for the subject matter. The aim of this is to look for possible options in light of the strengths and limitations identifiable from different stakeholders. This is perceived to be the starting point for further interpretation on the feasibility as well as the desirability of any policy option identified. (ibid: p.115).

The primary aim of this research is not only to evaluate the actual achievement attained by existing policies, but also to discover the various factors impeding the education realization of migrant children in Beijing, on the basis of which, policies recommendations are to be made so as to improve the situation of these children. In view of this, the qualitative research method provides the research with better opportunities to discover remaining problems and to make policies recommendations accordingly.

CASE STUDY

Justification for Doing a Case Study

The case study is but one of several ways of doing social science research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, histories, and the analysis of archival information. According to the summary of Yin (1994, p.1), each strategy has peculiar advantages and disadvantages, depending upon three conditions, first of which is “the type of research question”; then come “the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events”; and thirdly, “the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena” (See Table 5-1).

Table 5-1: Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies

Strategy	Forms of research question	Requires control over behavioural events	Focuses on contemporary events
Experiment	How, why	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much	No	Yes
Archival analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much	No	Yes/no
History	How, why	No	No
Case study	How, why	No	Yes

(Source: COSMOS Corporation, in Yin, 1994, p.6)

These various strategies are not mutually exclusive. But under different situations, a specific strategy might have distinct advantages. For the case study, this is when:

A “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (ibid: p.9).

In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (ibid: p.1). As a research Endeavour, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries (ibid: p.3). Not surprisingly, the case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, business, social work, and planning (ibid: p.2). In particular, the qualitative case study is prevalent throughout the field of education (Merriam, 1998, p.26).

Aims of this study are to find out how the current urban environment is making migrant children vulnerable, and why the educational realization of migrant children is hampered. The topic is a contemporary issue with a lot of stakeholders involved, each having their own roles and interests, each of which are also acting and reacting constantly to shape the ways of how the issue is developing through time. Policy and measures developed and being utilized are not coming out from vacuum but are evolving according to how the issue was perceived, the ways these are shaped and developed also reflect the relative power and control over the issue. In-depth investigation into the interplay and dynamic of these different parties involved is

definitely more preferable to be with a comprehensive yet detailed observation but not only by counting occurrence of events according to a structured questionnaire. In view of these, case studies combining discussion as well as observations are regarded as most relevant for this research.

Definition of the Case Study

Yin (1994, pp.12-13) defines the case study from two angles – its scope and its technical characteristics, saying that a case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- i. Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- ii. The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

And the case study inquiry:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.

He pointed out that the case study method would be a good option when the researcher deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions, believing that they might be highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study. Also, the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method – with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis. In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone but a comprehensive research strategy (ibid).

SELECTION AND THE GENERALIZATION OF THE CASE

Concerning the selection of cases, Stake (1995, p.4) suggests that the first criterion should be to maximum what we can learn. For this research, the issue of education for migrant students is the theme. As described in Chapter 4, different stakeholders are involved, all of whom are shaping the way this issue is perceived and reacted to. It is therefore a specific case, the *XX Migrant School*, is selected as the unit to start the study, while other cases, including cases of migrant children, the migrant communities being served by the schools, the migrant families within this communities, are being generated around this school and offer a holistic perspective on how the issue is being addressed in a given context.

The school, which is to be called the *XX Migrant School*, was considered as such a good resource of information for the several reasons.

First of all, its typicality constitutes the first reason why this migrant school was chosen by the researcher, as it had been in existence for many years, and gone through

various ups and downs. The experience of it shed light on the encounters of many other migrant schools in Beijing. Secondly, the school was also selected for its specialty, as it was regarded as one of the best migrant schools in Beijing, gaining enormous attention, media coverage, and a huge amount of donations. Therefore, a school like this not only helped to draw a picture of the general situation, but also shed light on individual experience. Lastly, since it is located near migrant communities where a large number of migrants lived, the school also provided the researcher with a precious opportunity to closely observe the day-to-day lives of migrant families. All these reasons help to explain why the *XX Migrant School* had been selected to be case of this study.

As to the generalization of the case, it touches upon one of the major reasons why many investigators have a distain for the strategy (Yin, 1994, p.9). Critics of the case study approach draw attention to a number of problems and/or disadvantages (Bell, 2005, p.11). Perhaps one the greatest concerns has been its narrow basis for scientific generalization. “How can you generalize from a single case?” is a frequently heard question (ibid).

A short answer to such questions proposed by Yin (1994, p.10) is that:

Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a “sample,” and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories and not to enumerate frequencies.

Stake (1995, p.4) also holds a similar point of view, with emphasizing the value of understanding even a single case:

Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case... In instrumental case study, some cases would do a better job than others. Sometimes a “typical” case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases (Stake, 1995, p.4).

In view of the strengths of the case study in emphasizing individual experience, context as well as development, Freebody (2003, p.81) stresses the strong practical implications of the case study, saying that:

We find that it is often the “case” – particular story of an experience, the context of its production, its development in particular circumstances, its consequences and its professional significance – that serves the purpose of bridging the work and exchanges of researchers and practitioners.

It is realized by the author that the endowments of a particular migrant school surely cannot cover all those schools in Beijing. In this sense, a study build on a single case runs the risk of being challenged for its narrow base for generalization. However, as pointed out by Chung (2004, p.123), even a single case poorly represented is valuable. With data collected and analyzed in a rigorous and creative manner, even the information generated from a single case could be enormously rich and precious.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

As pointed out by Yin (ibid: p.8), the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available in the conventional historical study. Moreover, in some situations, such as participant-observation, informal manipulation can occur. In this research, evidences are collected from the following three sources.

Documentation

Except for studies of preliterate societies, documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study. This type of information can take many forms and should be the object of explicit data collection plans (ibid, p.81). The following various kinds of documents are summarized by Yin (ibid):

- Letters, memoranda, and other communiqués
- Agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events
- Administrative documents – proposals, progress reports, and other internal documents
- Formal studies or evaluations of the same “site” under study
- Newspaper clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media

In this study, “Documents” is used in its broadest possible sense, including all forms of written down, filed and published materials. Concretely speaking, two broad categories of documents are to be reviewed and analyzed.

The first category is public documents that have been issued. It includes legislations, policy papers, regulations and administrative guidelines; official documents and reports produced by national governments or official documents produced at the local or institutional level; administrative records, which are used by organizations at different levels to record the factual information of migrant population as well as the activities and decisions made by them.

The second category is of even a broader sense, which includes research literatures relating to the issue; surveys and statistical reports; academic papers; and features, viewpoints and discussion made in journals or the press. For the present study, review on information concerning education for migrant children and various options put forward by different sectors would certainly contribute to a more holistic understanding of the issue to be studied.

Because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case studies. Systematic searches for relevant documents are important in any data collection plan (*ibid*). In addition, although documentary analysis can be a research method used in isolation, it is often used in conjunction with other research methods.

Interviews

The strengths of interviews in a case study are evident. As pointed out by Yin (19984, p.85), the interview is one of the most important sources of evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation. They also can provide shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, helping researchers to identify other relevant sources of evidence.

Interviews in this research aim at probing respondents' point of view on various issues relating to the objectives of the research. An interview plan is made to understand how migrant parents view and value education, and to what extent are they aware that education is a social right for their children. Besides, identifying the difficulties faced by them in securing education arrangements for their children is another important target of the interview plan. Moreover, the plan is also designed to know their remarks on the quality of education provided by migrant schools, and how they plan for the future of their children. Lastly, issues such as how they view their lives in cities, and whether they feel they are unfairly treated or not, are also covered in the interview plan.

Furthermore, another group of interviewees, namely informants including school administrators, teaching staffs, officials from government organs, scholars, and members of NGOs as well. They are those who have been to different extents involved in the issue of education for migrant children, and their viewpoints and interests would further complement the findings. With information from more

resources addressed and examined, the research aims to draw a more holistic picture of the issue.

However, on the other hand, since interviews should always be considered verbal reports only, they may be subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall or inaccurate articulation (ibid). In light of these, Yin (ibid) suggested that a reasonable approach is to corroborate interview data with information from other sources.

Participant-observation

Participant-observation is a special mode of observation in which a researcher is not merely a passive observer, but might assume a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied. Yin (1994, p.88) summarized three major unusual opportunities offered by participant-observation, the first of which is “the most distinctive opportunity” related to the researcher’s ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation; secondly, another distinctive opportunity is the ability to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone “inside” the case study rather than external to it; and lastly, other opportunities arise because the researcher might have the ability to manipulate minor events.

However, meanwhile, it also involves the following major problems (ibid, p.89):

- the investigator has less ability to work as an external observer and may, at times, have to assume positions or advocacy roles contrary to the interests of good scientific practices;
- participant-observer is likely to follow a commonly known phenomenon and become a supporter of the group or organization being studied, if such support did not already exist;
- the participant role may simply require too much attention relative to the observer role. The participant-observer may not have sufficient time to take notes or to raise questions about events from different perspectives, as a good observer might.

In spite of the problems, participant observation is still regarded effective in yielding valuable data, on the condition that it is conducted properly. As May acknowledged (2001, p.174):

Participant observation is not an easy method to perform, or to analyse, but despite the arguments of its critics, it is a systematic and disciplined study which, if performed well, greatly assist in understanding human actions and brings with it new ways of viewing the social world.

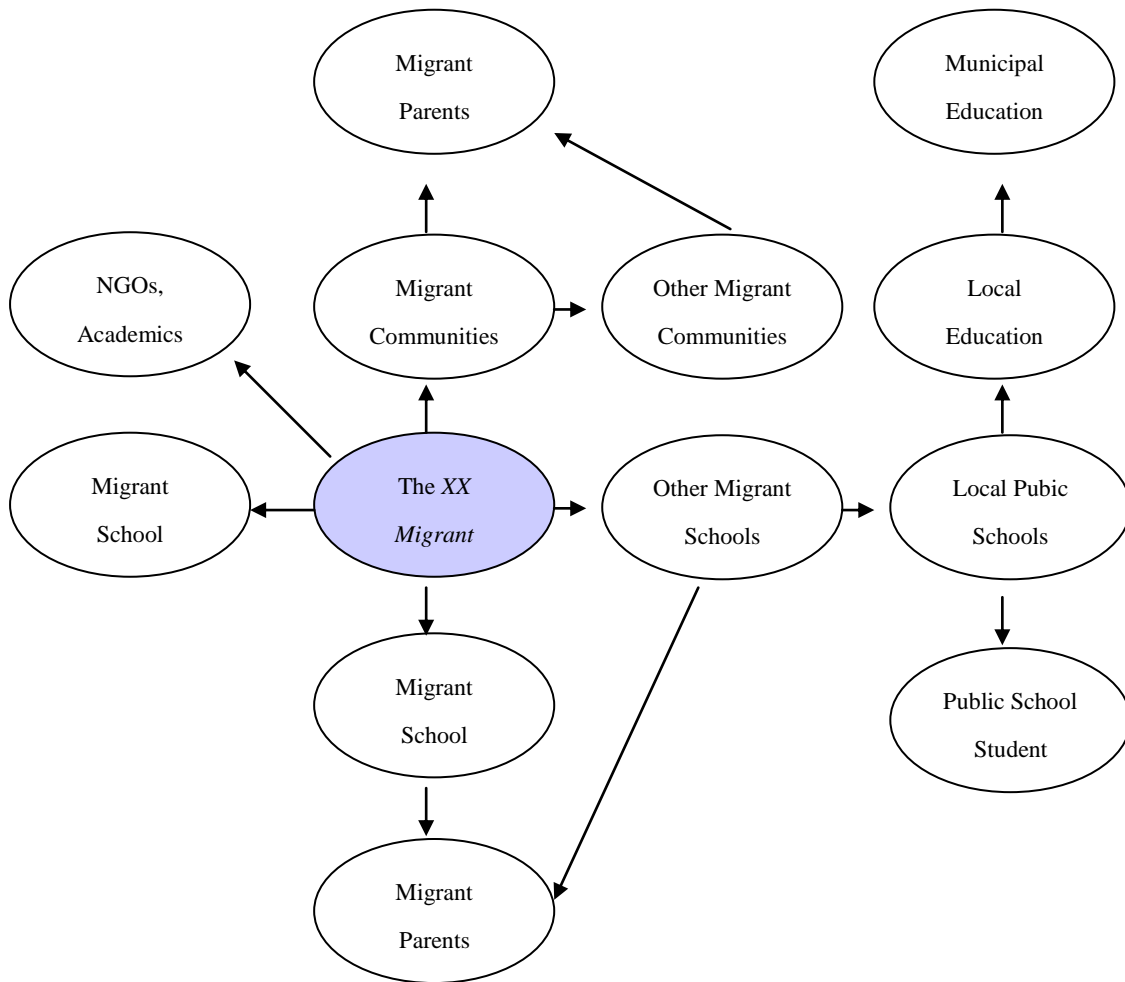
This research involved a participation in everyday life at a migrant school for the duration of nearly three months, from February to May 2008. The field work started a few days before the beginning of a new semester. The researcher was assigned a part-time position of teaching English to the only class of the ninth grade.

Accommodation was provided by the school, so she could stay working and living within the school premises, sharing all living experiences with those teaching, learning and working there. The researcher was also capable to get in touch with the neighboring migrant communities and migrant families residing there. This teaching experience enabled her to build a natural relationship with many of the students, a number of whom were selected for home visits and their parents were interviewed. Living on-campus and working with the other teachers also facilitated her understanding on the daily operation of the school. Meanwhile, alongside teaching, she also found her way round and outside the school to capture more evidence and clues, so as to piece up the reality with data gathered from various sources. Among the works done, analysis was the issue which started right from the very beginning.

SAMPLING PROCESS

This research adopted an ongoing sample selection process commonly referred to as theoretical sampling. This type of sampling begins the same way as purposeful sampling, but the total sample is not selected ahead of time. Popularized by Glaser and Strauss (1967, in Merriam, 1998, p.63), “theoretical sampling is the process of analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges”. The researcher begins with an initial sample chosen for its obvious relevance to the research problem. The data lead the investigator to the next documents to be read, the next person to be interviewed, and so on. It is an evolving process guided by the emerging theory – hence, “theoretical” sampling (ibid). Figure 5-1 demonstrates the how theoretical sampling was proceeded in this research:

Figure 5-1: Sampling Process of This Research



From the above figure it could be seen that the research started from the *XX Migrant School*, then, data collected at the school called for observations elsewhere. Gradually, more stakeholders were involved in this reach, and in the end, all these parties were discovered and covered by this sampling map.

Six migrant communities and nine migrant schools in both Daxing and Chaoyang were visited. Migrant communities visited include Haizijiao, Xin, Lucheng, Yihe Zhuang, Baimeiyao and the isolated community where lived the extended family of Dong. As to the schools, apart from those mentioned in this thesis, namely the *XX*

Migrant School, the *Guang'an Junior High School* as well as the *Daxing XX Primary School*, another five migrant schools and a public school were also visited in the fieldwork, making the total number amounted to nine.

Moreover, totally twenty-nine interviewees from different sectors were interviewed. Most interviewees were migrants and their children, while others might come from a variety of backgrounds including academic circles, NGOs, the local governments as well as other schools both migrant and public. Following is a list of the background information of the interviewees:

Table 5-2: List of Interviewees

	Interviewee	Identity	Background Information
1	Mr. Dong	Migrant Parent	Children Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
2	Mr. Dong (the Second)	Migrant Parent	Children Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
3	Mrs. Guan	Migrant Parent	Child Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
4	Mrs. Shao	Migrant Parent	Child Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
5	Mrs. Wang	Migrant Parent	Child Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
6	Mr. Li	Migrant Parent	Child Attended a local public school
7	Mr. Wang	Migrant Parent	Child Attended a local public school
8	Mrs. Wang	Migrant Parent	Children Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
9	Mrs. Shao	Migrant Parent	Child Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>

10	Mrs. Yang	Migrant Parent	Child Attended a migrant school in Chaoyang
11	Fang's Father	Migrant Parent	Children Attended the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
12	Mr. Wang	Teacher	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
13	Mrs. Guo	Teacher	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
14	Mrs. Ma	School Principal	from the <i>Guang'an Junior High School</i>
15	Mrs. Yang	School Principal	from the <i>Tuan He Migrant School</i>
16	Mr. Zhang	Retired Official	from the <i>Chaoyang Education Commission</i>
17	Mr. Li	Official	from the <i>Beijing Municipal Education Commission</i>
18	Mr. Hursh	NGO Founder	from the <i>Compassion for Migrant Children</i>
19	Mr. Xu	Committee Member	from the <i>XX Foundation</i>
20	Mr. Lu	Employee	from a local NGO
21	Mr. Shi	Professor	from the <i>China Youth University for Political Sciences</i>
22	Min	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
23	Man	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
24	Peng	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
25	Fei	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
26	Bei	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
27	Qin	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>
28	Fang	Migrant Student	from the <i>XX Migrant School</i>

29	Li	Migrant Student	from the <i>Guang'an Junior High School</i>
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As shown by the list, a pool of interviewees from a variety of backgrounds was selected for an interview. The diversity of their backgrounds secured an effective collection of opinions from a range of angles, which helped to put together an all-round picture of the real situation in Beijing. However, it is not possible, nor desirable, to present all this cases and all interviews in the thesis, selected cases representing enough will be presented in the following passages and chapters.

DATA ANALYSIS

Lasting for around 30 to 80 minutes, the majority of the interviews in this study were tape-recorded upon the consent of respondents, except for a telephone interview with the government official. These interviews were taken smoothly and successfully, with most of them taken at the migrants' homes, school offices, headquarters of some NGOs, or simply on the streets. In general, those who agreed to be interviewed were cooperative and patient. In particular, most migrant parents met in the research were amiable, and they treated the researcher and her study seriously. Without feeling anxious for the purpose and consequence of the interview, they were quite open towards the questions, so were the Headmaster of the public school visited and the two teaching staffs from the migrant school. However, unfortunately, several other interviews aimed at exploring the issue of miscellaneous fees with different parties had been turned down, which from the other angle demonstrated that the seriousness of the issue still exists in Beijing, or maybe evenly prevails in other areas. Apart from

the interviews, the researcher had written accounts on the way in which data was interrogated. Interviews were completely transcribed into Chinese after they were conducted.

Preliminary analyses of the transcription were carried out right after the transcriptions were done. Memorandums were employed to catch emerging themes, with categories developed and relationships between them noted. These accounts and memos are formally logged and viewed as part of the interpretative process. During this process, the two features of qualitative data, namely the language and the substantive content of people's accounts, had been emphasized with due consideration. As regard to former, the actual words of the interviewees had been selected properly to portray how a phenomenon was conceived by them. As to the latter, the contents of their accounts were carefully reviewed both in terms of descriptive coverage and assigned meaning so that the fineness of detail in different perspectives or descriptions could be understood.

In addition to interviews, fieldwork notes were taken. They recorded the details which were not included in tape records. Identification of factors from their living environment, which were revealed to have great impact on their views and reactions, was made on every note, based on which, and by comparing the transcripts, recurrent themes and emerging concepts were identified and developed. The initial conceptual framework was then applied to the raw data, which were indexed accordingly. After that, data were sorted and ordered in a way so that materials with similar content or properties are located together. This is to allow the researcher to focus on each subject in turn, so that the details and distinctions can unfold. Then, in the final stage of data management, the original data was summarized and synthesized. Due attention had

been given to retain key terms, phrases or expressions as much as possible from the interviewees' own language. Their actual words and tones have been transcribed into English as far as possible, carrying their original meanings and emotional colors.

To sum up, in this research, the presentation of research findings mingles detailed narratives with clear conceptual focuses.

INTERNAL VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people's lives (Merriam, 1998, p.198).

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality (ibid: p.201). Internal validity in all research thus hinges on the meaning of reality (ibid), which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 295, in Merriam, 1998, p.203) is "a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans; their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them". Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research. Merriam (ibid) believes that in this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 342) identified the four strengths of ethnographic research in regard to internal validity, saying that: first, the ethnographer's common practice of living among participants and collecting data for long periods provides opportunities for continual data analysis and comparison to refine constructs; it ensures a match between researcher categories and participant realities; second, informant interviews, a major ethnographic data source, are phrased in the empirical categories of participants, they are less abstract than many instruments used in other research design; third, participant observation, the ethnographer's second key source of data – is conducted in natural settings reflecting the life experiences of participants more accurately than do more contrived or laboratory settings; finally, ethnographic analysis incorporates researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring that Erickson (1973) calls disciplined subjectivity, and these expose all phases of the research to continual questioning and re-evaluation.

On the other hand, reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions (Bell, 2005, p.117). In other words, it refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998, p.205). Qualitative research, however, is not conducted so that the laws of human behavior can be isolated. Rather, researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it. Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no benchmark by which to take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense (ibid). In view of the fact that the term “reliability” in the traditional sense seems to be something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest thinking about the “dependability” or “Consistency” of the results obtained from the data. That is, rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes

outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable (Merriam, 1998, p.206). Therefore, reliability of a research is reflected by the extent to which findings are consistent with the data collected in the fieldwork.

In this research, internal validity and reliability had been primary concerns of the researcher, and were enhanced through these following strategies:

- Triangulation – in the fieldwork, data was collected from multiple sources through multiple methods. Case interviews with migrant students and their parents, informant interviews with government officials, academic staff and members from NGOs were arranged. Information of all kinds, including official document, school reports, student’s diaries and internet resources, were all referred to, which significantly contributed to a comprehensive view. In addition, the literature review conducted before the fieldwork also significantly validated case study materials.
- Long-term observation at the research site – gathering data over three months had enormously increased the validity of this research. In particular, doing participant-observation on the school campus as a part-time teaching staff effectively enabled more comprehensive understanding on the daily operation of the school. Living in a migrant community facilitated the researcher’ observation on the lives of migrants and their children, which gave rise to a clearer picture of their vulnerability and constraints. Staying longer in the field also made possible many trips near or far – either to other migrant communities, migrant homes and migrant schools, or to public schools and NGOs.

- Researcher's position – clarifying the theoretical orientation of the research and providing a framework guiding the fieldwork in Chapter 4, the researcher has demonstrated her theoretical stand and explained the map concerning data collection.
- Rich, thick description – detailed narratives of interviewees, description of the backdrop of the study, and in-depth analysis of the interaction between migrant children and their surroundings support the readers to judge the authenticity and partiality of the study.

The employment of these above strategies has helped to enhance the internal validity and the reliability of this research.

ETHICAL ISSUE

Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998, p.198). In order to ensure a sensitive research practice, ethical concerns were addressed of all stages of this study.

Informed Consent

Blaxter et al. (2001, in Bell, 2005, pp.45-46) summarized the principles of research ethics as follows:

Research ethics is about being clear about the nature of the agreement you have entered into with your research subjects or contacts. This is why contracts can be a useful device. Ethical research involves getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from. It involves reaching agreements about the uses of this data, and how its analysis will be reported and disseminated. And it is about keeping to such agreements when they have been reached.

Abiding by the rules of ethical research, a consent form was designed by the researcher to ensure that participants would be fully aware of the purpose of the research and understand their rights. It was read out at the start of every interview, explaining that participation was voluntary, that participants were free to refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from the interview at any time. For those interviewees who felt anxious and was at first reluctant to sign the consent form, sufficient time was given for them to read and re-read the form at their own pace. Besides, they were assured that the publishing and reproduction of the data would be confined to the academic domain.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

According to Sapsford and Abbott, “confidential” is a promise that participants will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while “anonymity” is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent (Bell, 2005, p.48). In this research, confidentiality and anonymity were promised to those interviewees who so required, and the promises were kept

consistently in composing the thesis. The migrant school studied in the research, the Headmaster, teachers, students and their parents were all addressed by their titles, initials or made-up name. The researcher has done her best to conceal the evidence revealing the identities of the school and the Headmaster. Meanwhile, as to the public school visited in this research, it was only after getting the permission from the Headmaster in person, that she and her school were addressed with their real names. Sensitive figures like government officials had been addressed with their initials.

LIMITATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

This research chose to study a migrant school in Beijing. Researches involving a single case study usually are prone to be challenged for their generability and reliability. There are questions like whether a study's findings are generable beyond the immediate case study, or if a later investigation will reach to the same conclusions if the later investigator follows the same procedures.

With full acknowledgement on this possible limitation, early discussions in this chapter have already explained that the primary goal of this study is not to unfold a generalized situation encountering all rural children. In reality, China is a big country with huge population as well as vast regional diversity. Generalization on a regional level is more likely to be convincing and theoretically sound. If the research has chosen to do so, the situation of Beijing is already significant enough as it is the capital city to make it also a population magnet with migrants coming from all over the country. Still it is considered that survey on general life satisfaction or living arrangement has been conducted with relatively ease and coming up with statistically

impressive datasets, the dynamic of living of migrant families and the operational patterns of migrant schoolings inside those migrant communities may shed light on some unattended aspects, a deeper understanding by extended observation into selected cases may be academically desirable also.

The findings found at the school might be challenged for not being applicable to other migrant schools in Beijing. However, on the other hand, focusing attention on the *XX Migrant School* for three months enabled valuable discoveries on various aspects of the school. Observation also helps to unfold a picture pinpointing the relationship between the school and other stakeholders involved. The value of this research, in this sense, is shown most in the way how it has recorded this complex network which has long been influencing the development of migrant schools in Beijing. The identification of these six parties also bears great significance for the policy recommendations to be made in the end of the research. In all, a single case study like this might also be valuable academically.

Moreover, as to reliability, multiple research tactics are adopted by this research to secure its accuracy, which include triangulation, rich and thick description as well as a relatively long period of in-filed observation. All these methods serve to improve the reliability of this research.

Another question which might also be raised is about the position of the researcher – whether her evidences are chosen in a selective manner or whether her conclusions are drawn on the basis of a biased selection or distorted viewpoints? Again, multiple measures mentioned above are employed to ensure both a rich context of the issue and a vivid presentation of the opinions collected. The voices of

the interviewees from different parties are all audible, regardless which sectors they are from. Also, at the beginning of the research, the researcher has already explained her stands clearly and all through the study, she has constantly placed the interests of migrant children on the top of the list. All these, including the multiple research tactics and the clear declaration of stand will help later investigators to trace the logic of this study.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, methodological considerations have been discussed and method to further the study is proposed. Chapter 5 is the last chapter of part one. From the next chapter onwards, which is on migrant communities and migrant homes, the lens of observation will be focused on the concrete and detailed experience of migrant children in regards to their education and their lives in Beijing.

PART TWO: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This part is to present the findings observed, heard, learned and collected in the fieldwork, which involved the researcher's participation in the everyday life at a migrant school roughly for three months in Beijing. The researcher started her field work in late February, attached to the ninth grade class of 14-15 year old students, teaching them English together with another teacher. Alongside teaching, the researcher began to find her way round the school, trying to learn more about the factors influencing the schooling arrangements of these children. Throughout the researching process, several stakeholders had been found to have an important impact on the schooling arrangements migrant children, including migrant schools, public schools, local governments, migrant parents, as well as academic circles, mass media and NGOs. Their influences on the issue of education for migrant children are to be unfolded in chapters from 7 to 11 respectively. Chapter 6 is to focus on the environment of migrant communities and the condition of migrant homes witnessed in the field work, both aiming at drawing an overall picture of the living condition of migrant children and at setting up a background for the stories to come in the following chapters.

CHAPTER VI

MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES: VILLAGES IN THE CITY

With the descriptions on what has been observed and perceived from field study with migrant households and other people in the migrant communities, this chapter aims to construct the general background for the stories to come in the following chapters. A closer look at their surroundings will shed light on the general environment in which migrant children were brought up, which in turn will further the understanding on those more detailed aspects of their lives, such as their entertainment in spare time, their circles of friends and their ways of coping with pressure, etc. Among the migrant households and other characters in the migrant communities visited and interviewed in this research, a few of them are selected for presentation. It can be found that while all of them are rather typical and representative, they are also very unique in their own way, just as the saying goes: “Every family has its own problems and a sad tale to tell.”

THREE MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

The rapid social and economic development has brought about great changes to Beijing and the face of the city is changing with every passing day. It can be difficult for people to recognize those places where they have visited before, as the changes taken

place could be too tremendous for them to associate the new outlooks with their old memories. In those old days, only the four districts within the second ring road, namely Xuanwu, Dongcheng, Xicheng and Chongwen, were deemed as the downtown area, whereas the vast open land surrounding them was either suburban or rural. Later, because of the rapid urbanization process, the downtown area further stretched out to the third ring road, and then, it touched the fourth ring road. Because of this, another four districts, which include Chaoyang, Haidian, Fengtai and Shijingshan were integrated into the urbanized area. Nowadays, all these eight districts have been quite developed.



The urbanization process has never ceased further advancing its territory. However, in Beijing, there are still many other places where changes are taking place so slowly, as if they have been forgotten by the ongoing time. The vast suburban and

rural areas, in particular, have hardly been touched by the enormous urbanization progress. Instead, they have maintained many typical geographical and cultural characteristics featuring the countryside, so that they looked entirely different from the city centre. Migrant villages visited in the research are typical examples of these less developed places.

The Village – “Xin”

Xin and the *XX Migrant School* stood on the two different sides of a “river”. Though being called a “river”, it was in fact a long and narrow ditch. Quite imaginatively, the school named the “river” and the pathway running parallel with it after itself. As a result, a special effect had been reached, that is, with the “*XX River*” and the “*XX Road*”, the territory of the school had been efficiently expanded and its image became much livelier. The researcher arrived at the school before the new spring semester started. It was almost the coldest season in Beijing. The weather in Daxing was particularly awful, due to the absence of large-scale constructions and tall buildings, strong northwest wind could take its way wantonly on the vast and open expanse of the district. When night fell, it became so quiet outside. The only sounds audible were the sighs of the wind, the barking of dogs, as well as the roaring engine of heavy trucks.

Due to the dry and cold weather, the “river” was now a deserted channel, the bottom of which was covered by all kinds of garbage like dry plants, broken bricks, plastic bags, pieces of paper, and so on. Later, it was found that when spring came

back and the temperature continued rising, filthy water would quickly find its way back, which in summer would eventually take over the ditch and make its smell of sewage. With several bricks and deserted wooden boards set across the “river” as a simplified bridge, some naughty migrant boys would repeatedly go to the other side of the ditch, laughing and screaming, as if it was an interesting adventure. Another game they favored was to climb the big willow trees planted on the bank of the “river”. Moreover, for some other children, swinging on the school’s steel gate was an entertainment, too. Unlike the city center where fitness equipment was commonly provided to the general public, migrant communities in Daxing barely had any similar facility. As a result, migrant children had to play with whatever available to amuse themselves.

Nonetheless, the landscape of the village was not without any saving grace. It sometimes looked pretty beautiful. Probably, as a small and backward suburban village, the beauty of it was exactly embodied in its simplicity, which in itself was a rather sharp contrast to the boasting nature of urban life. Moreover, what made the village, or many other similar villages round China, even more special was the fact that they were the places where the dreams of tens of thousands of rural migrants started. They lived in those single-storied brick houses, and were eager to have a big go in cities. Their hopes and disappointment, happiness and suffers, efforts and frustrations, all had filled the village with a special atmosphere full of vigor and vitality. Furthermore, in Xin, local residents and migrants lived together in harmony. In order to earn more money, local residents redesigned their houses, so that they could have more separated rooms to rent out to migrants. Usually, these rooms were smaller in size and were only plainly decorated. But they suited well the needs of

migrants, who were not particular at all with the living conditions, but deeply concerned with the rent.

Even though Xin was small in size, generally speaking, the layout of it was sensibly designed, with rows of neatly constructed bungalows and streets which were clean and of moderate width. There were some small businesses located along its main street, including a drugstore, several barbershops, a shoe repairing stand, as well as a few tuck shops. These businesses were owned either by local residents or migrants. An indispensable facility was a public shower house, the only one within this area. For those who lived nearby, one of their headaches must be the tough weather, the endless wind and irritating dust. It was easy to get dirty here, so that once in a while residents of Xin need to visit this public shower house. However, the charge, which stood at 3 *yuan* per service, might be too much for migrant families. Therefore, most of the children went there to take a shower once in a week, or even had to wait longer.

A busy road running from south to north was located in the west of Xin. It was one of the passes for heavy trucks to ship goods to the city centre. Sometimes, drivers of those huge vehicles would poke their heads out of the window, whistling to the young women walking on the street. More often than not, their whistles were accompanied by a cloud of dust thrown up from street, which to some degree were even more annoying. There were more businesses on both sides of the street, which were larger in scale. Most of them were car repair shops and restaurants. A little bit further in the south, along the street there were places like seeds stores, drugstore, big junkyards and recycling centers as well. By going further in south, the sceneries

alongside the street would be replaced by open fields clear to the horizon, which when spring came, would be planted with maize, potato and other crops.

The Village – “Haizijiao”

Haizijiao had been frequently visited by the researcher, as it was where most of the students she knew lived. It was not far away at all from the *XX Migrant School*, a one-way trip between them only cost about fifteen minutes on foot. It was bigger than Xin and more complex in terms of its layout, at first sight, which almost looked like a maze. Crisscrossed with each other, all those pathways formed a network, stretching out into all directions. However, with a bit more knowledge of it, it turned out that, in fact, like the saying goes: “all roads lead to Rome”, however twisty those pathways were, they would finally lead to the destination one was looking for. Everyday, various kinds of social activities were put on stage here in Haizijiao, with most of them taking place alongside two busy streets.

Nearby the first busy street, there was an outdoor market, the middle of which was occupied by rows of stands, selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables. Small shops around sold goods like fish, meat, milk, eggs, cooked food, cooking oil, rice, flour, seasonings, toilet paper, clothes and kitchen wares, etc. Even though it could hardly be compared with big supermarkets in the city centre, this open market was indispensable for nearby residents, as it was an important resource for their daily supplies. Every day, before dinner time, a large number of people would flood into the market to buy materials they needed for cooking. Moving slowly along the narrow

pathways and carrying several bags, they often would block each other's ways. Their voices of asking for prices and bargaining, all at once, would fill every corner of the market.

To the north of it, there was a recently opened indoor market selling all kinds of small commodities and daily necessities. It was equipped with air conditioning system, which made it a preferable choice for casual walks. Housewives and their children or those who had been retired found it a good place to go, considering the harsh weather outside.

Next to the indoor market there was the first main street, which, in fact, was more like a street market. Small restaurants and tuck shops lined up along the south side of the street. They were favored by nearby residents who could hardly resist the temptation of a cup of beer and some snacks after a day of work. On the opposite side of the street, there were quite a number of vendors selling piles of fresh fruits and vegetables. Their goods were displayed either on pick-up trucks, tricycles or simply on a piece of cloth placed on the ground. Most of the businesses here were run by migrants. Owing to the diversity of the goods and services it offered, this street was rather popular among residents from surrounding neighborhoods.

The second main street was situated down to the centre of Haizijiao, surrounded by bungalows on its three sides, with its east end touching the edge of the village. Unlike the other one mentioned above, due to its geographical location, this street was more exclusively catering to the needs of the residents living inside Haizijiao. Single-storied houses around were built of bricks, most of which were old and lacked

maintenance. The street, half the width of the other one, also accommodated many businesses. It was only much busier and more crowded. Apart from the various kinds of goods and services that could be found along the first street, more choices were available here. There were several public shower houses, cheap laundries, a computer bar, a few barbershops as well as a printing shop. With all these, the street succeeded in providing villagers living nearby with a more convenient life.

Without official statistics, it was difficult to name the exact number of migrants living in Haizijiao. In fact, there were so many of them. It seemed that they had already outnumbered local villagers. Quite a number of them were engaged in private businesses, either big or small, however, the majority of them were still hired for odd jobs or taking seasoning vacancies.

It was rather usual to see migrant youngsters strolling around in Haizijiao, both boys and girls, in groups of two or three or even more. They played, chatted, window-shopped or simply enjoyed each other's company, whiling away their time after class. Living in a migrant community where the most basic public recreational facilities were lacking, migrant youngsters had little choice concerning the entertainment in their own time. Since neither did they have much homework, nor could they be occupied by some other more meaningful activities, they ended up idling around or doing something inappropriate for their age. For instance, even though it was against the law for internet bars to let in those who are aged below eighteen, migrant youngsters could still find their access to these bars, both for the loose implementation of law and the greed of the bar owner for gain. Due to their adventurous nature, migrant boys in particular, were more prone to be obsessed by

some inadequate activities and exposed to certain dangers. Some of them might spend hours in internet bars, for they were addicted to online chatting or online games. Others might find a little restaurant or a street corner, trying some cigarettes or alcohol, which was deemed by them a gesture showing their growing manhood.

Unlike their urban counterparts who usually had a busy schedule after school, doing homework or attending extra-curricular courses, most migrant children spent much less time and efforts on school stuffs. Meanwhile, their parents, too occupied by their own jobs, were unable to pay close attention to them all the time. Together with the minimal pressure given by their teachers, it was easy for them to feel bored and vacuous. At this moment, playing outside carelessly became a good method to escape from this kind of emptiness. However, in migrant communities, their surroundings simply would not provide them with sufficient facilities and healthy recreation.

An Isolated Community

The community to be introduced was barely a real village, but a special community made up by several separated big yards, accommodating different groups of migrant residents. It was about one mile in the west of an intersection, at the other side of which there were rows of newly constructed commercial estates. Situated between them, the road running from south to north was like a dividing line, which marked the boarder of two very different worlds.

Migrant workers lived in the yard at the south part of the community worked for a construction company. They were busy building a metro station of a new line which was about to be open to the public in a couple of years. Those big yards in the centre of the community, rented by several small-scale private companies, were used both as their workshops and as dormitories for their employees, whereas, the one taken over by their families, as told by Qin, a migrant girl interviewed in the research, was at the north part of the community, closest to the main entrance. These yards were linked up by a pathway. Qin said that, sometimes, while they were walking towards the only public toilet located in the south, some men living in the yards besides the pathway would whistle to them, which they regarded rather annoying. Qin's family lived in the yard together with their relatives. Her father, Dong, was the oldest brother in this big extended family, followed by him, were his two younger brothers who were also married and had their own children. Apart from them, they also shared the yard with a few other relatives. Coming from the same village in Henan Province and related to each other in this or that way, most of them had the same family name "Dong".

Their yard, surrounded by walls on its four sides, was as big as four or five basketball pitches. Rent charged for a year was about 10,000 *yuan*. It would be jointly shared by these individual families. Close to the wall in the north, there were eight huts in dirty green, standing in a line. They were among the most shocking migrant homes visited in this research. The rest of the yard, namely a big piece of land, had been planted with a vast variety of plants, including some kinds of vegetables for their daily consumption. This piece of land was an indispensable resource for their family's wholesale business of sapling and flower seedlings. Because the visit was paid in winter, a season when it was impossible for the land to be in a better shape, everything

in their yard looked gray and lifeless. However, as told by Qin and her cousins, when spring finally found her way back, its scenery would be rather pretty.

Every day, males of the family would work outside to earn money, while their wives would stay at home, handling the house chores, working on the land, or taking care of children. When less occupied, these women would ride to a nearby street market together, selling flowers. Sometimes, they would be joined by their children, who expected to be treated with some snacks at the market.

Their children, except a newly born, all studied at the *XX Migrant School* in early 2008. Since their community was not close to any kind of recreational facilities, and there was no other migrant child living nearby, Qin and her cousins had to think of other ways to please themselves. Qin, Man and Min, the three oldest girls, were luckier, as they enjoyed more trust and freedom granted by their parents. Sometimes, they went window-shopping with their friends at a shopping mall a few bus stations away. Sometimes, they visited their friends who lived in other villages and were permitted to stay over at their homes. By contrast, their younger sisters and brothers could only while away their spare time around the yard, watching TV at home, or playing with each other. Upon seeing their older sisters leaving home, the two little boys, Shun and Bo, usually would be very jealous, insisting to be taken along. But, their requests would always be denied, leaving them in furious complaints. Therefore, sometimes, half forced by their bored feelings, half lured by their temptation to seek fun, the two boys would go out exploring. Considering their surroundings, it was scarcely a good idea. The road running past the entrance of their community led to the city centre. Every day, a lot of trucks carrying heavy goods would take it to enter the

downtown area. While strolling along the road, these heavy vehicles would simply brush past them at arm's length. The most dangerous accident once occurred must be Shun's falling in to a pond on a small hill behind their community, which, in rainy season, would be filled with rainwater. He almost drowned in the pond. As soon as the frightened boy calmed down, he and Bo were beaten black and blue by their furious parents.

Conclusion

In the above section, three representative migrant communities have been presented. Generally speaking, though as parts of suburban Beijing, the living environment of migrant communities was rather different from that of the urban area proper. As for migrant children, the biggest problem confronting them was the obvious lack of public facilities beneficial to young people. As a result, some of them were idling away their precious time after school on streets, while others were even involved in some activities improper for their age.

FIVE MIGRANT HOMES

It had been heard more than once from migrant students that local residents in their villages were lazy bones, who made easy money simply by renting out their houses to migrants. As a matter of fact, rent in Daxing was much less than that charged in the city centre, for in general, the living standard of Daxing was lower.

Though having been lifted from a county to a district, the economy of Daxing was still falling behind. Agriculture continued playing an important role in its economy, and much of its industries still focused on the distribution of food and consumer goods to serve Beijing.

Take the experience of Guo, an English teacher from the *XX Migrant School*, for instance. Coming from northeast China, Guo married a local man. The two of them lived in a two-bedroom flat in a six-floor residential building in Haizijiao. Plainly decorated and half furnished, the flat was equipped with two big bedrooms, a medium-size living room, a bath room and a kitchen. As roughly estimated, it covered an area about 60 to 70 m². In 2007, monthly rent charged for it was merely 600 *yuan*, an amount only enough for a basement in the downtown area. Nonetheless, it had been regarded an unbearable burden for the couple, when their landlord had it increased to 800 *yuan*. Guo and her husband thought about moving to another place. For most migrants, the living condition was less a concern compared with the cost. Therefore, in order to keep the spending on a place to live to the minimum, they would not mind choosing a room or a flat in less satisfactory condition. With five typical examples, this coming section is to draw a picture of those migrant homes visited in this research.

The Crowded Tiny Home of Hong

It was impossible to pack so many people in a small room. So, it was very hard to imagine how Hong's whole family had managed to live in a room as tiny as that. Hong

attended grade five at the *XX Migrant School*. Her family came from Henan Province. In total, there were four people in her family: mother, father, little brother and Hong.

On the day of the visit, they were all at home, except Hong's father who was now in their hometown, taking care of the farmland. Because of it, he had to shuffle between Beijing and Henan every year. When he was in Beijing, he would work for a foreman, who summoned them together when there were jobs available. Normally, they built houses for other villagers. Hong's mother was a cleaning worker at a local hospital. It was a temporary position, and the monthly salary, standing between 500 to 600 *yuan*, was rather low. But her income was stable compared with that of her husband's, which was decided by the availability of jobs. Their small home cost them 170 *yuan* a month. Hong's mother was grateful to the landlord who had kept their rent unchanged while the rental fees charged in their village had all been soaring up in 2008. As told by her, knowing each other for years, their landlord knew she was a good person. Besides, she had sympathy for their difficult condition.

Their home was a typical private construction, which might be illegal. Nowadays, local residents rushed to have their houses enlarged, so that they could earn more money by renting them out to migrants. As a result, pathways in the village became narrower and narrower. Roughly estimated, their room could not be bigger than 10 m². The only merit of it was a very small yard connected to it in the front, which was equipped with a water pipe, and the rest of the place could hold Hong's bicycle. Inside the room, the view was so packed that it could hardly be summed up in two words or three. The left side of the room was primarily occupied by two beds. Separated by a shelf, the two beds were not of the type that one normally thinks of when imagining a

bed. Rather, they were hand-made by wooden boards and bricks. The one closest to the door, which was slightly bigger in size, was shared by Hong's mother and her little brother, while, the much narrower, blocked by the shelf, was Hong's. It remained a mystery where Hong's father would sleep when he came back. In total, the two beds and the shelf had taken over about two-thirds of their entire room.

In front of the wall facing the door was a row of shelves, on top of which was placed the most valuable items in the room – a television and a radio. An array of odds and ends was piled atop the table, television, and radio. The mother said that people from the hospital had given her these items, and though the items were old, she did not dislike them. In the space closest to the door was a traditional oven that they used to warm themselves and to do cooking. Bowls and chopsticks, rice, oil, all of these things were placed on the adjacent shelf or simply on the floor. A table, where the two children did their homework, stood in the remaining space in the center of the room. Another table, where the family took meals, was simply a foldable classroom desk. When taking meals, one was like squatting on the floor. The room had but a single light bulb whose yellow glare made the room's furniture appear even older than it was. As the room also served as a kitchen, a layer of grease had formed on the surface of the furniture. Hong and his little brother did homework under the dim light. "Luckily, their eyes are still good", their mother said in relief. Due to the less satisfactory physical condition of herself and her children, she had spent quite an amount seeing doctors and buying medicines. So buying glasses for them in case they became short-sighted would be another financial crisis she disliked imagining.

The Cold Tiny Home of Chen

Chen was in the fifth-grade of the *XX Migrant School*. She and her mother, who earned a living by selling newspapers, lived in Haizijiao. The two lived in a small yard which also accommodated another three migrant families. Could not be more than 10 m² in size, their home consisted of two parts, a bedroom and a small lumber room. Monthly rent for this place was 200 *yuan*.

In the lumber room, there was an old-fashioned washing machine and piles of boxes placed against the walls, while a big dark green bicycle was parked in the middle, which was an evident for her job as a newspaper deliverer. Inside their room, newspapers leftover was put in a pile of a man's height in the corner behind the door. Different from Hong's small home which was stuffed with various kinds of items, theirs was only furnished with a few pieces of furniture, including a small double bed for the mother and her daughter; a wardrobe storing their clothes and other belongings; a desk used to hold an electronic stove, rice cooker and other kitchenware; as well as two chairs and a folding table on which they had meals. Sitting on the edge of the bed, Chen also did her homework on this table. Nature light could not come through the tiny window facing the door, as with an arm's distance there was their neighbor's wall. Shrouded in the dim yellow light given off by the only light bulb, their home looked so gloomy and cold.

Since they did not have a heater, the room was just slightly warmer than the outside. The only thing they used to cope with the cold weather was an electric blanket put beneath the bedclothes, because of which, an unfortunate accident

occurred in early 2008. One day, the electric blanket was overheated and started burning, and in a second, both their quilt and mattress were on fire. Luckily enough, the fire was eventually put off, only caused a permanent damage on the mattress, which was later stuffed by Chen's mother by some clothes. In addition, the other damage happened to their home was the falling of two pieces of tiles from the ceiling, leaving a black hole above their heads. As told by them, sometimes there were rats running in their room while they slept in nights.

Home inside a Laundry

Living in Haizijiao, Peng was a ninth-grade student from the *XX Migrant School*. His mother worked for a local resident who opened a small laundry in a bungalow besides the street. His father did seasonal or odd jobs. He also had an older sister, who was recently admitted by a part-time accounting program offered by a local college.

Divided into three rooms, the bungalow managed to accommodate both the business and Peng's family. The small room in front was used as a reception area, where Peng's mother usually stayed during daytime, greeting customers and ironing clothes. The room was separated into two portions by two sets of professional washers and driers. The room in the middle was taken up by Peng's parents. Meanwhile, it was also used to store those cleaned clothes waiting to be picked up. The room at the back, a small and narrow one, was allocated to Peng and his older sister, who shared a bunk bed.

This accommodating arrangement came as a benefit of the job of Peng's mother, whereas, it was not at all a free offer. Every month, a rent worth of 500 *yuan* was paid to the laundry owner, who was also their landlord. Compared with the other migrant homes visited in this research, Peng's felt more like a home, considering the size and the layout of the bungalow as well as their whole set of furniture, including a 21 inch color television.

Still, the room shared by Peng and his older sister was by no means an ideal place for their studies. First of all, with only one tiny window, the room lacked natural light and looked so dark even during daytime. Secondly, the junk bed was taking up almost half of the room, the space remained, which was as wide as one's shoulder, was not big enough for a writing desk. Lastly, converted from a kitchen, there was a sink standing at the other end of the room, still in service. It made their room too damp to live in and the moist corner of the walls smelt of mildew.

Home inside a Greenhouse

Ying was a shy and quiet girl coming from the same class of Peng. Very serious with her study, the girl performed outstandingly well in her class, distinguishing herself from the other students. In particular, her efforts and passion in English often led her to the first place in English examinations. Moving to Beijing from Henan Province, now Ying's family lived in a little town called Lu Town, the last stop on the route of the school bus service. Normally, it would take Ying and her younger sister a whole hour on their way to school or back home.

Ying's home was greatly different from the common concept of home adopted by most urban residents. Engaged in the wholesale business of flower seedlings, her family lived in two special rooms connected with two huge greenhouses. Their community, to meet the needs of those migrants who earned a living on the farm, was made up by rows of huge greenhouses. The rooms, in which they stayed, were in fact separated from the greenhouses and were built of brick, only taking up a fairly small part of the entire construction, while the vast pieces of land were planted with various kinds of flowers. Inside the greenhouses, it felt like a totally different world, which had nothing to do with the dry and cold weather outside, as if spring had chosen to stay behind. The two greenhouses were rented by Ying's family and their relatives at an annual rent as high as 5000 *yuan*. However, from the food they had for dinner, it seemed that they led a better life than many other migrant families. As told by Ying's father, even though the prospects of his business fluctuated with the market, he could have control over it and secured stable gains.

The room, which was built for tenants on purpose, was taken by Ying and her cousin. It was a real room, built of bricks and was of a better quality. Heating inside the room was pretty good. Even the yellow light given off by a light bulb hung from the ceiling made the room feel like much warmer and cozier. Nonetheless, the room was unexceptional small, with a double bed occupying most space. The room was furnished with old furniture. However, it was clear that every piece of them was carefully selected to meet the needs of the girls. Ying was the only migrant child seen in the research who had a desk, though quite narrow, of her own. On her desk, those items exclusively for her use, including even an old computer, some exercise books, a radio and a lamp, were a real luxury for many other migrant children. All these

seemed to demonstrate the efforts of Ying's parents in offering their daughter an ideal environment to study.

Separated from the other greenhouse by a wall made of cupboards and plastic film, the two rooms occupied by her parents, her younger sister, her uncle and aunt had many problems, though they were kind of spacious. They were dark, damp, cold and smelt of earth, poorly furnished with boxes, cases and old cabinets, neither of which was furniture in real sense. The plastic film used as a wall, as told by Ying's father, would be taken off in summer so as to let in more natural breeze. However, at the same time, there would come numerous mosquitoes, making their life a real suffering. One might wonder why Ying's parents did not care about improving their living condition. The reason was simple. As told by her father, he was assured that one day they would go back to their hometown. So, living and doing business in Beijing was a mere temporary arrangement. Therefore, it was better to save every cent they earned now than spending it on something they would finally leave behind.

Home inside a Hut

As mentioned in the first section, Qin and her family lived on a piece of land inside an isolated community, with their other relatives. They lived in huts, instead of houses, as when they signed the contract, it was required by the landlord not to build up any structure on this land. Made up by materials like bamboo, wooden boards, plastic film, felt and straw, the images of their dark green huts were very striking. The roofs, with bamboo as the frame inside, straw and felt in between, and plastic film as

the surface, had several layers. So were their walls. There were bricks placed on top of the roofs, to make sure that they would not be blown away by the strong wind in winter. The only merit of their huts was that they were bigger, considering the size of the flats or single rooms rented by other migrant families.

Take Min's hut for instance. Their many belongings, such as cupboards, a stove, a television, beds, tables, chairs, a folding table and a single sofa, all squeezed inside, leaving some limited space in the middle for moving around. As they lacked natural light inside and the light given off by a bare light bulb was weak and dim, things placed at the far end of the hut could only be recognized by their dark shapes. With wooden boards and bricks, their beds were made by themselves, with the one close to the entrance occupied by the couple and their son, and the one inside by the two girls. Their dilapidated furniture was apparently a collection of discarded items found all around. Without frame and made out of several pieces of wooden boards attached to each other, their door could hardly be closed tight. The stove, even with the fire on, could not drive away the severe cold. In particular, the floor, rather than being covered by bricks or cement, was simply soil stamped hard. Their most expensive item, namely, the old small television, was the favorite of Qin's younger brother, which had accompanied him in numerous afternoons after class.

A small simplified outdoor toilet was built behind the hut, which was in fact a pit dug on the ground. Around the hut, rubbish like broken bricks, worn-out basin, baskets, pieces of paper, cloth, shoes and boxes were scattered about, making it a big mess.

Conclusion

In this section, five migrant homes have been introduced. They were selected from dozens of migrant homes visited in this research, representing migrant homes of different conditions, in different environments. In general, migrants would keep their spending on housing arrangement as low as possible, because at this stage of life, what they expected, rather than a comfortable, cozy but expensive home, was an affordable shelter where they could reunite with their other family members and take a rest after a day of hard work. Therefore, the condition of their temporary homes in Beijing was often unsatisfactory.

In her fieldwork, the researcher had seen a migrant girl whose family was engaged in the business of collecting garbage. She bent over her bed to do her homework, while sitting on a swivel chair as tall as the bed. Moreover, the most striking migrant home seen in the research was situated on a piece of farmland planted with blanched garlic leaves. Built up by sandbags, its lower part was buried under the ground. A staircase made out of soil led to the bottom. No electricity was available inside. A young migrant mother played with her baby daughter in front of their “sandbag bunker”, looking anxious and worn-out. As told by her, this year the price of blanched garlic leaves had kept declining on the local market, which made her bitterly regret having followed her husband to Beijing, suffering in the severe cold and leaving their cozy and spacious house behind. When the researcher was taking a photo for her home, the young mother spontaneously covered her face, embarrassed to be the hostess of such a horrible home.

PROS AND CONS OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND MIGRANT HOMES

Early studies on the housing issue of migrant populations just had found that migrants had very diversified housing arrangements, especially in 1990s when most migrants were moving on their own. According to the study of Mallee (2003, p.151), at that time construction workers usually lived on the work sites and industrial workers in dormitories provided by the factories. Domestic workers, on the other hand, often lived in the homes of their employers. Where weather conditions permitted, small traders and peddlers not infrequently spend the night on the streets and in marketplaces next to their wares. Similarly, people working in shops, restaurants and service workshops simply spread their mattress on the floor once the customers were gone and the doors had been closed.

However, in recent years many changes have taken place among the migrant population. One distinguished change is that the population is no longer composed mainly of young people in their 20s. A 2002 survey showed that the average age of the migrant population in Beijing had risen from 20 to 30 years old in the last decades; many had married and established families, and preferred to live in the city (Kwong, 2004, p.1076). The most direct consequence is that nowadays migrants, rather than moving on their own, come to cities with their entire families. According to Mallee (2003, p.153), a 1997 survey conducted in Beijing found that about one-third of the migrants consisted of families. In particular, small operations in commerce and services, which often needed two workers, were characterized by family migration. Since the special needs of children and their schooling need to be taken into consideration, it is certain that migrants now are having more consideration regarding their housing

arrangement in cities. Those migrants who have a family to look after can no longer sleep on the streets, nor at the places where they work. Therefore, they need to find a place which at least looks like a home.

Pros and Cons of Migrant Communities

Identified by Song and Appleton (2008, pp.143-144), there are three typical kinds of settlements for rural migrants in China. The first type is the “migrant settlement community”. They have emerged in the suburbs of big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Examples of such communities include Zhejiang Village, Xinjiang Village, and Henan Village in Beijing. These communities are clearly structured with services – clinics, transports, shops and restaurants – catering to their own needs. In this type of community, migrant workers live with their employers in an environment where they do not have many opportunities to contact “outsiders”. The second type of settlement is comparative isolation. Migrants live with their fellow-workers and their employers in a corner within a city. These migrants do not have much contact with urban residents and their reference group remains their rural fellow-villagers or fellow-migrants. These migrants tend to work in manufacturing or on construction sites. The third type of rural-urban migrant is more intermingled with urban residents. Their clients are usually urban residents, or they rent accommodations from urban dwellers, or their children, if with them, are mixed with urban children in schools or residential sites.

Migrant communities visited in this research belong to the third type, as they suit the needs of migrant families who have children to raise and educate. Three reasons explain migrants' preference for living in these communities on the urban outskirts: firstly, to find an accommodation there is usually easier. Secondly, official control in these areas is more than often less strict. And lastly, it is only a commuting distances to go to the downtown areas (Mallee, 2003, p.152). Their demand for housing had not been overlooked by all. Instead, local farmers soon discovered that their land yielded much more income when it was occupied with rented-out rooms than when it was cultivated with crops (ibid). They started renting out their spare places to migrants at an affordable price, and these in turn had attracted more migrants to come and settle in. As a result, by the late 1980s, migrant enclaves had emerged on the periphery of most large Chinese cities. And even when there were no clearly identifiable settlements on the rural-urban fringe, migrants often accounted for a considerable proportion of the de facto population, sometimes, even equaling or surpassing the number of original residents (ibid).

The above findings are identical with the discoveries of this research. Communities visited in this research in suburbs were unexceptionally occupied by a large number of migrants. The real estate market targeting migrant family, a way for local residents to earn quick money, was booming and prosperous. Even though the exact ratio of migrants to local residents was unavailable, it was quite self-evident that migrants had taken over these communities from local residents. By dwelling in a concentrated manner, migrant families can be accessed to certain kinds of benefits and supports. For example, their network of friends, neighbors, relatives and fellow-townsmen can provide them with a rich resource of useful information.

Information on the local job market, on available medical service, as well as on the education arrangement for their children, will all help newly arrived migrants to more quickly adapt to the entirely different urban environment. Additionally, as the Chinese saying goes: “a far-off relative is not as helpful as a near neighbor”, by living together with people coming from similar backgrounds, migrants will feel secured and are most lucky to gain mutual supports from each other.

On the other hand, in many Chinese cities, migrant communities are perceived as “low class” or “under class” communities where the rental prices were generally low and living conditions are generally poor (Guo and Gao, 2008, 2008, p. 123). Remarks like this show a great deal of prejudice, however, when it comes to the interests of children, migrant communities are in fact a less ideal choice.

First of all, located on the urban outskirts, usually the former rural areas, migrant communities usually lacked reliable infrastructure for children and youngsters, such as a library, an after-school center or basketball pitch. Not being able to access sufficient proper extracurricular activities after school, some migrant children, especially teenage boys, might end up strolling around on the streets or being addicted to activities inappropriate for their age. As a result, it was not infrequent to see their figures in internet bars and restaurants, playing games, chatting, drinking alcohol and smoking. At these places, they not only whiled away a good deal of time, but were also exposed to potential risks of coming across with inappropriate information and bad people. The situation was further worsened by their parents’ insufficient supervision and instruction. Coming across with such migrant teenagers and

anticipating their gloomy future became the bitterest personal experience of the researcher while walking around in their communities.

Furthermore, living in migrant communities in suburbs might also be less beneficial for migrant children to better integrate with the urban environment. Even though within the territory of Beijing, the localities of migrant communities are usually solitude, isolated, and barely touched by the rapid development commonly occurring in the city centre. As if they were two different worlds, between which, there was no communication. Growing up in a migrant community means to these children that most likely they will maintain the habits, customs and practices they have been accustomed to when they lived in the countryside. Whereas, due to the absence of an encouraging environment, they are less likely to have access to those prevailing social norms commonly accepted in cities, not to mention picking them up, or those social expectations placed on every urban dweller. The consequence of this was damaging for their future development. On one hand, the lack of knowledge on the other world fails them in making sensible judgment on important issues, such as what kind of education is needed for an employment in cities, what kind of skills are indispensable for urban residents, when and where and how to get those opportunities efficiently, etc. On the other hand, the more they are used to the habits, customs and practices reminding their rural background, the less quickly for them to be integrated with the mainstream society.

Lastly, considering their studies, influenced by the loose general atmosphere, children from migrant communities are less likely to be under sufficient positive pressures, which originally should have been exerted by their schools, their parents, or

their peers. It was hard for them to settle down in front of their desks, only if there was a desk in the first place. Adequately exerted, pressures are both useful and necessary, as they might change to be self-motivating, which encourages the children to be more aggressive and have high expectations on themselves. On the other hand, supervision from their schools and parents will help them to be more disciplined and concentrate on their studies. However, since their parents are too busy to keep an eye on them, migrant children are wrongly given too much freedom but too little pressure and supervision. Meanwhile, the lack of cultural and recreational facilities had also severely weakened the overall atmosphere favorable to the studies of migrant children.

To conclude, bearing in mind the essential importance of childhood and adolescence, it can be put that living in isolated migrant communities is less likely to benefit migrant children when their future prospects are concerned.

Pros and Cons of Migrant Homes

During the past few years, the situation of left-behind children, their peers who have been left to the guardianship of one parent or other relatives, has also attracted a great deal of attention from various sectors. Numerous academic studies have consistently pointed out the disadvantages faced by these children living apart from their parents. For instance, the biggest risk faced by left-behind children is the absence of family intimacy and proper parental supervision, both of which are decisive and indispensable for a healthy growth of children. Some of these left-behind

children may later be reunited with their parents in cities. However, after years of living apart, they might find themselves not only to be reunited with someone they barely know, but also in an entirely different situation which they have to adjust to as well. To a great degree, not having to live separately from their parents, for most migrant children, is already a big blessing. Just having a look at the face of Qin will help to understand what this means to a child. Having lived on herself for a year in Henan, the girl was simply so pleased to come back to Beijing, living with her entire family, despite any difficulty.

However, undeniably, given their living environment, living in cities does not seem like a perfect arrangement, either.

First and foremost, due to their limited financial capacity, most migrant families could only afford a one-room bungalow, in which they performed all these daily activities, such as cooking, eating, communicating and entertaining. They might disturb each other while they were engaged in their own businesses. For migrant children, they also needed to study. However, the unavailability of a quiet and private space might have them easily interrupted by their surroundings. Take Hong's home for instance, during the interview with Hong's mother, the girl and her younger brother had to do their homework on a small table only a few steps away. It was also usual for Qin to do her homework, while Shun was watching an exciting cartoon movie attentively.

Secondly, because of their poor material conditions, migrant homes are also unlikely to be a favorable environment for migrant children. For instance, most homes

visited in the research only had one light bulb, under the weak light of which the children had to do their homework quickly enough before the dim light hurt their eyes or make them sleepy. In Hong's home, it was impossible to take pictures without turning on the flashlight. But Hong and his younger brothers had apparently adapted to the limited light, for they both managed to do their homework without feeling disturbed. In addition, since their places were too small and crowded, rarely migrant families could prepare a writing desk for their children. Therefore, the children did their homework on a variety of items, such as on foldable tables, wooden cases, or even on their beds.

Because of these, for migrant children, doing homework could be an uncomfortable and distressing experience, rather than something interesting and rewarding. Also, they added to the possibilities for them to be distracted from their homework. As a result, migrant children seemed to be less accustomed to working hard with their studies, the long-term consequence of which could be really devastating, considering how important a good education background meant in nowadays society.

To add, there was lack of the least amount of privacy at migrants' homes. As aforementioned, their single room could be really multifunctional, as at different times of a day, they could be used as bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, dining rooms, or even bathrooms for taking a shower in summer. Privacy was, therefore, a real luxury term for migrants, especially for girls. It became particularly acute when the entire family had to stay in the same room, with younger children sleeping with their parents,

sisters and brothers either sharing a bunk bed or be separated by a bed sheet. Living in such compact rooms, privacy was something that only existed in their imagination.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF OBSERVATION

In this chapter, three migrant communities and five migrant homes have been selected for presentation, so that stories coming in the following chapters can be presented against a more vivid and genuine background.

As described in the previous pages, it can be concluded that the migrant communities could not offer an environment to back up schooling as the communities are dispersed, if not isolated at all, and are all lacking the cultural and social endowments to enrich education outside the school premises. Most children have nothing to engage themselves for constructive consolidation of learning from school. Parents of migrant children were either not educated enough to appreciate the significance of education for their children to go through the social hurdles in front of their life, or they are not competent enough to assist or support their education to make good use of the education opportunities. The description also clearly showed that the home setting were without the basic necessities (such as light bulbs bright enough for revisions, desks for homework, and etc.) to facilitate learning. Apart from these tangible basics, the impoverished community setting, the inadequate housing, and the lacking of social activities were all disabling to the strengths and impacts of formal education. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the essences of social protection is its transformative aspects, then the mere existence of migrant schools to provide

formal schooling may not be adequate, the core issue is what exists there to enable education to transform the migrant communities from their deep rooted backwardness and deprivation.

To conclude, first of all, despite the convenient access to employment and other opportunities for earning a living, as well as the availability of supports from kin and neighbors, living in migrant communities in suburbs might not be a preferable arrangement for migrant children. These communities, in which migrants coming from the same origins usually live together, gradually give rise to the so-called “urban villages” or “in-city villages”. Because of the insufficient exchanges between cities and these “urban villages” and the absence of communication among these villages, it is in fact the disreputable phenomenon of “residential segregation”. Living for years in a less secure environment like this and lacking access to enough scientific and healthy recreational facilities, it is easier for migrant children to be exposed to negative influence (Wang, 2008, p.32). Moreover, due to those factors such as their geographical environment, the educational background and vocational status of migrant parents, and their economic and financial conditions as well, migrant families are less likely to provide their children with a favorable environment for their studies (ibid), nor is this dwelling arrangement in the interests of migrant students’ integration into the mainstream urban society.

CHAPTER VII

A MIGRANT SCHOOL: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

This chapter presents the findings of a migrant school studied in the research. The school, located in Daxing District, is a reputable migrant school in Beijing. During the fieldwork stage, the researcher stayed there as Voluntary Teacher from February to April of 2008. The researcher lived with other teaching staff in the school dormitory and to work as a paid staff for three months in order to get acquainted with people, to conduct interviews, to observe from a participant's point of views, and to keep herself in context. Observation on the school campus, interviews with related personnel and evidence collected during the research are the three major sources of information. In order to avoid disclosing the identities of the interviewees and causing them unnecessary trouble, the school, the Headmaster, as well as the interviewees will all be named either by their surnames, titles, or made-up names.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE SCHOOL AND ITS HEADMASTER

The *XX Migrant School* in Daxing was a non-profit migrant school founded in 2001, providing quality education to migrant children at an affordable price. As reported on papers, it had 1,200 students from preschool through ninth grade. Over the years, it has drawn a lot of media coverage as it went through twists and turns (Li,

2007). In the first three years after its establishment, the school had been kept “illegal” and was forced to move by the local government as many as up to five times. But in October 2004, it was among the first group of migrant schools in Beijing to receive official authorization. Since then, almost all the news about it has been quite optimistic. As a matter of fact, during these years, extensive media coverage had long been playing a supportive role in pushing forward the development of this particular school. Finally, the school earned its name as one of the best among the hundreds of migrant schools in Beijing.

The reputation of the school reached a record high when an auction jointly held by the China Central Television (CCTV) and the Chinese Youth Foundation (CYF) was broadcast live. The auction aimed to save the school from bankruptcy, as it had publicly claimed that a closure was the only outcome for the huge debts it could not pay back. With this declaration of bankruptcy, the school succeeded in winning another first place again – the first migrant school in history ever to apply for a close-down voluntarily. Overnight, reports on the closure of the school flooded the media and shocked the whole society. Yet, this was far from the end of the story. Soon after, a dramatic turn took place and surprised all. According to a report on the school’s official webpage, a big show named “Spring Warmth 2007 – I Have a Dream” was broadcasted live on the CCTV, during which two gold medals donated by two Chinese athletes were sold at auction at the price of 1.72 million *yuan* (USD 250,000). Together with another 0.3 million *yuan* (USD 44,000) donated by two anonymous private companies, altogether the school received two million *yuan* (USD 290,000) on that single event. With this incident, the name of the school was pushed to a record high.

The researcher got to know *the XX Migrant School* in 2006 from newspapers. At that time, it had already obtained a legal status. The first visit was paid in October, 2006. A staff from the Administrative Office received the researcher warmly, showing her around and giving her some general information about the school. According to her introduction, the school had a set of strict standards for the selection of teachers, for only university or college graduates majored in education would be considered for recruitment. Its physical condition was also better than many other migrant schools in Beijing. It was spacious, having a playground and rows of classroom kept in good shape. In general, the first visit was impressive. Particularly, students there had made a lasting impression on the researcher, as it was extremely touching to see them growing up healthily in a tough environment, laughing cheerfully, and embracing beautiful dreams. Moreover, as told by the school's accountant, the Headmaster used to turn down his payments during those hardest times faced by the school.

Being deeply moved, the researcher decided to do something more for the children. Hence, started from November, 2006, she started volunteering at the school, teaching English once a week at a third grade class. This enabled her to communicate directly with the children. Observations at this stage gave rise to a preliminary impression that the children of migrant workers could study and grow happily and healthily at migrant schools like the *XX Migrant School*. Therefore, such schools worth more assistance from both the governments and the society as well. Against this backdrop, it was easy to understand why the researcher was so delighted and grateful when the Headmaster approved her research at his school.

It was not until the late 2007 that the researcher first met the Headmaster in person in an international symposium held by a university in Hong Kong. The symposium assigned a specific section to the various issues relating to Chinese rural migration. It was there the researcher recognized the Headmaster from his unique dressing and speaking style. This unexpected encounter turned out to be a historical moment of this research, because it was when the Headmaster promised to assist the researcher with his full strength. In 2007, running into him in an international conference in Hong Kong was a complete surprise. However, when thinking back, it seemed to be less a surprise now, considering his many contacts in the mass media and the academic circles.

CLOSER ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE SCHOOL

There are moments when something trivial happens, since they are seemingly less important and rather isolated, they usually can not lead to immediate findings. However, given more time, these seemingly fragmented pieces of information might piece together into a whole picture showing what are really going on. That was how it felt in this research. As above mentioned, the *XX Migrant School* enjoyed a good reputation in Beijing, and the first visit was fairly impressive. However, staying on the school campus for nearly three months helped to discover another side of the school, which might be less likely found in short visits.

Physical Condition

Though not extremely big, the *XX Migrant School* was not small in size. It was at least as large as ordinary primary schools in Beijing, only even bigger. The school campus had been made use of efficiently. It was divided into four yards, with the two bigger ones accommodating most classrooms. In the front yard, which was the second largest one, were located classrooms for grade five to grade nine. Next to the school gate, there was a small tuck shop originally opened by a former teacher as an experimental extra-curricular project. After she left, the school took over the management of the tuck shop from a group of students from the eighth and ninth grades. Selling all kinds of cheap snacks, the tuck shop unquestionably was one of the hottest spots on the campus. On the other side of this yard, there was a sand-pit. Rubber tires were arranged around it for safety issue. Some worn exercise equipment stood behind the sand-pit. Opposite the sand-pit, there were three rooms, including a computer room equipped with donated second-hand computers, a dormitory for several girls who lived on the campus, as well as an empty dormitory of a former staff.

Further inside the school, there was the biggest yard, which accommodated the classrooms for students under grade five. A playground stretched over this yard. It had six basketball stands and a 300-meter plastic jogging track. Classrooms stood in the west and south, teachers' offices in the northwest. An office, a classroom, a social worker's room and several dormitories were located in the northeast. There was a boiler room in the northeast corner and a kitchen in the east. A famous flagpole stood in front of the classrooms in the south. The flagpole earned its fame from its repeated

appearance on various newspapers as a fine example of the school's economical spirit:

A flagpole, which comprises a number of steel pipes that were bought from a scrap yard and welded together, stands proudly in the school's playing field. "By doing this we were able to save more than 5,000 RMB (USD 600)," the Headmaster says proudly (China.org.cn, 2004).

Two narrow corridors at each end of this row of classrooms in the south connected this main yard with another one. The third yard was narrow and small and was occupied by dormitories. Unlike those in the main yard which were shared by several young teachers, dormitories here were for the families of married staff. They were either the relatives of the Headmaster, or the senior staff.

The last yard was in the west end of the school. Being the third biggest one, this yard accommodated several big classrooms, including a music room equipped with donated multimedia devices and a dancing floor, two experimental rooms for physics and chemistry classes, a small library, as well as an art studio. This yard was connected with the main campus by a long and narrow pathway. Like the flagpole, this pathway was famous, because it was known as the two "Democracy Walls". Both of the walls were covered by the students' writing and drawing. As described by the papers, these two walls not only enabled students to give full play to their creativity, but also encouraged them to make wishes and have dreams:

In XX Migrant School, there is a wall to showcase creative graffiti by its students. On the wall, some students also left their wishes for tomorrow. "I want to be a singer." "I want to be an air hostess." "I want to be an artist." These children

hope for a future different from the migrant life of their parents (Crienglish.com, 2008).

It is estimated that the school's physical condition was enhanced around 2007 or 2008, because back to the late 2006, the school was still in a less satisfactory condition:

Not far from them are several rows of one-storied brick rooms. The walls are thin and weather-beaten, and adhesive tape has been used to patch up some broken windows. There is also an earthen playing field and the 300-meter jogging track is bare and battered. In Beijing's typical windy winter days, dust swirls around with each gust of wind (China.org.cn, 2004).

Most possibly, the improvement was brought about by the donation received in the 2007 auction. As told by the Headmaster, a large amount of that donation had been used on the playground and the equipments. Given to these improvements, the *XX Migrant School* stood out as one of the best equipped migrant schools in Beijing.

The Headmaster – Mr. H

“Don Quixote” in the Field of Education for Migrant Children

A brief look on the background of the Headmaster revealed that he was regarded by the papers as a lofty-minded educator with strong ability and a pioneering spirit. According to his introduction on-line, the Headmaster earned his Master degree at the

Huazhong Normal University, majored in education. Apart from the Executive Chairman of the *XX Migrant School*, he was also the Vice Secretary-general of the *China Home Service Association*. He was once awarded the “Super Headmaster in China”, and was invited by the United States through its “International Visitors Leading Plan” (Official Webpage of the *XXX Training Centre*). His concern and efforts in running a migrant school earned him massive public recognition. Over the recent few years, he had been interviewed by the media home and abroad, including the CCTV, Phoenix TV, China Education, People’s Daily, China Youth Daily, Guangming Daily, Beijing News, Xinhua Net, Beijing Review, People’s Daily-Overseas Edition, Reuter’s News Agency, Japan NHK, and France Newsletter, etc (ibid). The enormous media exposure had made the Headmaster and his school famous.

It was understandable why he and his school had attracted that much attention. On one hand, individual struggle and success with a trace of heroism is very likely to make a good impression on people. On the other hand, the children whom he was serving were migrant children, one of the disadvantaged groups that received the most public attention around 2007 and 2008. Combining these two points, it became easier to understand why much attention had been given to the school and why he had been highly remarked by the public. The papers referred to him as a pioneering and assiduous educator from rural China, who started his school with bare hands. Also, he was known for his resistance against the local government over the years before his school was officially authorized. The media had praised him to a degree that any report about him would add to his accomplishment records. According to those media coverage, he was a grass-roots hero, who was devoted to the education of migrant

children. Take two articles which are entitled “Forward-thinking Educator Leads from the Front” and “Migrant School Finally Gains License” for instance:

Before the 39-year-old Mr. H founded the XX Migrant School three years ago, he spent much of his young adulthood fighting the conflict between the liberal educational concepts he learned at university and China’s current educational modes, which are geared toward the single purpose of passing college entrance exams. He has taught in various primary and middle schools in several different provinces (China.org.cn, 2004).

The fact that the XX Migrant School and other such schools are left outside China’s education system makes them, rather ironically, ideal experimental laboratories for pioneer educators like Mr. H (ibid).

The Headmaster of the XX Migrant School said: “We are obligated to provide equal education opportunities to every child. With good education, these migrant children will become a major force for China’s future, at least, for the development of rural China” (CCTV, 2004).

Heroism added more readability to his stories and dedication to the children of migrant workers brought about a great deal of sympathy to his school. In addition, the other factor which could explain the success of school was the timing. As a matter of fact, twists and turns experienced by the school were living records of how the issue of education for migrant children evolved in Beijing. The past few years witnessed a positive development of the issue, and the Headmaster had successfully captured

these opportunities and displayed his ability in controlling over various resources. He seemed to be quite pleased with his portrayal on the papers. On their first meeting, he proudly told the researcher that he was called “Don Quixote” by the papers – “Don Quixote” in the field of education for migrant children, for praising his adherence in the philosophy of the Chinese educator Tao Xingzhi, fights against the examination-oriented Chinese education system, as well as efforts in serving migrant children. As a grass-roots hero in a troubled time, he seemingly well deserved this title.

“Don Quixote” and His First Barrel of Gold

Don Quixote, under the pen of Cervantes, was a character led by a romantic vision, extreme naïve, and unworldly idealism. The image of his was that of a knight with abundant braveness but scanty means. However, when this research was conducted, the Headmaster was exactly burning with the eagerness for a try in the business world. His connection with a business and economic interests made his image of a real-world “Don Quixote” blurred.

It happened a few days before the researcher moved to the school. On the morning of a day, she received a call from the Headmaster who offered to walk her around in the school in person. On the way to the school, they stopped over at a commercial premise which headquartered the Headmaster’s company. His engagement in business of domestic services was something entirely new to the researcher. As told by him, the company was a social enterprise, and maybe, the first of its kind around the whole

country. The Headmaster explained that to achieve a healthier development, the school could not always depend on donations. It had to find another source of funding which was more safe and stable. That was where the idea of opening a social enterprise came from. Squeezed inside an ordinary apartment, his enterprise looked ordinary. But this company surely carried with itself a great responsibility. The Headmaster then described enthusiastically and confidently its bright future. As explained by him, market research had identified a big potential market for high-end domestic helpers. And this, as believed by him, was where he was going to earn his first barrel of gold. “We will have the best management team. I want everything best for this company.” By this, the Headmaster meant that only the most advanced ideas would be adopted to manage the company, and only the most qualified personnel, in particular young talent with overseas education background, would be invited to join the management team. “I will ask my friend in Hong Kong to find me a Filipino domestic helper, because Filipino helpers are the best in the world. I will hire a real Filipino helper to train my employees. And I will offer a high pay.”

A complicated feeling aroused upon hearing his plan, as even though it was gratifying to see that the school finally identified a way to solve its financial problem, it was not easy to adapt to his new role as a business man. Finally, information on the internet helped clarify the ins and outs of his business. It turned out that during the past two years or more, the Headmaster had already planned to explore other areas. According to the website of his enterprise, he set up the *XXX Training Center* in January 2006. Then, he had it recognized as a social enterprise in August 2008, so as to push forward the development of social enterprises in China. In September 2008, he started building the *XXX Vocational School* as well as the *XXX E-Business Co.*,

Ltd. In October 2008, he began building a school for gifted rural children (*Official website of the XXX Training Centre*). No matter it was a social enterprise, a vocational school, or a school for gifted rural children, it was clear that his new endeavors still focused on education and rural children.

The profits to be made, as said by him, would not only be used on the *XX Migrant School*, but also on the establishment of a senior high school and even a normal university. As said by him, the *XX Migrant School* had only realized one percent of what he had planned for it, and the quality of today's normal universities was less satisfying. He wanted to build up his own education empire to make all these better. If this plan works, for certain, it would benefit migrant children. However, the image of the Headmaster, seating on the bus driving back to the downtown area, talking fervently about his enterprise, made a lingering impression on the researcher:

I have gained success and recognition as a migrant school headmaster. Now I am thinking about trying something new. I used to appear on the papers as a headmaster, but believe it or not, next time I will be there as a millionaire. No, a million is too little. I will be there as a billionaire.

Behind the thick lens of his old-fashioned glasses, the symbol for his adherence of the Chinese educator Tao Xingzhi, his eyes burned with enthusiasm and his voice loud and proud, talking against all the noises on the crowded bus about the future success of his company and the perspective of being a billionaire. Passengers nearby looked at him in astonishment. At that moment, it felt so strange, as if it was a snatch of a montage movie.

Teaching Practice and Teachers

Theories-led Teaching Practice and Qualified Teachers

At the headquarters of the *XXX Training Center*, the Headmaster gave the researcher a report entitled “*Zhongguo Nongmingong Zinv Jiaoyu Shengtai yu Women de Xingdong (The Ecology of the Education for the Children of Migrant Workers in China and Our Action)*”, a report written by the Headmaster himself and presented during his trip to the United States. Mentioned in this report (2007, p.7 and p.25), the *XX Migrant School* was a non-profit making, civil-run and government-subsidized full-time school with pre-school, primary and junior high sectors. Its mission was to provide migrant children with education, particularly, quality education. And it aimed to set a good example to other migrant schools, by fully guaranteeing the lawful rights of migrant children to compulsory education, promoting education equality, and pushing forward the sustainable development of the society and the whole mankind. Its education services focused on four areas, including civil education, mental health education, traditional culture cultivation, as well as vocational enlightenment education.

Also mentioned in this report (pp.26-37), ideas such as the “Life Education” put forward by Tao Xingzhi, “Civil Education” and “Education for Sustainable Development” were all employed at the school for fulfilling its missions. In addition, the school had a comprehensive curriculum which consisted of two parts – compulsory courses required by the State and complementary courses designed by the school itself. At this school, complementary courses covered five areas, including

psychological health education, traditional Chinese literature, diversified local culture, migrant worker and urban culture, as well as knowledge on running business, looking for employment and starting an enterprise. This complementary curriculum might shed light on the preferences of the school.

In regard to the teaching methods, the report said that (p.38) teaching activities were to be carried out inside migrant families, on the school campus, as well as in the society. To be specific, teaching activities designed for migrant families included lectures and seminars offered to migrant parents. These lectures and seminars focused on legal education, vocational education and the concept of civil society. Secondly, teaching activities inside the school were realized by an integrated education mode, led by a variety of ideas and philosophies to be operationally implemented in the day-to-day teaching. Among them, the Headmaster particularly favored the ideas put forwards by the Chinese educator Tao Xingzhi. His education philosophies such as “society as school”, “life as education” and “unity of teaching, learning, and reflective acting” were all praised highly by him. Lastly, teaching activities were also to be carried out in the society. This meant that on one hand, students would participate in various social activities and public charity events held outside the school. On the other hand, outstanding people from all walks of life would be invited to teach at the school.

With regards to the teaching staff, it was written in the report that the fifty-three teachers employed were selected in a nationwide recruitment (p.22). Their average monthly salary was around 2,000 *yuan* (p.44), which was slightly higher than that offered by most other migrant schools. As explained by the Headmaster, this higher

payment meant to keep those qualified teachers from leaving. However, compared with the salaries offered by local public schools, this amount was still a bit low. For this reason, teachers of this school were praised in the papers for their altruism:

Still, qualified teachers continued to join its faculty. As said by Yang, a Xi'an Fine Arts Academy graduate working at the school "the concerns about money fades away when you feel you are involved in a noble undertaking" (China.org.cn, 2004).

From these above descriptions, it could be seen that the *XX Migrant School* distinguished itself from other migrant schools for its advanced teaching philosophy, well-designed curriculum, committed teachers, as well as a strong determination in serving the children of migrant workers.

Reform of Management and Mobility of the Teachers

On the last Friday before the new spring semester started, a small group meeting led by the Headmaster was held in the meeting room. Only a few people were invited, including the researcher, a social worker formerly having studied in Hong Kong, and several administrative staff. In the meeting, the Headmaster talked about his plan of reforming the school's management. According to him, the idea of reforming came after his reading of many management books, the core of which was to decentralize the management power to every teacher, so as to enable them to act fully on their own judgments and give full play to their own initiatives and creativities. He suggested

teachers to be divided into several groups, with each of them managing two grades. All these groups would be in full charge of every aspect of the teaching activities, from the design of the curriculum, to the employment of teaching methods and the arrangement of leaves, all of which were used to be done by the two administrative secretaries. After briefing his idea, the Headmaster asked the attendees for opinions. The answers he got were all positive and supportive.

Then, the decision was announced to all the staff in another meeting held soon after the small ground meeting. In front of all the teachers, the Headmaster first passionately reviewed the management books he covered during the holidays of the Spring Festival. He said that from the ninety-seven most famous or recent publications on management he had learned a lot, which helped him to realize that education was a kind of service that needs to be adequately managed. According to him, a migrant school played the role as a service provider, while migrant parents and their children were the customers. Also, apart from parents and children, several other groups should also be taken care of seriously, which included the teachers who were supposed to grow with the school, the communities around, the donors, the local governments, as well as the media. As believed by him, only when a school could cater to the needs of all these groups could it be regarded successful. Afterwards, he announced to the teachers his plan to reform the school's management.

After a short break and discussion, the teachers came back to the classroom with themselves being divided into nine groups based on the grades and subjects they taught. Then, each group was invited to the front to present to the others their responses towards the reform as well as their initial working plan. Every one needed

to say something. Most teachers said that it was a good idea to reform and they would be supportive. Only a few others expressed their doubts on the workability of the plan. However, they all added that they would not mind trying it out. During the group presentation, someone quoted a former teacher, saying in an exaggerating voice: “Here in the *XX Migrant School*, one can do whatever he wants.” She might just be joking, as everyone else, including the Headmaster himself, started laughing upon hearing this.

Wouldn't it be good for the children if their headmaster was a grass-roots intellectual? Unlike many other migrant school headmasters who might only be poorly educated, the Headmaster of *the XX Migrant School* was someone who could use his knowledge to make differences.

When it came to her turn, the researcher said that it was equally important for the students to be academically strong. It was the first time the academic performance of the students had been mentioned. The atmosphere inside the classroom changed slightly. Unlike the fervent comments he had given to others, the Headmaster only made a short remark on the researcher's opinion. He said that he did not want his students to become bookworms who only knew how to recite book knowledge but not how to use it. He believed that excellence in other aspects was more important.

But, is that necessary for the excellence in other aspects to be achieved at the expense of academic excellence? Or, can't they be equally important?

During the meeting, only several teachers had taken notes, including the

administrative staff, the researcher, and the social worker. The teacher sitting next to the researcher had been reading a women's newspaper folded on the desk in front of her.

As was told by her, the school had around forty staff and their mobility was enormous. For example, both the Vice Headmaster and the Director who received the researcher in 2006 were no longer there. Like the students, teachers also came from a variety of origins. Only two or three of them were local. Most teachers were female, in particular young women. Roughly one fourth of them were last year students of a normal university in Northeast China, as the school was their university's internship base. These university students shared the same responsibilities in day-to-day teaching. Upon finishing the internship, they would go back to their university, preparing for the graduation examination and start looking for jobs. Only few of them would choose to teach at the *XX Migrant School*. Some young teachers told the researcher in private that their teaching here was merely a temporary arrangement. What they wanted was to find a better job in Beijing. A few others were trying their luck for Master education. They did not have a place to live in Beijing, so they worked here to exchange for food, a place for studying and some pocket money.

School Finance

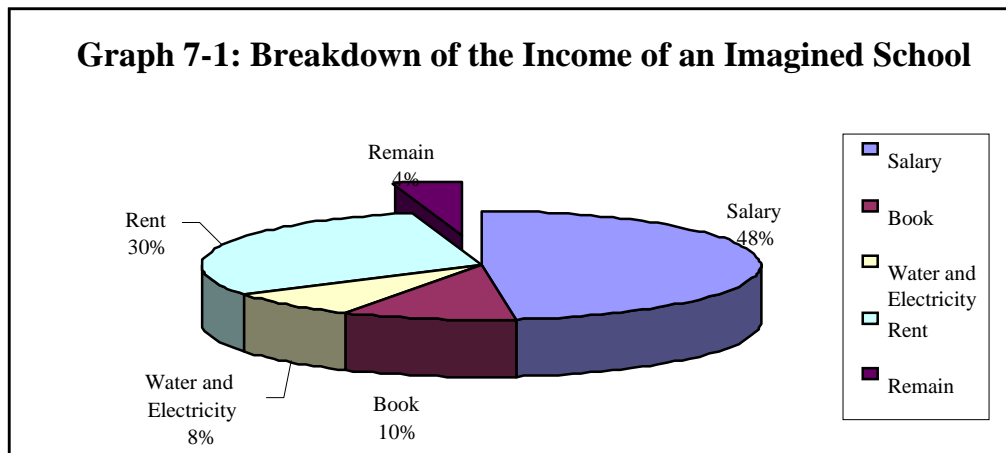
Sources of Funding

According to the Headmaster's report (p.8), as an affordable, non-profit making and high quality migrant school, tuition fees were not even enough to cover the operational costs. The gap thus was filled by the funds from elsewhere. First of all, cooperation with a foundation brought to the school 500,000 *yuan* (USD 73,200) for the first year of their cooperation. And there would be another 500,000 available in the following five years. Secondly, tuition fees brought about an annual income of 450,000 to 500,000 *yuan*. Thirdly, since 2006, the local governments started subsidizing the school at an annual rate of 100,000 *yuan*, which equaled to 200 *yuan* per student per semester. Lastly, every year, the school could receive donations amounted to 100,000 to 200,000 *yuan*, even since its establishment. By a rough estimation, its annual income would be between 750,000 to 900,000 *yuan* in the next five years (p.43) (see Table 7-1).

Table 7-1: Estimated Annual Income in the Next Five Years (*yuan*)

Resource	Amount (Per School Year)	Note
Foundation	100,000	Only for the first five years of their cooperation
Tuition Fees	450,000-500,000	450 per semester for preschool and 500 for primary school
Government Subsidy	100,000	200 per student
Donation	100,000-200,000	Since its establishment
Total	750,000-900,000	

In order to prove that a school could barely survive without public assistance, the Headmaster worked out the accounts of an imagined school of five hundred students. As pointed out by him, if the school charged 500 *yuan* per semester, and all the students were able to pay, it could have an annual income of 500,000 *yuan*. To take care of these students, the school at least needed to hire twenty teachers. When they were paid at 1,000 *yuan* per month, which was too low to keep qualified teachers, 240,000 *yuan* had to be level of salary instead. An additional 50,000 *yuan* would be spent on books, 40,000 *yuan* on water and electricity, and 100,000 to 300,000 *yuan* on the rent (see Graph 7-1). All these meant that at the end of the school year, barely any money would be left. Therefore, if not for public supports, this school could hardly survive. Even the equipment given by the local governments would not help.



Note: A median of 150,000 *yuan* was chosen in the graph as the amount of the rent, which accounted for 30% of the total. If the rent increased to 170,000 *yuan* a year (34% of the total) nothing would be left at the end of the school year.

Since its establishment, the school had greatly depended on the supports from the society, in particular in its early days (p.15). Quite a lot of enterprises and individuals had contributed to its development. For instance, the *Ford Foundation* once donated 400,000 *yuan* (USD 48,300) to the school (China Daily, 2004). And the *China Red*

Cross donated 200,000 *yuan* (USD 25,600) in equipping the school with computers and computer-assisted teaching equipment (Li, 07). As said by Mrs. Zheng, one of the members of the school's executive council formed in 2004 under the Headmaster's request, donations had helped pull this school out of its dire financial straits (China Daily, 2004). In a word, public donations had greatly helped the school even since its establishment.

Strict Economy

Despite these funding resources, the school insisted on the practice of strict economy. According to the Headmaster's report (pp.44-45), the major principle guiding the school's physical construction was "running the best school with the least money". For instance, as long as the teaching standards could be met, unnecessary equipments would not be considered. Also, whenever possible, teachers were required to make teaching aids by themselves. And it was not allowed for any device to be put aside unused. Examples of its economical spirit included the self-made flagpole mentioned above, two pigs used to be kept in the backyard, as well as the Headmaster's refusal to take a salary in previous years:

Mr. H has not drawn a salary since it started... "As soon as we achieve a balance between our revenue and expenditure -- and that will be realized soon, I believe -- I should be able to look at drawing some sort of a salary (China Daily, 2004)."

Like the Headmaster, Mrs. Z, a member of the executive council, also refused to take her pay:

“As we know that every cent here must be used directly in education,” said Mrs. Z, “We invest money in importing qualified faculties and organizing extracurricular activities, not in trying to compete with urban public schools in the looks of facilities.” Like the Headmaster, she also refused to draw a salary until the school is on a more even keel financially (ibid).

Meanwhile, the school was openhanded in some other aspects. For instance, it bought the latest reading materials for the teachers and students without the least hesitation. It provided scholarships to outstanding students. It also lowered or even exempted the tuition fees for students from poor families. According to the Headmaster’s report (p.44), since its establishment, the school had altogether charged reduced fees from 423 students, with the total amount of the reduction up to 270,000 *yuan*. The reduction and exemption of tuition fees had not only earned the school a good reputation among the public, but also helped it to attract more migrant students.

Declaration of Bankruptcy

In 2007, something unexpected happened. With 500,000 *yuan* in debt, the school handed in an application to the local governments asking for a closure. Such things never happened before, especially when the school had long been regarded successful. Some people reckoned that being a “Min Ban (civilian-run)” school was the cause for

its bankruptcy, because “Min Ban” schools could hardly get any assistance from the local governments. Other people believed that the reduction and exemption of tuition fees had worsened its financial situation (Li, 2007). According to newspaper reports (ibid), salaries of teachers were three months in arrears. Somehow, this reminded the researcher what she was told in her first visit to the school in 2006. At that time, the school accountant told her that teachers had been waiting for their wages for two months. Unfortunately, the economical spirit and the strict budget could not save the school from bankruptcy.

But fortunately, public donations could. The school was finally saved by the funds raised in the action.

Current Tuition Fees

Back in 2004, 400 *yuan* and 600 *yuan* were charged by its primary and junior high sectors respectively. Three years later, in the Headmaster’s report, tuition fees of its preschool and primary sectors were 450 *yuan* and 500 *yuan*. In 2008, tuition fees for its three sectors had all increased. As told by a migrant father, each semester, he paid 800 *yuan* as tuition fees for his oldest daughter who studied in the junior high sector, 600 *yuan* for his second daughter in the primary sector, and 500 *yuan* for his son in the preschool sector. Another 600 *yuan* was charged for school bus service. Since 500 *yuan* had been exempted, in total, he paid 2,000 *yuan* a semester for the schooling of all his three children. Yet, this amount did not include the fees for school lunch, which was 3 *yuan*. The father said that every year 10,000 *yuan* or more would be spent on

his children (Interview with Mr. Dong, March 3, 2008). These amounts were confirmed in other interviews of migrant parents (See Table 7-2).

Table 7-2: Tuition Fees and Other Charges at the XX Migrant School (yuan)

Resource	Tuition fees per semester	School bus (optional)	Lunch (optional)	Note
China Daily (2004)	Primary sector: 400 Junior high sector: 600	---	---	Preschool sector unmentioned
Headmaster's report (2007)	Preschool sector: 450 Primary sector: 500	---	---	Junior high sector unmentioned
Interviews (2008)	Preschool sector: 500 Primary sector: 600 Junior high sector: 800	200	15 per week	10 for preschool students

In his report, the Headmaster did not mention the tuition fees charged by the junior high sector, nor did he mention the fees of the school bus services and the lunch, which, when added together, could become a rather heavy burden for many migrant families. Mr. Wang, a teacher at the school, quickly worked out the accounts for the researcher. According to his estimation, each semester tuition fees collected by the school were around 500,000 to 600,000 *yuan*, of which, about 400,000 *yuan* were paid to the teachers, 150,000 *yuan* went into the pocket of the property's owner. Then, he said with certainty that if the school would use the money economically, but not

spent it on something else, this amount would be rather sufficient (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

Unclear Accounts

In the second month of the new semester, some teachers complained in private that their wages were delayed again. Given the tuition fees just collected, it would be too fast for the school to run out of money. The situation was made further complicated by the fact that the school had long been a favorable object of public donations. According to the Headmaster's report, government rewards amounted to 300,000 *yuan* (p.17), while public donations received so far were around 3,600,000 *yuan*. Since the school was established in 2001, the yearly donation it received thus was around 500,000 to 600,000 *yuan*. Furthermore, as told by another teacher, the school could have had received a donation worth of 10 million *yuan* (USD 1,470,588) since its establishment.

Because of the inaccessibility to its accounts, the accurate amounts of incomes and expenses were not available. But at least, the Headmaster's report could shed some light in this regard. No matter what, being short of money soon after the start of the new semester was something too strange to be put aside. In addition, the Headmaster had a new sedan when the research was conducted, as well as a driver under his command. The bills were told to be covered by the social enterprise.

DISCUSSION

In the previous sections, four aspects of the school, namely its physical condition, its Headmaster, its teaching practice and teachers, as well as its financial situation, have all been introduced. It is clear that over the years the school had established a good reputation, for which it had won enormous support. Also, the mass media had played a contributive role in pushing forwards the development of the school. However, it felt as if the school indeed had some other sides which were unknown to many people. In this section, interviews with two teachers will help to draw a clearer picture of the school as it really was.

“Everything Is Important but Teaching”

Education quality is important, as to a great extent it determines the performance of students. Quality education not only provides students with knowledge from text books, but also fosters them to become civilized, intelligent and decent members of the society. In particular, in a nowadays highly competitive environment, the importance of quality education becomes even more prominent. However, understandings of quality education differ. Some people emphasize the efficiency of the education system in helping the students to improve academically, while the others may value more of a wholesome development of the students. The Headmaster surely had his own understanding towards this question. At his school, book knowledge, scores, examinations all had to give place to a variety of extracurricular

activities which, as believed by him, were to be more beneficial to the well-being of the children:

The most important thing is to create a wholesome environment where these children can develop both in a mental sense and in terms of their personality...I hope this school can be guided by real, open and liberal educational thoughts, as we don't have any pressure from local district or even municipal educational authorities, he says. And we don't hold up the college entrance exams as our sole purpose and goal (China Daily, 2004).

We do not want them to feel like they are being marginalized in the city. One important part of our work is to design programs to help them communicate with urban students, take part in all kinds of social activities and meet visiting guests who are concerned about their well-being (ibid).

The fruit of the inclusive and encouraging education was described to be encouraging:

Compared with migrant children studied at urban public schools, students of the XX Migrant School seemed to be more polite and willing to interact with others. They were less aggressive when playing with each other and were very happy to show visitors around the school yards (ibid).

However, opinions of the teachers interviewed revealed a rather different story. According to them, “normal” studies of the students had been seriously interrupted by

too many extra-curricular activities. Under the Headmaster's influence, the importance of academic performance had been regarded as of "less importance". Most teachers were not required to be fully devoted to their teaching. Rather, their time and energy were spent elsewhere. As said by the young teacher ironically:

At this school, everything is important but teaching...The primary duties of the teachers at this school are discipline and sanitation. The academic performance of the students is also taken up by the teachers, but it is less important. Teachers here all work quite hard, but our school does not care about teaching, so we don't have time for it (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

Gradually, the atmosphere of the school became unfavorable for studying and students lost their interests in learning:

For long, the scores of the students could not be improved. Neither do their care. No matter how you stress the importance of studying. The school's overall environment has been established already. It did not just start this year...Those students who started studying here since the first grade no longer mind their studies, and they pass this attitude to other students (Interview with Mrs. G, June 2, 2008).

As a result, the academic performance of the students was disappointing. Mrs. Guo identified a big gap between the academic performance of her students and the students of public schools:

The scores of the student from grade one and two are very good. But from grade three, their performance is just unsatisfactory. Students from the primary sector do their homework carelessly. Starting from grade three or four, (some students) just could not pass the mathematics examinations. English is taught from grade three. And the students just cannot pass the examinations. Their scores in English and mathematics cannot be improved, just get around 50 points. You can imagine that mathematics is fairly easy in grade three or four. Students from other schools can get 80 or 90 points. But students at our school just can't. As to the junior high sector, only 16 students had passed the examination. 32 of them failed. The exam papers we used are the same with those used at public schools (ibid).

Moreover, conflicts arose between teaching and extra-curricular activities. Unlike the Headmaster who insisted on the benefits, teachers regarded the participation in various activities inside and outside the school as interrupting their teaching and thought that it would give the students a false impression that studying in the classroom was less important:

We often have activities, sometimes trainings, too, all for being stopgaps. Such as the show "Appointment with Lu Yu" and other shows of the CCTV, we go there often, mainly for rolling logs for them. Actually we got nothing (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

If you compare (our school) to public schools, (students here) cannot learn many things. If the children have some sort of self-control, it might be possible for them to learn something. But if we have extra-activities every day, (their studies) will be

seriously interfered. (If the students have to) practice singing today, and learn dancing tomorrow, and if (they) need to go out to join other activities today, (the situation would be like that) while the teachers are making efforts to teach, the school is arranging many other activities. The mid-term examinations have just finished. Our teachers still don't have time to summarize it, there just came the activities. There are conflicts between teaching and activities (Interview with Mrs. G, June 6, 2009).

As observed by the researcher, every two or three days there would be activities taken place. Sometimes, guests were invited to the school. Sometimes, students were invited out. In order to participate in those activities, they might have to skip classes. Or at least, their class might be interrupted by the guests:

Take today for example. Isn't it that some journalists came to our school? We were having an examination. They just asked our students to stand in a row, for welcoming the Olympic Games or something. When we were taking the exam, they just did that. The students did not come back until twenty minutes later. Our school is always like that (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

If someone wants to see the student's gymnastic show, we will start preparing it a few days in advance. Having classes comes second (ibid).

We have prepared for two months for the Children's Day. Students did not need to have classes. Except for the main subjects, they did rehearsals on the other

classes. It took my class two months to practice for it. There was a day on which they barely had any class (Interview with Mrs. G, June 1, 2008).

As told by the teacher, the school had already shown some restraints in arranging activities, compared with what it used to be in the past:

It had shown some restraints. In the past, even classes could be canceled. Whenever there was an activity, (we) left immediately. The class would be canceled. Our students have already got used (to the idea) that extracurricular activities are most important. What we told them, they feel... (She sighed)...If the students like playing, they will be fully occupied by these activities (ibid)

When asked why they did not show their disagreement, both of them said that opinions of the teachers did not count. Whenever the Headmaster made up his mind, the only thing they could do was obeying. Even when some parents complained about those activities, the Headmaster still insisted on his ideas:

Some parents said we have too many activities. But our Headmaster said that this was a kind of innovation. Students were not studying lifeless knowledge. They had creativity which they could show others. They were not bookish. He thought it in this way (ibid).

Of course we disagree with his opinions, but, our objection doesn't count much. As long as he has made the decision, it will be pointless for anyone to object, whether

(the decision) is right or wrong. We say that seldom is he right, he is always wrong (ibid).

Moreover, the school failed to assist the students in making plans for their future, as it seldom explained to them the importance of having higher education. Many older students upon graduation did not know how to go to a senior high school either in Beijing or in their hometowns. Their academic performance also became a very realistic barrier that prevented them from moving on. Unlike younger students who tended to be more cheerful owing to their nature, students from higher grades, in particular those who were about to graduate, were apparently more confused, depressed or even overwhelmed. At this critical point of their lives, their school failed them. It did not encourage them to take the high school entrance examination back in their hometowns, so as to pave their way to universities. Nor had it equipped them with a solid academic foundation:

I have never heard of it before. But I have told them once. However, most students here had already given up. They don't want to study...They felt that their performance was already hopeless (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

Most ninth grade graduates would enroll at some local vocational schools to learn practical skills. They knew that they would start working in two or three years. Some students even started working right after they graduated from the *XX Migrant School*, at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Even though the door of universities was not completely closed for migrant children, only a small number of them could overcome various difficulties and finally realize a university dream. As said by the two teachers,

in two years or more, when the children joined the job market, they would have a more personal understanding on the disadvantages caused by a lack of education. However, that would be too late. Very likely, these children would find that they were at the bottom of the society, just like their parents:

I think it would be difficult for them to look for jobs. Why not hire university graduates? Why hire vocational school graduates (Interview with Mrs. G, June 1, 2008).

Nowadays, even university graduates could not find jobs. If they only graduate from middle school, it would be more difficult for them in the future. They might end up like their parents, doing odd jobs everywhere (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

The lack of information, guidance and a solid academic foundation had greatly narrowed the student's chances in pursuing a higher education, which might exert a negative impact on their future development. The lack of quality education makes them lagging behind their urban counterparts. It seems that they had already lost the game when it barely started. Moreover, instead of being integrated into the urban environment, migrant children would be remained in the margin of the society and be kept as cheap labor force for their lack of education.

Operating in the Shade

“Learning democracy by living democratically” was one of the guiding principles at the school, and democracy was its core value. However, the teachers interviewed believed that there was a long way before democracy could really be realized. They complained that their opinions were barely heard and their feelings did not matter, even when the arrangements were against their interests and those of the students. Power inside the school was highly concentrated and unchallengeable. As a result, real democracy was still far away. As told by them, though the Headmaster believed that he was a capable leader, in fact he usually made wrong decisions and caused problems:

The biggest problem of the school is that it does not care about teaching. The second problem lies in its management. The power of the school is too concentrated and there is no supervision. The opinions of others do not count. He does whatever he wants...There was once a teacher who said that things not allowed at other schools could be done as much as you like at this school. But only few took the full responsibility (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

Our school is neither good in teaching nor in management. Our Headmaster is not an expert in management. He is good for raising funds, but he is not a real manager. He wants to be part of the school's management. But he lacks the ability. He did not know about it, though he thinks he knows it. Whenever he reads some books, he will do this or that. But it really tired us out, making us pay a high price which might not need to be paid at the first place. We are exhausted (ibid).

Since migrant schools were not under the direct supervision of the local governments, what happened inside them could hardly be known by outsiders. Therefore, it would always be the students who suffered most from bad schools.

Furthermore, the concentration of power gave rise to unclear school finance. Only those several core members, such as the two accountants and the senior administrative staffs knew what was going on behind the scenes. Some teachers complained in private for the delay of their wages. And there was the gossip that the apartments bought by the two accountants in a nearby county could hardly be afforded by their little wages. One of the accountants was called behind her back a “smiling tiger”. The other was said to be the former student of the Headmaster. These complaints might have never been heard by those newspaper reporters who swirled to the school, shot around, and then swirled away:

Two months is not the longest. Once before, we were not paid for three months. The school doesn't have any money. No one knows where the money goes...It was said that 900,000 yuan was used to pay for the debt and only 700,000 or 800,000 yuan was left. But after we got paid the first month, there was not any money again. As far as I remember, at the beginning, the debt was said to be around 600,000 yuan, but after the school got the donation, the amount raised to 900,000 yuan. As we are only ordinary teachers, we have no access to the interests of the authority (ibid).

Suggested by the Headmaster, an executive council was formed in 2004 to improve the school's management. This action was referred to by the papers as

another innovation of the school, and probably, it had won the school another first place. However, the interviewed teacher did not have a favorable comment on this:

In fact, I think whether or not there is the executive council doesn't mean too much, since it is still our Headmaster who has the real power. I feel that the school does have problems. There is hardly any supervising mechanism for this kind of private schools. So, how to make it function openly is still a problem...At least, it is not like a well-managed enterprise. Everything here was operated by one person...We do not know how the money was spent. The key problem of the school is that the power is too concentrated (ibid).

Lastly, despite a higher pay, turn-over of the teaching staff was still rather high. This had greatly influenced the teaching quality. On one hand, there was a weak coherency between the teaching plans of different teachers. On the other hand, students needed to adapt to new teachers again and again. As told by the interviewees, the school might hire last year's university students for cutting the budget (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008). But the budget reduction was realized at the cost of the students. Another reason causing the high mobility was the fights over power among those in position. In these fights, only their friends and those harmless ones could stay:

The management here is a big mess. Before, those who were in position used to fight for power. Now, some of them have left and only two are still here. In the past, there were seven or eight of them fighting over power and position...None of

them gave up but all fought hard to beat others (Interview with Mrs. G, June 1, 2008).

When I just came here, there was a young teacher who was really nice, always asked for some benefits for us, such as allowance for teaching additional hours or something else. But the teacher was dismissed since he often had quarrels with them (ibid).

Additionally, some other teachers left because they had lost their faith in the school and the Headmaster. After teaching for a period of time, they gradually realized what kind of person the Headmaster was.

Our Headmaster can attract all kinds of media to our school. When he goes abroad, or wherever he goes, he can always be very exciting (Interview with Mr. W, April 27, 2008).

He takes advantages of the kindness of the society and the teachers for his own reputation, at whatever costs...He was not like that before, not when the school was just built. It all started when the school moved here...When we first moved here, he promised something good to us. He made us admire him, and we were eager to work with him, even without food to eat and water to drink. We wanted to follow him. Everyone had faith in our work. At that time, the food we ate tasted like swill and we were cold to death. It was his words that had encouraged us...He's changed. Now what he says is flashy, without any real content. He failed to keep his promises. Previously, we believed in what he had said, but not

anymore, especially those old staffs. We understand this. Those new teachers, they haven't known it yet...I used to think he was a Christian. So kind, and wasn't doing this for himself, like a Christian. What he said was moving and touching. But after a period of time, it turned out that he is not like that (Interview with Mrs. G, June 1, 2008).

Compared with the harsh environment and the low payment, it was the actual facts of the school and the true face of the Headmaster that had disappointed them most deeply.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF OBSERVATION

In this chapter findings of *the XX Migrant School* have been presented. Here are some major observations:

First, the *XX Migrant School* is already one of the most eye-catching migrant schools not only in Beijing, but maybe in China as a whole. Still it is fair to say that the geographical location, the physical situations, the facilities, as well as the class size, etc., are still not comparable to local public schools. Migrant children who could not enroll to public schools have to accept the fact that migrant schools like this is already the second best for them. Needless to say, there are many schools of this type which are poorly equipped and extremely in shortage of other resources. Some of them are standing on abandoned factory sites, abandoned behind

agricultural lands and even garbage fields. A lot of health and environmental hazards are embedded to endanger the safety of both children and staff there.

This leads to another major observation which even the *XX Migrant School* is also not exempted from – migrant schools are mostly to a great extent out of the reach of administrative control and monitoring. Their civil-run nature makes them immune to some administrative red tape and they may not have to meet the same standards as required for state-run schools. This may both be a merit to make them flexible enough to cater for the “excluded” migrant children; yet it may also be problematic as lacking public administrative control may imply that standard and quality could not be certain.

The existence of migrant schools offered migrant families and their children a second choice, remedial it may be, some schooling is definitely better than no schooling if people agree with the idea that education should be an unalienable right for all children, regardless whether urban or rural, or urban-based rural like that of the migrant children. However, this inequality of access leaving migrant children to take this remedial alternative may in itself be a major violation to the basic principle of “free and compulsory education” to all.

Observations on the *XX Migrant School* also pointed out that some “not-so-conventional” education practices have become “normal practices” which, strictly speaking, may be abusing children’s educational rights. Is it morally acceptable for having children too often taken to activities which were “propaganda” and “public-relation” making in nature? What if “too often” was already up to an extent

that even normal classes are disturbed or upset? Could it be judged that migrant children are being “used” but not appropriately “educated” in a school setting? Maybe, one could justify this by saying that this practice serves to appeal to the public and to mobilize more social support for the long term interests for migrant children education. But who is to judge and to what level could this be accepted, or at least tolerated?

Even worse, tuition fee is necessary to keep these schools running. How much, then, should be fair? Under a “market” situation, “fairness” is not the prime concern. The point where the demand curve meets the supply curve is where the “market equilibrium” laid. However, many migrant families are in fact left with no real choice. They always agglomerate with the natives in specific spots in the urban vicinities. School operators may also be from the same place of origin, offering schooling according to the curriculum of the home provinces. The choice is more often “take the school or not”, but not “which school to take”. This imbalance in “market bargaining power” is in fact offering room for manipulation and even profiteering. Some other migrants schools observed and visited by the researcher are indeed offering low cost and low quality services at a price some migrant families could and have to pay, but not necessarily a fair market pricing for the “customers” after shopping around before they could make a “rational” market choice.

Information collected by on-campus observations and interviews conducted after “three month staying and working” as an insider, at least two major problems of this migrant school are revealed. Firstly, due to the excessive extra-curricular activities and the lack of qualified teachers, the studies of the students had been seriously

limited. Lacking a solid academic foundation would jeopardize their chances in pursuing higher education, which in turn would severely restrict their future development. Secondly, due to the concentration of power, the school's management was not transparent and democratic enough. This gave rise to a little clique formed by the trusted followers of the Headmaster. The other teachers were kept out of the clique and deprived of their rights in the involvement of decision-making. Also, because of this clique, the school's finance had become a gray area.

This research does not intend to keep on at the problems of this particular school. Rather, it aims at discussing the flaws very likely to be found "common" and is existing at many migrant schools. An unarguable truth was that these migrant schools lacked a well-established management mechanism. Also, the local governments were not exercising an effective supervision over them. Considering the fact that the *XX Migrant School* was reputable in Beijing, it worried the researcher deeply when thinking about the situation of other migrant schools which were known to be worse. Of course, it was possible that problems of this particular school were triggered by the various privileges it exclusively enjoyed, such as the massive amount of public donations and the massive media exposure. However, the concentration of absolute power in the hands of the school owners was a phenomenon that commonly exists at other migrant schools, too. This might severely threaten the quality of the education services they provide.

To conclude, loopholes are embedded in the nature of migrant schools, which might bring about negative impacts on their education services. In order to guarantee the quality of education and protect the interests of migrant children, the local

governments should consider applying more direct and forceful supervision over these schools.

CHAPTER VIII

LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS: OPEN VS. CLOSED

The other stakeholder closely involved in education for migrant children is local public schools, who are required by governments to shoulder the responsibility of educating migrant children. In principle, these schools should enroll migrant children residing in their community under the existing administrative requirements. However, in reality, most local public schools have not strictly adhered to these rule, either because they are not able to accomplish, or they are not willing to fulfill this responsibility because of various reasons. With the case of the *Guang'an Junior High School* in Xuanwu District and the information collected in the fieldwork in Daxing District, this chapter endeavors to unfold a real portrayal of a diversified situation in Beijing, so as to prove that despite certain efforts and improvements, there is still a long way to go before securing a final solution for the issue of education for migrant children in Beijing.

THE GUANG'AN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Visit to the *Guang'an Junior High School* was arranged in March 2008. The school was located in Xuanwu District, within the second ring road. Residential properties on its four sides blocked the hustle and bustle of the outside world, making it a small piece of hidden land full of quietness and peace. Neither too big nor

particularly good-looking, *Guang'an* appeared ordinary. Information on its official website revealed that history of the school could be traced back to 1962. Through the following decades, its accomplishments had been widely recognized. For instance, *Guang'an* was the “Unit of Spiritual Civilization” of Xuanwu District; its party branch was the “Excellent Party Branch of Education System”; and, its labor union was the “Home for Advanced Teaching Staffs” (Website of the *Guang'an Junior High School*).

Despite these achievements, *Guang'an* remained an ordinary school until the year 2001, when it was nominated by the district governments as a local public school catering to the ever expanding education needs of migrant children. Back in 2001, or even over recent years, such an administrative arrangement was rather rare. At the very beginning, only 125 out of its 705 students were not local. However, in 2007, the number of migrant students jumped to 397, accounting for 96.5% of the school's total. Rarely a public school in the downtown area could hold such a high percentage of migrant children. Therefore, attention was dragged by curiosity to the *Guang'an Junior High School*.

A Public School Serving Migrant Children

Physical Condition

According to its official website, the school totally covered 10,200 square meters, among which approximately 5,300 square meters were occupied by its only classroom building. The remaining space was mainly covered by a playground. The classroom

building stood in the north, opposite to the school's entrance. It was four storeys in height and white in color. A flagpole stood in front of the building in the middle, with two big pine trees on each side. The playground was paved with plastic cement, consisting of a badminton pitch, two basketball pitches and a running track roughly three hundred meters in length. On the day of the visit, a Physical Education (PE) class was held on the playground. Most students were engaged in basketball or badminton games. Some others scattered around in two or three, playing chess or simply chatting. Clearly, sports equipments and entertainment devices were prepared for students by their school. In addition, all students were dressed in school uniform, making them look vigorous and well-behaved. Despite their migrant background, the feeling given by these students formed quite a sharp contrast to that given by their peers from migrant schools. Beyond all doubt, it was an expected but lovely surprise.

The interior decoration of the classroom building was also comfortable and pleasant. Walls were painted in white, decorated with big square windows. The floor was tiled in white, too, shining against the sunlight coming through the big windows. During late March, spring was very much in the air. All these made it pleasant to stroll along the corridors and walk pass the classrooms, from where the voices of the teachers and students could be faintly caught. According to its website, *Guang'an* was equipped with modern high technologies, such as multimedia teaching devices, closed circuit television network, broadband network, and so forth. It also owned a library, several laboratories, a professional gym, a computer room, a music room, and an arts room as well. These modern devices and advanced equipments built a solid foundation for its pursuit of a quality modern education (Website of the *Guang'an Junior High School*). Judging solely from the physical condition of the school, it

seemed that *Guang'an* was a more favorable choice for the children of migrant workers than other civic-run migrant schools.

Teaching Practices and Teaching Staffs

Thanks to the arrangements by Headmistress Ma, the researcher got a precious opportunity to personally experience the teaching activities of the school. It was a physics class taught by a young female teacher. The impression immediately aroused upon entering the classroom was that, like the corridors outside, things inside were kept tidy and ordered, too. The classroom was equipped with modern devices, including a television, air conditioners, a computer and a projector. Around twenty students were in the class, with every five or six of them sitting in a row, and altogether there were four rows. Holding such a small number of students, the classroom appeared to be rather spacious, with considerate space left uncovered. In her 20s, the teacher seemed to be well prepared for her lesson. Her notes on the blackboard were comprehensive and easy to follow and her experiments were interesting and attractive. Therefore, she succeeded in seizing the attention of her students. Forty-five minutes passed quickly, barely noticed by the attentive students. In view of this, a feeling aroused that migrant students here were much luckier, because they were given the accessibilities to both qualified teachers and a favorable environment.

Information on the school's website showed that since its establishment, the school had highly valued the quality of education:

Regarded by most schools, education quality is their lifeblood. It is the primary concern of parents who are looking for schooling for their children. The Guang'an Junior High School has firmly and consistently attached enormous significance to the quality of education.

Its efforts in improving education quality could be proved by the performances of its students and teachers:

The school has achieved a hundred percent passing rate in the graduation examination. Moreover, all through these years, the performance of students in the senior high school entrance examination has ranked high among schools in Xuanwu District. In addition, students and the teachers of the Guang'an Junior High School have performed well in competitions at all levels and of all kinds (bid)

Also, quite a number of the teaching staff had been awarded with a variety of honors:

Nearly ten percent of our full-time teachers are the "Future Stars of Xuanwu District". Motivated by them, young teachers teaching Chinese, Mathematics, English, Physics, Chemistry, Politics and other subjects all have won competitions in their professional fields, either at the municipal or district levels...The English, Physics and Chinese faculties have been awarded the "Advanced Teaching Teams" of Xuanwu District...Among the teachers in charge of the classes, a few of them are the "Morally Advanced Workers" or "Outstanding Class Advisors". A few of

them won the first prize in the competition of “The Best Class Advisors in Beijing” (ibid).

Performance of teachers and students are important indicators for assessing the quality of the school, so is its general attitude towards the teaching practices. Observation at *Guang’an* showed that the school had handled its teaching activities in a much serious and responsible manner.

Futures of the Graduates

Future of the students graduated from the *XX Migrant School* was a topic seldom appeared on the papers, nor was it covered by the Headmaster’s own report. As told by Mr. W, a staff in the *XX Migrant School*, over the past one and a half year, he only heard once or twice that their students went to universities or colleges. Mrs. Guo remarked with disapproval that the Headmaster had never paid serious attention to the academic performance of the students. Quite to the contrary, the *Guang’an Junior High School* seemed to honor a stronger commitment in preparing its students for a brighter future. It considered that fine academic performance served as the solid foundation for those students who were pursuing a better future

The school honors fine scholarship and it has a clear commitment in nurturing students. It respects and it is concerned about the students. The school endeavors to help the students to build up a solid foundation for their studies. Also, it aims to foster in them fine qualities (ibid)

Their efforts were rewarded by the expanded future perspectives of its students:

Upon graduation, some students chose to continue their studies back in their hometowns. They took part in the university entrance examination, and were admitted by universities like Beijing University, Beijing Polytechnics University, and Beijing University of Political Science, etc. Some other students chose to stay in Beijing and continued their studies at local vocational schools. After graduation, they had all found satisfying jobs (ibid).

As it is believed, a good school helps its students to unleash their potential and create for them more possibilities, while a bad school does the opposite. *Guang'an* was a good choice for migrant children, as it not only cared about the future of its students, but also endeavored to assist them in their pursuits.

Recruitment of Migrant Students

As mentioned, the school started recruiting migrant children in 2001. The changes taken place in following years within the school, to a great extent, reflected how the issue of education for migrant children had generally evolved in Beijing. Among the changes, the most profound one must be the exemption of miscellaneous fees. According to Headmistress Ma, migrant students were charged 1,000 *yuan* (USD 146) as sponsor fees in 2001, as so required by the Municipal governments. Then, the fees were reduced by half in the next semester, and eventually, they were completely abolished in 2002. Migrant students could register at *Guang'an* for free, as long as their parents could present a “Transient Schooling Proof” ratified by any sub-district

office in Xuanwu District. To get the proof, migrant parents needed to go through application procedures. In order to assist migrant parents with their application, *Guang'an* thoughtfully prepared leaflets for their reference, on which the first step was to collect five required documents (see Table 8-1):

Table 8-1: Five Documents Required

1	Temporary residence permit
2	Actual address in Beijing
3	Working certificate
4	Proof issued by the governments at county or township levels in the rural origins, proving the absence of guardian for the children in their origins
5	Copy of the Household Registration of the students and the parents

(Source: Leaflet offered by the *Guang'an Junior High School*, obtained on March 19, 2008)

After obtaining these five documents, migrant parents could proceed to the second step, namely applying for the proof itself:

By providing the above documents and certificates, and submitting an application to any sub-district office or any county government, the proof will be issued to those who are qualified for a temporary schooling in Beijing. On the “Transient Schooling Proof” there will be words like “Child of Farmers”. By showing this proof, transient student fees will be exempted (ibid).

Owing to this favorable new policy, an increasing number of migrant children came to *Guang'an*. Not only did they come themselves, these children and their

parents had also extended invitations warmly to the children of their relatives and friends. No other type of advertisement could achieve a better effectiveness than the praises passing from mouth to mouth. So the name of *Guang'an* soon spread around migrant communities in Xuanwu District. In consequence, there came more and more migrant students:

In view of such a bright future, many graduates had introduced Guang'an to their brothers, sisters, or the children of their relatives (Interview with Headmistress Ma, March 19, 2008).

When compared with migrant students in *Guang'an*, it seemed that students in the *XX Migrant Schools* were mostly lacking some or all of these documents for them to get an entry point to public schools, and one of the reasons for this could be attributed to this information gap. Most unfortunate at all was that this knowledge deficiency was proved by *Guang'an* that it could actually be solved, if some more efforts had been made on it.

Interview of Headmistress Ma

Headmistress Ma was introduced to the researcher by a staff from the *Education Commission of Xuanwu District*. Surprisingly, she accepted the invitation for an interview readily, without the least hesitation. As the way she put it, an interview was a pleasant opportunity to exchange ideas with young people, from whom she often expected something new and interesting. As it was arranged, the interview was taken in March 2008 inside her office. Seated by her table, Headmistress Ma spoke in a

calm and friendly manner, smiling benignly all the time. In her early 50s, she was kind and more than merely approachable.

Adjustments to Assignment and Difficulties Encountered

As a public school used to serve only local children, *Guang'an* surely had its own plan for a future. However, the official assignment suddenly arrived in 2001 had not only called off its original plan, but also demanded quick reactions. However, back in 2001, the school's vision was blurred by the absence of clear-cut policies and regulations. Headmistress Ma admitted that, at that moment, not all teachers were prepared for such a change. In contrast, some of them seriously doubted the future of the school, while the others were deeply concerned with their own teaching careers. Their worries and hesitations were somehow understandable, because for all the schools, a fine reputation and a high rank decision on their future development, for the sake of which, they had to hold tightly on the quality of the students. Some teachers were afraid that the coming of migrant children might be a drag on the overall quality of their students, which might eventually push the school into a dead end.

Nonetheless, after rounds of meeting, school leaders of *Guang'an* finally decided to face up to this challenge:

In the very beginning, our teachers had their own considerations. They were afraid that the governments might stop giving the school quotas for recruiting local students. They also worried for the future development of the school. School leaders discussed over this matter for many times. Well, there were supports from

the district education commission. Hence finally, we reached the conclusion that it was necessary for these children to receive nine year compulsory education (Interview with Headmistress Ma, March 19, 2008).

Afterwards, under the guidance of school leaders, teachers at *Guang'an* started adjusting themselves to the new tasks and challenges. However, according to Headmistress Ma, in this process, they had never ceased encountering all kinds of difficulties. For instance, due to the diversified education and family background of its migrant students, teachers at *Guang'an* had no unified standards to guide their teaching. Rather, they had to pay attention to the special needs of every student. Headmistress Ma stated that:

In the past, our school only admitted Beijing students. There wasn't too much difference in the children's family background or in the education they've received back in primary schools. But that's not the same for migrant children who came from all around. The levels of their education differ greatly. So are their personal qualities. These have brought to us lots of difficulties, both in terms of the teaching of the book knowledge, and in fostering among them fine behaviors and good habits (ibid).

Secondly, the age difference of the students makes the situation further complicated. Many possible reasons could explain why the schooling of some of students had been seriously delayed. Headmistress Ma said that some migrant parents had missed the proper time to find a school for their children, as they could not spare themselves from heavy work. Some other parents failed to do so because of their financial incapability. Moreover, it also happened to many children that their families'

frequent resettlements had seriously interrupted their schooling. When being transferred to new schools, migrant students might be required to retake the previous one or two years, so as to bridge the gap between them and other students. Together with other reasons, there was an obvious age difference among its migrant students. The following was what Headmistress Ma observed:

The age difference of students is obvious, too. Some students are already 16 or 17. Normally, they should have already entered senior high schools. And, in accordance with common practice, they should have no longer been qualified for compulsory education. Meanwhile, some other students are still studying at primary schools at the age of 13 or 14. Besides, there are those who have finished the first or second year at junior high schools in their hometowns, but after coming to Beijing, they have to restart from the first year again. The age difference means that their mental developments are uneven. Those students who are older are more mature, while those who are younger are not. As a result, there are a lot of problems in the teaching (ibid).

With few opportunities to draw on the experience of other schools, *Guang'an* had to explore on its own a way to better serve migrant children. Over the years, the school had achieved gratifying accomplishments which had been widely recognized.

Equal Treatments towards Migrant Students

Some people doubted if local public schools were a good option for migrant children, because they thought that there could be more discriminatory treatments

against these children. Discrimination could come from urban students, their teachers, or even worse, from the schools' unfair rules and regulations. Since the nature of migrant children made them rather sensitive to their surroundings, the feeling of being looked down upon or the sense of being unfairly treated might cause these children serious wounds and lasting shadows. Therefore, for some migrant children, attending public schools might be a nightmare. Headmistress Ma also sensed the fragility of these children:

These children somehow may have an inferior feeling, especially when they are surrounded by many Beijing students (ibid).

In order to avoid such negative consequences, various actions had been employed by *Guang'an* to protect migrant students. For example, treating local students with preference was strictly forbidden. In spite of their origins, students were encouraged to compete in various competitions or for various rewards on an equal footing. To put this rule into full effect, *Guang'an* had made it a criterion for assessing the performance of teachers. As introduced by Headmistress Ma:

Since the admission of the first group of migrant children, it had been made a rule by the school leaders that migrant children should be treated equally. During their primary school study, because of the limited quotas for awards like the "Student of Three Excellences", their teachers might have given preference to local students. Hence, we brought forward the idea that excellent non-local students ought to be entitled to these awards, too. Also, they must be guaranteed equal opportunities in elections for the members of class committee (ibid).

At the same time, the school refused to teach migrant students in separate classes. Instead, they studied together with local children, so that every child got the chance to learn from each other:

We didn't separate them. Instead we mixed them up, which enabled the students, especially migrant students, to exert good impacts among themselves. Though their living and behavioral habits might have some problems, migrant children exceed local kids for their innocence and down-to-earth attitudes. On the contrary, local Beijing kids, though having a better family environment and better informed, are lazier. Migrant and local students could not only accept the existence of the other party, but also benefit from the merits of each other (ibid).

According to Headmistress Ma, their efforts had yielded good results. Now, *Guang'an* was one of the thirty-two public schools in Beijing covered by the "Secondary School Construction Program". Headmistress Ma eagerly hoped that with the supports drawn from this program, *Guang'an* could be further improved.

Leaving of Local Students

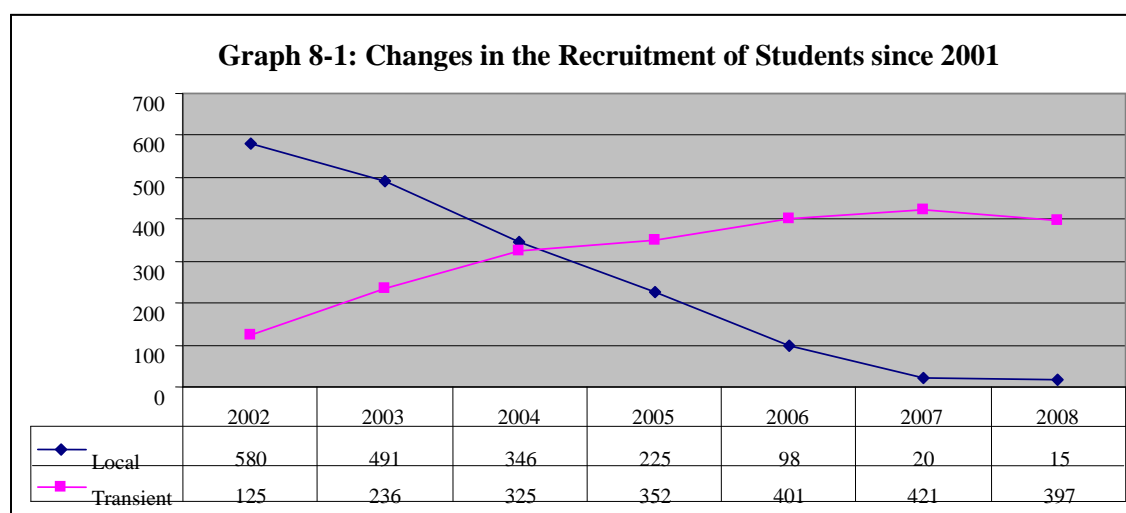
On the other hand, over these years, the school had constantly suffered from the loss of local students. Statistics showed that from 2001 to 2007, the number of migrant students enrolled at *Guang'an* increased from 125 to 397, while the number of local students dropped from 580 to 15. The year 2003 witnessed the smallest disparity between the numbers of migrant and local students. 2004 recorded the first time the number of migrant children surpassed that of the local kids. Then, around

2005, migrant students became the absolute majority, and in 2006, their number reached the peak. Eventually, in 2007, there were only 15 local students studying at *Guang'an* (see Table 8-2 and Graph 8-1):

Table 8-2: Recruitment of Students at *Guang'an*

	<u>Grade 1</u>		<u>Grade 2</u>		<u>Grade 3</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Local Students	Transient Students	Local Students	Transient Students	Local Students	Transient Students	Local Students	Transient Students
2001.9	125	107	241	11	214	7	580	125
2002.9	128	125	132	98	231	13	491	236
2003.9	81	136	134	112	131	77	346	325
2004.9	13	155	82	124	130	73	225	352
2005.9	1	194	15	139	82	68	98	401
2006.9	5	177	1	159	14	82	20	421
2007.9	5	157	8	147	2	93	15	397

(Source: Document offered by the *Guang'an Secondary School*, obtained on March 19, 2008)



Statistics marked the school's eventual transformation from an ordinary local public serving local students to a special one primarily catering to the needs of migrant children.

As to the reasons why local students left, Headmistress Ma admitted that at the very beginning, local parents were concerned with the potential deterioration of education quality:

The problem was relatively more obvious at the beginning. At that time, students studied in mixed classes. Beijing parents had their own considerations, wondering if the education quality would be hampered if these children studied together. (They thought) our children were going to universities. Would there be any negative influence (Interview with Headmistress Ma, March 19, 2008)?

To comfort local parents and to wipe out the worries of migrant parents, parent meetings were arranged by the school:

So, we invited parents to our meeting to discuss together. Beijing parents worried about this, while migrant parents were afraid if their children would be looked down upon or if the teachers would give preferential treatment to Beijing students. But it was proved by the fact that that a Beijing student was admitted by the High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University, and then enrolled at a university in South China. Finally, the parent admitted that she used to worry too much, and she agreed that this school could indeed treat every child equally. After three years of education, parents could have more understanding and acceptance (ibid).

However, she then admitted that later they simply had less and less Beijing students.

Apparently, their efforts in dispelling the doubts of local parents were not very convincing. Local parents transformed their worries into real actions, and transferred their children to other schools. Even those who belonged to this school district had found other options for their children:

Students who belonged to this school district and graduated from local primary schools did not come here (ibid).

When asked how she felt about it, Headmistress Ma answered with a forced smile:

We have no other choice. They've chosen to leave. Nothing further could be done about it. We only want to try our best to teach well those children who stayed. It is rather difficult. To be frank, those local kids who chose to stay here usually have this or that problem. Their parents knew that they could not catch up with other students if they studied at "demonstration schools" (Similar to the idea of key schools) (ibid).

The case of *Guang'an* to some extent explained the worry of Mr. L, the official from the *Beijing Municipal Education Commission*. Thanks to the massive supports of local governments, *Guang'an* handled its new role well. Yet it was hard to deny that its triumph was not completed and it was achieved at huge sacrifices. For *Guang'an*, the coming of a large number of migrant children made it no longer favored by local

students and their parents. For any local public school, pleasing the two sides at the same time could be as hard as a mission impossible.

Their Future Work

According to Headmistress Ma, priorities of their future work laid in the cultivation of fine habits and good personal qualities among migrant students. As believed by the school, fine habits and good personal qualities were their key to enter the mainstream society and a brighter future. Therefore, the school started with training on small matters:

Habits will exert a significant impact on their entire life. Good habits inspire good personalities, while good personalities in turn assure good life. So, we regard these important (ibid).

Our students' families come from the bottom of the society. They have the worst condition and the least incomes. So the environment is not favorable, and hardly any concern is given to hygienic issues...There is a simple example for you. When these children lived in the countryside, maybe in little towns, they didn't flush the lavatory. Such a habit shows the big difference between them and local students. We also found this problem. So we had to teach them in class to flush the toilet. It's pretty simple. And it is probably not necessary at all to brief urban students on such an issue. But, for them, we have to teach. Also, every week, we check their appearance and dress...We will also ask them to put their hands on table to see if

they have trimmed their fingernails. And we will see to it if their collars are clean (ibid)...

Headmistress Ma and her colleagues believed that in the future most likely these students would stay in Beijing, rather than going back to the countryside and working on the farmland. For these children, the time spent in Beijing had not only given them a much stronger sense of belonging here, but also further weakened their connection with the countryside. Besides, after getting used to the hustle and bustle of a metropolitan city, even thinking about living in the countryside would bore them to tears. As a result, most migrant students would choose to stay in Beijing, looking for a job and starting their own ventures. To realize these, they need acceptance and recognition from the urban society. Therefore, *Guang'an* perceived that it is the school's duty to equip migrant students with the habits and qualities they needed for urban living.

In addition, Headmistress Ma also reckoned that the school was also responsible to pass over to migrant children the “tolerance”, the “magnanimity” as well as the “high quality” of Beijing.

Conclusion

After being accustomed to the sight of poorly equipped migrant schools, the mere physical appearance of the *Guang'an Junior High School* was no less than a visual pleasure. Satisfaction became even more intense when more information on the school was obtained. It turned out that as a local public school officially assigned to

the needs of migrant students, *Guang'an* stood out both for its quality of teaching and for its stronger resolve in helping the children with an earlier integration into the mainstream society. To a certain degree, the new outlook of its students had demonstrated how effective the school was in reshaping the children in line with mainstream urban values. Quite to the contrary, students at the *XX Migrant School* or at any other migrant school visited in the research were still carrying with themselves evident signs of their rural identities. The experience of *Guang'an* proved that it was possible and feasible to entrust local public schools with the responsibility of educating migrant children. Moreover, it demonstrated the powerful influence of education on shaping the diversified development paths of migrant children. Rather than something of the moment, the impact of education was long-lasting and far-reaching.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN DAXING DISTRICT

With the case of the *Guang'an Junior High School*, the previous section has probed the efforts made by local public schools in solving the education difficulty faced by migrant children. In this section, the contradictory situations found in the fieldwork in Daxing District are to be briefed, so as to prove that there is still a long way to go before finding a final solution.

Miscellaneous Fees

Mr. Wang, in his 50s, migrated to Beijing from an industrial city in Northeast China many years ago. He was now engaged in his illegal business of riding passengers with a three-wheel motorcycle designed originally for the handicapped. Mr. Wang was both extremely warm-hearted and sophisticatedly skeptical, so that, while he talked with strong interests about the miscellaneous fees charged by local public schools in Daxing, he refused, with unusual determination, to sign the consent form for a serious interview. Fortunately, he did not mind having the conversations recorded by the researcher, most of these conversations took place on their way to different local public schools or different migrant homes. Mr. Wang was hired by the researcher as her exclusive driver for several days. This turned out to be a wise move, as not only his motorcycle, though officially banished, was proved to be highly efficient on the big streets or small alleys around Daxing, his personal network and his warm-heartedness was also efficiently connecting researcher with more migrant parents. Mr. Wang and his acquaintances contributed greatly to this section.

Amount of the Fees

According to Mr. Wang, miscellaneous fees charged by local public schools varied in line with their quality and reputation. In general, the amounts were handsome:

The No.1, No.2 and No.7 secondary schools are the three best ones in Daxing...Altogether 30,000 RMB is charged for the three-year study at the No.1

Secondary School. If you go to the No. 2 Secondary School, it is also pretty good. The No. 2 Secondary School is rather good now. The No. 7 Secondary School ranks the third...The No. 2 Secondary School asks for the lowest amount, with is 12,000 yuan to 15,000 yuan for three years (Conversation with Mr. Wang, April 16, 2008).

Because of the high fees, Mr. Wang did not send either of his two children to local public schools years ago. Now, both of his two children were working. In order to provide the researcher with the latest information, Mr. Wang proposed to introduce his fellow-townsmen to her, whose boy was attending the *No. 7 Secondary School*. Under his arrangement, the researcher met Mr. Li in front of the market where he ran a seafood stand. As told by Mr. Li:

My boy came here in the spring of 2001. At that time, he studied at the Daxing No.2 Primary School. Transient schooling fees were charged at two different rates, which could either be 9,000 yuan or 12,000 yuan. But later I found some contact to speak for me. In other words, in the end, I only paid 4,000 yuan (Interview with Mr. Li, April 16, 2008).

As to the reason for the two different rates, Mr. Li attributed it to the arbitrary attitudes of the school headmaster:

The headmaster just said that: "I could charge you 12,000, or 9,000." But I found someone to speak for me. So I paid 4,000 for four years and a half (ibid).

After graduating from primary school, Mr. Li's son passed the entrance examination and was admitted by the *No. 7 Secondary School*. He currently studied in grade two. Again, Mr. Li paid handsome fees to the school:

My child goes to the No. 7 secondary school. 15,000 yuan is charged from those local kids who failed the entrance examination. My child also took it. They have three different criteria, which are eighty points, ninety points and a hundred points respectively. 14,000 yuan is charged from those reached the lowest criterion which is eighty points. 13,000 or 12,000 yuan is asked from those reached ninety (ibid).

His son scored above eighty. However, Mr. Li did not pay as much as 14,000 *yuan* to the school, as once again, he succeeded in getting a discounted price by telling a white lie. Seemingly amused by his own tricks, Mr. Li explained that:

My child got more than 80 points. So he was admitted. Let me put it that way. I escaped the high fees with a lie I made up, saying I have this or that difficulty. So, they charged me less...Finally I paid 5,000 yuan (ibid).

It was ironic to see the potential wisdom of a migrant father was unleashed in this why. His tricks merely served a simple and reasonable request – sending his son to a local public school. It somehow showed how twisted one's nature could be when exposed to a power he barely had any chance to fight against by proper means and through proper channels.

Luxury Goods for the Richer

Moreover, it was crystal clear that given the high fees, only those migrant families that were economically better-off could afford local public schools. Originally, Mr. Wang had also intended to introduce the researcher to another friend of his, whose son was attending the *Daxing No. 2 Primary School*. However, he failed to discover his friend's car among those waiting outside the school gate around the school closing hour. Nonetheless, according to his description, his friend, coming from Hubei Province, was now a contractor of several construction projects. Mr. Wang said that:

Of course, contractors are rich (Conversation with Mr. Wang, April 16, 2008).

For ordinary workers, those who don't have their own business, it's very difficult for them to send their children to public schools (ibid).

Therefore, education services provided by local public schools became luxury goods for many migrant families in Daxing. Only those who were richer could buy it for their children as a precious gift. Considering the average economic situation of migrants, such people were certainly in the minority.

Deals in the Dark

In addition, miscellaneous fees were charged by local public schools in such a subtle manner in the dark. As told by Mr. Li, they would not be given any record for the fees they paid, let alone any receipt. Besides, rather than *Transient Schooling Fees*,

miscellaneous fees were charged under the names of “Contribution” or “Sponsor fees”, by which it meant that such money was provided to schools by migrant parents as a kind of financial supports to the school. Whatever it was, the keynote was “Voluntary”:

They take the money, but they won't admit it is Transient Schooling Fees. If you don't pay them, they won't take you in. Only you pay the money, they will give you admission. There's no need to go through any formality (Interview with Mr. Li, April 16, 2008).

After paying 5,000 yuan, they didn't give me any record. Just bring them the money and they will settle the admission, without any record. If you want them to give you something like a receipt, what do you expect them to write on it? Temporary schooling fess? Or something else (ibid)?

Sometimes, the situation could even be worse. Money alone could not knock open the doors of local public schools. Migrant parents needed to have acquaintances and contacts to speak for them in front of the school leaders. Nonetheless, they still tried hard to send their children to local public schools. They paid the forced charges willingly, for the sake of their children. Meanwhile, for those migrant families lacking any kind of resource, local public schools simply became luxury goods they could barely afford.

To conclude, there was still a long way before the final elimination of miscellaneous fees in all the public schools in Beijing, even though this practice has been forbidden by policy for some years already.

The Daxing XX Primary School

Introduced by Mr. Wang, the *Daxing XX Primary School* was the other local public school visited in the research. It was not far away from the *XX Migrant School*. A single trip between the two schools only cost around fifteen minutes. Opposite to the school's entrance, there was a residential neighborhood. Judging from its considerable size, it could be inferred that the school was less likely to be short of students. Compared with the Huang Village, this community appeared to be more prosperous. Bungalows in view were kept in better shape. And there were all kinds of small businesses lining up along the street. In terms of its geographical location, this neighborhood also surpassed the Huang Village for it was closer to the downtown area of Daxing District. Judging from the pedestrians on the streets and the parents waiting outside the school gate, it was felt that roughly half of the residents were local and roughly half of them were migrants.

Arriving around noon time, the researcher succeeded in going inside the school entrance even without being questioned by the door keeper, who probably was by chance not inside the reception room. Not many students were playing outside, so the school looked rather quiet and empty. The campus was fairly clean and tidy. Rows of single-storied classrooms kept in order and in good shape. Sceneries in view revealed that it was built in a common size and was plainly decorated. In all, it was another ordinary and typical public school commonly seen on the urban outskirts. Obviously, its physical condition was incomparable to that of the schools in the city's downtown area.

On her way further inside, the researcher came across three students, including two boys and a girl. After brief introduction, it was found that two of them were migrant students, and the other one was a local child with rural *hukou*. All of them were quite talkative, as if they had a lot to share in regard to the fees they paid. According to the migrant boy who was in the fifth grade, his parents paid 3,000 *yuan* to register him at the school last year, which equaled to 500 *yuan* per semester. Apart from this amount, like other students, he also needed to pay the tuition fees at the start of every semester. The tuition fees stood at 140 *yuan* for migrant students and 50 *yuan* for local students. As told by them, these amounts were recently reduced. In 2007 it used to be 200 *yuan* for migrant students and 100 *yuan* for local students. Before they hurried back to their classroom, the migrant boy curiously asked the researcher if she was a reporter. When being told she came for information on the charges, the outspoken boy immediately advised her to turn to students but not teachers, saying their teachers would only tell lies on such a topic. Upon hearing his remark, the local boy echoed in agreement, saying that everyone knew it, as if it was so obvious that one should not have bothered to point it out.

After saying goodbye to the students, the researcher walked further inside and stopped in front of some offices. Peeping through the window of the Finance Office, she saw a male staff around 40 years old, taking his nap in a sofa. After hesitating for a while, she finally knocked on the door and woke him up. Sitting in the chair by his desk, the staff tried to cool his head in front of a complete stranger. He firstly checked the researcher's student card and then required to have a look on the consent form. In the end, he shook his head and lighted a cigarette, saying that the only thing he could do was to answer some questions. According to the staff, priority was given to local students when recruiting students. Only when there were extra quotas, applications

from migrant children would be considered. Even though less than a half of its 400 students were migrant students, some of their classes were already oversized. As told by the staff, though it was important to cater to the needs of migrant children, it was also necessary to keep the class size in line with the criteria set by the governments. When asked closely if *Transient Schooling Fees* were charged from those migrant students who failed to prepare the five documents required, the staff evaded the questions twice by advising the researcher to have a look at relevant policies.

Conversation with the staff ended when he was on the edge of losing all his patience. Though his answers were ambiguous, the situation at the *Daxing XX Primary School* could still be probed from the information provided by the students. It was clear that miscellaneous fees were still being charged at the school by the time of the research.

Migrant Parents – Keeping Their Mouths Shut

The researcher went to the *Daxing XX Primary School* again around the school closing hour, hoping to interview several migrant parents waiting for their children outside the school gate. However, it turned out that these parents had the least intention to talk with a stranger on such a sensitive topic. Most of them turned away before the researcher finished her introduction. Suspicion spread all over their faces and an invisible wall could immediately be sensed. However, their responses were easy to understand, considering how insecure nowadays society is. The less trouble the better, for those who had already found their children a local public school, it was much wiser not to run any risk to blow this precious opportunity. The only pity was

that without their cooperation, there would be less detailed information on miscellaneous fees illegally charged by local public schools, the absence of which in turn would prevent the realization of the interests of their own children.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF OBSERVATION

With the case of the *Guang'an Junior Secondary School* and the findings of the situation in Daxing District, this chapter has unfolded a portrait of the diversified situation in Beijing. These contradictory cases demonstrated clearly that despite central policies for education for migrant children, the ways these policies were implemented at the local level was with great variations. The same policy could be interpreted differently, or might even be carried out not in accordance with what has been spelled out.

Guang'an Junior Secondary School represented one at the encouraging end of the issue. It was really rare case while most other schools were still skewing towards the opposite end. However, this seemingly successful attempt to accommodate migrant children in local public schools is not without costs. Local families choose to turn away from it despite the effort it made to integrate local and migrant children. The discrimination and prejudice on migrant kids prevails, making the *Guang'an Junior Secondary School* eventually transforming itself into a local public school solely for migrants. The question is, if there were no administrative requirement imposed on the school in 2001, would it even try to do that? With its eventual success and achievement, how many other local schools have been encouraged to adopt the same path? Obviously, masterminded and administrative initiatives from the government

are still needed if more migrant children really have to be taken up by state run schools. Though sample case of good practice for migrant education could and would be raised to demonstrate the progressive and proactive side of policy development and implementation, most migrant children and their families were still facing the harsh and cruel reality in seeking equal education opportunity

CHAPTER IX

MIGRANT PARENTS: DIVERSIFIED MENTALITIES

This chapter 9 is going to focus on the roles and impacts of migrant parents, either directly or indirectly, on the education arrangement for their children. Needless to say, education related decisions are in most cases parental decisions. Parents of impoverished sector are particularly encountering more difficulties in making choice. Cases found in the fieldwork shed light on this. Without undue over-simplification, four typical types of migrant parents could be identified when education decisions for their children is in focus. Stories of some migrant parents and their children are to be presented, identified by which is a close connection between the education arrangement of migrant children and the influence of their parents. With all these, this chapter aims at revealing the decisive role of migrant parents in whether and in what way their children could be helped in terms of realizing their rights to education.

CASE 1: BITTER-SWEET RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHEN AND HER MOTHER

Performance of Chen

Chen was a 12-year-old girl who studied in the fifth grade at the *XX Migrant School*. Her mother moved to Beijing from Heilongjiang Province many years ago

and gave birth to Chen in this city. The girl was good-looking and slim. Like many other migrant children, her dresses were dirty and her hands had chilblains. During the first time they met, Chen talked about her problems all alone without stopping, wearing an expression unsuitable for her age. It was found out immediately that she came from a single parent family and her parents divorced when she was four. Since then her father had never shown up again. Sitting in the sofa, the girl complained that she did not have any one to talk to about her feelings, not even to her mother who barely understood. Chen gave forth a feeling, though complicated, easy to read. It was a combination of various ingredients, including sadness for being rejected; longings for approval and acceptance; as well as pretended indifference so as to cover the fact that she failed to get them.

Maybe because of her mingled state of mind, Chen grew into a restless and unsettled girl who was bound to suffer a lot at school. Because of her careless and undisciplined character, she was not favored by her teachers or her pals. The little girl had problems in focusing on anything for a relatively longer time. Her enthusiasm came quickly and passionately, but it also disappeared in a similar manner. For instance, Chen used to beg her mother for enrolling her at the school's Chinese Shuimo Painting Society, swearing if not her artistic talent would be buried. Her mother finally agreed to pay for her painting class. However, like what had happened, Chen's passion in painting evaporated after few months. When mentioning her, some other girls from the same society shook their heads in disapproval, complaining about Chen's sloppy attitude towards their practices. Apparently, they did not favor her. To make things worse, Chen's academic performance was terrible, too, though not completely hopeless. Frequent changes of school had seriously interrupted her study,

in particular her English learning. Even in grade five, she still could not recite the twenty-six alphabets at one go. For her poor academic performance, she was jeered at and isolated by her classmates. Customarily, most people might attribute Chen's poor performance to the dreadful consequences of her parents' failed marriage, which to a great extent, was an undeniable truth. However, the stories to come might be able to provide another angle to have Chen's situation reviewed.

Choose between Chen and Herself

Chen's mother was a short, slim and sometimes strained character, whose image was commonly seen among those struggling at the bottom of the society. As a single parent, her life was fairly difficult. She started working two years after the divorce and over the years followed, she had taken several unskilled manual jobs, including delivering newspapers and promoting barreled water. Also, she had received trainings both at an insurance company and a real estate company. However, upon finishing the trainings, she chose to leave, because she believed that her straightforward personality and these jobs could hardly match. When the interview was taken, she was doing her old job – delivering newspapers every morning. Their most expensive belonging was a three-wheel motor tricycle originally designed for the handicapped. It turned out to be her key of an expanded business, as with it Chen's mother now could deliver newspapers in those neighborhoods located further away. Every month, her business could bring in more than 1000 *yuan* to the family. However, this amount was not always enough or stable, as she was in a less satisfactory physical condition, and sometimes she had to visit the doctor and take a leave. Therefore sometimes, she went

out “*la huo*” (riding passengers with the motor tricycle) in the afternoon to earn some more money. However, “*la huo*” was illegal, so that she had to avoid being caught by the police:

Last year my income was okay, but not this year... They hadn't increased the price at that time. The cost for each paper was 25 cents, and I could sell it at 50 cents. So I could earn half of it. If I went to those far places, I could sell 200 to 300 pieces a week. Then, every month I could earn almost 2,000 yuan. But, I can't earn that much now. I can't even earn a cent. So, I am so worried and I went out “la huo”, but a policeman caught me and detained my motor tricycle. I gave him 550 yuan, and signed a note for the rest 250 yuan...I don't know what kind of job I can do. Nor do I know what kind of job suits me (Interview with Mrs. Guan, March 23, 2008).

Her job meant that it was easier for them to move, compared with those migrants who were still working on the farm. Though there were risks associated with moving, it was the hopes and opportunities brought about by a brand-new start that made resettlement a charming idea, especially when the family was already too poor to have any more serious loss. In addition, living in the city's downtown area might benefit them both, or at least benefit the little girl, as firstly, policies on the education arrangement for migrant children were better implemented there, and secondly, a real urban environment might broaden the girl's view and facilitate her integration into the mainstream urban society. However, Chen's mother was not touched by any of these possibilities. Instead, she would rather stick to her own plan, in which Chen was hardly the leading role, but rather an unwanted obstacle. Chen's mother was thinking

about running a newspaper stand, so she needed both time and the initial funds. It seemed to her that, for the sake of the business, it was better to send Chen away:

You see she's going to graduate from primary school soon, but I've not decided if I'll let her study further. If she worked hard, I might try to pay for her education. But if not, I don't want to waste money on her anymore. I'll have her quit. After one year or more, she'll be 13 and I'm thinking about sending her back to her father's hometown. What they will do to her will be their business. No matter what, both mother and father are responsible to raise the child until they are eighteen. I didn't escape my responsibility. I've tried no matter how difficult it is. But if she turns out to be that disappointing and can't do well no matter how hard I've tried to help her, I feel that it's okay for me to stop after finishing my part (ibid).

It was not that Chen's mother had never tried to give her daughter better education. On the contrary, she had tried rather hard. As a single parent, she simply wanted to give her child more and more so as to make up the losses she already had. Besides, unlike many other migrant parents who failed to see the importance of education, Chen's mother knew how important education was for those who lived in a highly demanding city. However, it was Chen who did not live up to her expectation but repeatedly disappointed her. Her hope was chilled by the girl, so that now she seriously doubted if Chen was worth of her painstaking efforts.

She told the researcher a story that happened five years ago, which had completely changed Chen's fate. At that time, the girl was already eight, but had not attended school yet. There was a day on which the little girl screamed and cried, begging her to

find her a school. Upon seeing this, her heart was torn apart. Therefore, she went to a local primary school and begged the headmaster to take Chen in. However, she was turned down with the excuse that educating migrant children was not their responsibility. Chen's mother did not give up. Instead, she visited both another local school and the *Daxing Education Commission* for several times. Touched by her sincerity, the headmaster of the second school in the end not only agreed to admit Chen, but also promised to exempt the extra fees:

I went to the education commission. I told them that the situation of my family was different from those of others. I said that under this circumstance my child wanted to go to school. It tortured me deeply. Offering education was my responsibility and obligation. But, I had no money. I said that I could not let my child wait any more, because she was already eight. It would be too late if she could not start schooling right now. I told them I was worried (ibid).

I went to beg the headmaster. Then I went to the education commission. Then I went to see the headmaster again and again. I almost kneeled down in front of him. It was really so hard (ibid).

Fortune finally descended upon her daughter. Even today, Chen's mother could remember how happy the girl was on her way to the school. However, good time did not last long. Maybe because Chen was too small to comprehend the meaning of this opportunity, she did not cherish it, and a year later she dropped out. This marked the end of her study at local public schools. Despite her anger and disappointment,

Chen's mother did not put all the blame on her daughter. Instead, she regarded herself partially responsible for this disappointing result:

Since the school was a formal one, the opening and closing hours are fixed. Because I looked after her alone, I had all kinds of pressures. I didn't have sufficient time to take care of her. Other students were taken to school and taken back home by their parents. Their parents helped them with their homework. I couldn't do any of these, because if I did these, I couldn't do other things. I had taken several part-time jobs. I did this and that, all for making more money and bringing her up. I was busy every day, so I didn't have time for her. I sent her to the school but I was unable to have an eye on her. So sometimes, she skipped classes. She didn't go to school, because she couldn't enter it. So she went to shops. She didn't dare to tell me the truth when she came back home. On the next day, she just told her teacher that I was ill, so I couldn't go to school with her. The school didn't tell me either. I didn't know what had happened (ibid).

When she found out what had happened, Chen's mother had her dropped out. Chen could not understand how her fate had been changed forever. In fact, the moment she quitted the school, the moment her "school-hopping" journey started, first from a boarding martial art school in Daxing to a boarding martial art school in Gu'an, Hebei Province, and then to the *XX Migrant School* in the end. If Chen would continue her schooling, quite likely that a few other schools would be later added to this list.

Moreover, the other evidence showing her concerns over Chen's education was the money she generously paid for her. Even though her income was limited, she was rather openhanded when it came to her daughter's education. For instance, she used to pay a yearly tuition fee of 5,000 *yuan* to enroll Chen at a boarding martial art school. In contrast, the monthly rent of their shabby home only stood at 200 *yuan*. When asked why she had spared no money in educating Chen, she answered that she wanted her daughter to get rid of the disadvantages and pressures caused by the lack of education. Also, personally, she highly valued education:

It was expensive. Later the school had the tuition fees increased to 10,000 yuan a year. This forced me to send her to another one. When it was 5,000 yuan, I thought that as long as I take more jobs, I could afford it, because I didn't need to spend money on other things. I seldom buy anything for myself. I wanted to save it for the future of my child (ibid).

I myself long for knowledge, but I have missed the best time for studying. I can feel the great disadvantage caused by the lack of education. The jobs you can do would be restricted by it. Even if you think that job is good, you might not be qualified for taking it, as you have no education or relevant skills. I feel it is...I hope my child will not be like me. I think no matter how poor and how difficult I am, I'd let my child to be educated. So, I sent her to that school. But, later the tuition fees were too much to afford, thus I sent her to a school in Gu'an. It was cheaper there. But the quality couldn't be compared to the previous one (ibid).

Unfortunately, in spite of her efforts, the outcomes turned out to be enormously disappointing. After changing four schools within five years, the scores that appeared on Chen's school reports became lower and lower. Chen's mum eventually felt very frustrated, tired, and she doubted if it was time for giving up. Too young and too thoughtless, Chen could not understand the hardships and disappointment her mother had endured. Nor did she truly understand how serious the result would be, if her mother finally made up her mind to send her away:

To be frank, it seems contradictory to me, because I am so angry with her and I feel she is so disappointing. Before that, I have paid so much for her and placed so much expectation on her. Maybe, haste doesn't bring success. I think she became rebellious for I have expected too much. Then I feel so disappointed seeing her not making any progress. It is contradictory, who doesn't want to see her child to have a bright future, but I am just so disappointed seeing her not doing well (ibid).

I don't know what to do with her future. The pressure is so big now. If I send her to a school, I myself might be left in debt. Before, I could make a living by selling newspapers. But now I can hardly make it. I don't have any good job or skills. My education background is not good, either. I feel that I could hardly hold on. I paid too much money on her, but she couldn't do well. It is not that I couldn't endure any hardship, I just can't bear that she has learned nothing but wasted all my efforts. So, it seems contradictory to me. I want to send her to her father's family and see what he can do for her (ibid).

Whenever hearing her mother talking about sending her away, Chen's eyes would at once be filled with tears and terror. And then the girl would beg her mother, promising to study harder and behave better. She was frightened by the idea of being sent away to her father's side. So far, Chen's mother was undecided, uncertain what to do next. It seemed to her that their life had stuck there. There ought to be some changes, either Chen would do better with her study, or she would try her luck with the newspaper stand. Where to place her hopes, either on her daughter or on herself, was the most difficult question confronting this single mother now.

Insufficient Supports

During the past few years, the overall situation in Beijing in regards to the education provision for migrant children was improving. Nonetheless, Chen's mother could hardly feel it. For long, she had been fighting alone, barely benefited from any of those progressive policies and regulations. To make things even worse, tuition fees were ever increasing. Soon they would be beyond her affordability:

I don't have a TV at home. But I read news papers every day. I've come across with news reports on the improved policies. But they are only on the newspapers. They sound like beneficial to ordinary people, reducing our burden, and taking into consideration our situation. But I think when it comes to the real practices and the interests of us, there isn't any big change. It can't solve our problems from the root (ibid).

The governments have said more than once that it's not allowed to charge sponsor fees. But the school headmaster still asks for it, not under the name of sponsor fees, but as donations you'd like to give to the school voluntarily. If you fail to pay the money, the school will turn you down with all kinds of reasons, such as there are not enough tables or chairs. Anyway, they won't take in our children (ibid).

I think, seeing from the perspective of the society, everything is so expensive. Even if a child is gifted, if her family can't afford the tuition fees, she simply cannot study (ibid).

For impoverished migrant families, when government policies failed to offer them protection, many of them would be left with few choices and they could only send their children to migrant schools. This also happened to Chen. After leaving her second martial art school, she was admitted by the XX Migrant School close to her home. However her mother was not totally satisfied with the school's quality. She said that she used to turn to Chen's teacher for advice. However, she felt that that teacher was not willing to help. As told by Chen's mother:

I used to talk with her teacher. She only emphasized how busy she was and what so ever. As a teacher you must have the ability to do the job. You can't just say how busy you are. Teaching the students is your responsibility and obligation. You get paid for that...I thought about changing her to another school when I heard her teacher say that. I just thought that she's not qualified, nor was she responsible enough (ibid).

What was the most unfortunate was that Chen and her mother could barely get any supports from their own folks, not even from Chen's grandparents, as they disliked Chen for being both her father's daughter and her mother's burden, which also effectively reduced her chance to be remarried. Their patience ran out when Chen's mother turned down a local man whom was introduced by them to her. That man was satisfied with her, but he demanded to send Chen away. She turned him down, thinking that how a decent man could have ever asked for such a favor. But this made Chen's grandparents dislike the little girl even more. Chen said that once her own uncle wanted to choke her to death. No matter her uncle was serious or not, for the girl, it was the best example to illustrate how unwelcome she was in her mother's family.

Conclusion to Case 1

When thinking about the future of Chen, a small and strained image also appeared in the researcher's mind. It was her mother, who was by no means a lazy woman trying to avoid working hard. Instead, she was the exact opposite. She not only worked very hard, but also highly valued the importance of education. She did not mind paying openhandedly for Chen's schooling. As to herself, she cherished the opportunity to learn anything new, too. However, in today's society, there were not enough supports for a single parent family like theirs', neither formal nor informal ones. The situation became even worse when Chen was excluded by the urban education system, given their migrant status. For rural migrants, everything, from food to a shelter, from clothes to education, must be earned with their bare hands. In

this story, it was not that Chen's mother did not want to try. The single mother had tried hard, but she failed and was worn out. Now, she was so frustrated that she merely wanted to surrender.

CASE 2: A FATHER OF THREE OR FIVE

Dong the Oldest

Dong's family came from Henan Province. They and their relatives lived together in an isolated neighborhood in the suburban area of Daxing District (For more information on their neighborhood, please refer to Chapter 6). Dong was the oldest in this big horizontal family. Under him, there were his two younger brothers. Dong and his brothers' families shared a common characteristic, namely, they all had more than one child. In addition, the youngest ones were unexceptionally boys. Dong himself fathered three children, including two daughters and a son. This pattern was replicated in his younger brother's family, while his youngest brother only had two children. Only after getting well acquainted with the researcher, the wife of Dong the Second told her in private that in fact his brother-in-law had another two girls – his first and second born. But they were given away so as to exchange for the chance of having a boy. However unfortunately, their following two children were still daughters. It was until the fifth birth that they finally got a son. The wife of Dong the Youngest told the researcher with relief that since her second born was a boy, she did not need to have another baby. Then she added that back in her hometown, those families without a son

would be bullied by other villagers, so no matter how difficult and how expensive, villagers all regarded it worthy to have a male baby.

Dong was forty-two, but his swarthy and wrinkly face made him look older for his age. He was not accustomed to talk in front of others, so he smiled more frequently. It was felt that Dong preferred keeping his thoughts and feelings to himself. Nonetheless, his quiet personality would not challenge his absolute authority in the family. Like her husband, Mrs. Dong had a quiet and shy character, too, and so were their three children. Interestingly, everyone in this family shared the same introverted personality. But compared with her husband, Dong's wife was more amiable and easier to approach. Both of them were kind and hardworking migrants.

Dong the Oldest moved to Beijing more than ten years ago. He was among those first few who had left their rural hometown for this city. The decision of leaving, as told by him, was forcefully made by the fact that he could not feed his entire family with the crops yield on their land. At that time, his son was not born yet (Dong's explanation might hold water. A bold guess of the researcher was that they ran away from their rural hometown so that they could have another chance to have a baby). After moving to Beijing, Dong the Oldest had taken a series of jobs, such as selling fish, selling vegetable and collecting garbage. Now he worked together with his brothers and relatives who lived in the same yard, selling saplings and plants. According to him, though he had been working pretty hard, the money earned had never been sufficient enough for raising a big family. Their daily expenditure stood at 40 to 50 *yuan*, among which 10 *yuan* was for the rent, another 10 *yuan* for food, and

the rest was for the schooling of his children. At the end of every month, they could hardly have any money left. Dong claimed with absolute certainty that:

I don't have any income. Really! I don't have any income...After paying for the food and schoolings of my children, there isn't any money left (Interview with Mr. Dong, March 3, 2008).

For Dong the Oldest and his wife, their primary concerns were to bring up the three children and let them receive education. Leaving primary school before completing the fifth grade, Dong had very limited education himself, so that he wanted a different life for his children:

We can eat everything. We just want to bring them up. Our priority is their schooling. (ibid)

Another thing Dong the Oldest cared equally much was making more money. In his world, nothing was more important than having enough food to eat, a shelter to live in as well as enough money to be at his disposal. He noticed a big gap between the life of his children's and that of the urban students:

The difference between my children and urban kids is large, food, home and pocket money! The amount they spend in a single day equals to that spent by us for a whole week. I do business, so I see, after school those kids can eat mutton kebab, while our kids can't (ibid).

Rather than their migrant status, Dong attributed this difference to individual capability and luck. He did not blame others for his disadvantaged situation, instead, he believed that a brighter future must be achievable as long as he worked harder and earned more money. For him, money was the most important indicator showing whether a migrant had done well with his urban life. Living together with his relatives in the suburban area, Dong had little opportunity to connect with real urban residents. In fact, during his last ten years in Beijing, he had only made a few trips to the city's downtown areas. When asked if he considered himself well integrated into the urban environment, Dong replied in a muffled voice that he did not think so. However, rather than blaming others for the disadvantages he faced, Dong muttered that it was his own fault for not being capable enough. Dong said that some of his fellow-townsmen had made a fortune in Beijing, while he belonged to those who were less capable. As to the root reason that caused them all the problems, namely their Henan *hukou* and rural status, Dong not only generously forgiven the unfair policies, but also expected that in the future money would transform his children into urban residents:

It can't be said that (we've integrated with the life here). I don't have the abilities (ibid).

We don't have problems with our hukou. Children are not required to have residential certificate. So there is no trouble...if you are rich, isn't it true that you can buy houses? You can buy hukou too. It's just because that I am not that capable. If the children in the future have abilities, they can have urban hukou (ibid).

Even though Dong had not made a fortune in Beijing, he still preferred living here than in his rural hometown. Dong was satisfied with the better food they had now and most importantly, he was pleased with the little money left in his pocket. Dong said that as long as they were not forced to go, he would like to live in Beijing forever.

Dong's Three Children and Their Schooling

Dong's three Children all studied at the *XX Migrant Schools*. As a first year junior high student, Qin was the oldest and most diligent child in this family. Maybe because she once had a hard time living alone in the countryside, the girl cherished greatly her life in Beijing, living with her entire family. She knew that only if she behaved well would she be allowed to stay here. So, the girl worked hard, and since she was also smart, in fact the smartest in her family, she ranked among the top ten students in her class. Qin was also a member of the school's Chinese Shuimo Painting Society. However unlike Chen, she practiced painstakingly hard. After school, Qin spent more than two hours painting at the school's art studio, so that every day she had to go back home alone by bus. Quite often, when she arrived at home, others had already finished dinner. Considering the cold and dark winter nights in Daxing, it was not difficult to imagine how much hardship the girl had endured. Dong's second daughter, her younger sister Bei, used to be a member of the society, too. However, she quit not long after she started painting. On one hand, Bei was less gifted compared with her older sister. On the other hand, she was much less hard-working.

The reason why Qin could be that determined was in fact because she was in some ways much more mature than her younger sister. The girl was realistic. She understood that painting, rather than a mere hobby, was a skill which might be useful in the future. More importantly, it might be her key to the Affiliated Senior High School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, if what had been promised by her teacher was true. Qin firmly believed that there was a brighter future waiting ahead, which could be earned back by having more education. Therefore, when she saw the spark of hopes, she grasped it without sparing any effort. In terms of her personality, Qin and her father were as like as two peas, never talked much, but the stubbornness was very much self-evident. Both of them seemed to have everything planned well in their minds. When asked what kind of life she wanted, Qin said that:

I want to live in cities. I want to make a lot of money and give my parents a good life, so that they don't need to work that much. It doesn't matter in which city I live, as long as it is a city (Conversation with Qin, March 3, 2008).

Bei was twelve years old. She and Chen studied in the same class. Unlike Qin, Bei usually had no definite views of her own. Like her mother, she was accustomed to let others make arrangements for her. When asked questions about her future plans and her feeling towards her school, Bei usually would reply with a bashful smile, and then looked around for help. She was a shy and disciplined child, behaving well in class and was welcomed by her teachers and classmates, while the only headache she had was her unsatisfactory academic performance. As a fifth grade student, Bei already had problems to pass all the subjects. On one hand, she was not as gifted as her older sister. On the other hand, she had never given her mind to study in a way serious

enough, as she barely realized the significance of education. More than once, she passed her parents' words to the researcher, asking if she could find her a job later after she graduated from the *XX Migrant School*. The twelve-year-old girl merely did whatever her parents told her to do, barely thinking about what such a favor really meant to her.

Dong's youngest child, Shun, studied in grade one. This seven-year-old boy was rather strong and good-looking. Maybe because he was still young, Shun was very naughty. Sometimes, he was punished by his teachers. As a son coming after years of waiting, Shun was the hope of Dong and his wife, whereas, like Bei, this little boy was not very concerned with his study.

Dong did not know what public schools were exactly. In his understanding, there were only two types of schools – “migrant schools” and “government schools”. Migrant schools were for his children, while “government schools”, which were simply too expensive for him to afford, were for local kids. Dong learned this from his personal experience gained many years ago. It was around 2000, when he was about to find a school for Qin. He first thought about “government schools”. However, it turned out that more than 10,000 *yuan* was charged for registration. Dong was immediately frustrated and he turned back against “government schools” forever. In the end, he enrolled his daughters, and then his son, all at migrant schools:

We can't afford government schools. We can't pay for the extra fees which was about ten thousands a year... I once asked a government school around 2000. It

asked for more than ten thousands. It was too expensive, I stopped asking for information (Interview with Dong, March 3, 2008).

Qin used to have an opportunity to study at a local primary school. It was around 1999, when the girl was just about to start her first year study at a migrant school called the *Zhangbei Yucai Primary School*, but she was informed that the headmaster had run away with their tuition fees right before the new semester started. Burning with anger and anxiety, migrant parents turned to the local governments for a solution. And they were told that as long as they could pay 6,000 *yuan*, a local primary school could take in their children. But Dong did not have that amount. So he sent Qin back to Henan and the girl spent a whole year living in their rural hometown without her family.

Though enrolling his children to a migrant school had saved Dong a fortune, the money he paid was still considerable. The total charge for his three children, including tuition fees and school bus charges, was around 2000 *yuan* a semester, not including a weekly charge of 40 *yuan* for school lunch (for three children). However, Dong was already satisfied. Besides, he even felt himself lucky, because the school had arranged donations for his younger daughter for two successive years. Owing to the donations, every semester, Dong was exempted from an amount of 500 *yuan*. As to the quality of the school, Dong seemed to be satisfied, too. He believed that his children could perform as well as local kids in examinations. Also, he regarded himself a responsible father, who had done his duty and cared for his children's school performance:

I care about their school performance. I ask them to do their homework. I know their rankings at school. I won't allow them to watch TV until they finish their homework. I have never missed a parent meeting. Also, I buy exercises for them, not expensive ones but those cheaper ones (ibid).

Nonetheless, judging from Dong's own account, he seemingly did not particularly care about his children's education outcomes. In his opinion, they could go on pursuing education if they turned out to be qualified. Otherwise, it would be equally fine for them to stop whenever they earned enough credential to find a job:

They can continue their studies if they do well, if not they can just stop at the standard requirement level to get them a job (ibid).

In her fieldwork, the researcher had established a close relationship with the families of Dong and his brothers, which in turn enabled her to have some firsthand experiences of their daily life. For instance, she had had dinner with all of them; stayed overnight at their homes with their children and wives; got up together with the children in the early morning so as to catch the school bus at 6:20 a.m.; as well as joined the children when they visited their friends or went shopping in nearby markets, etc. These experiences brought about a more intimate knowledge on their everyday life, which in turn revealed the disadvantages and hardships faced by these migrant children.

Owner of a Pick-up Truck

After her fieldwork, the researcher still kept contacts with the children through emails and telephone calls. This drew her back again to them in October 2008. It was found in this visit that some changes, both unexpected and gratifying, had taken place in these families. For instance, Dong's wife had taken a new job as a babysitter, looking after a new born whose family lived nearby. This job not only saved her from selling flowers on the streets, but also brought to the family a stable monthly income of 1,000 *yuan*. Dong's wife seemed to be pleased with her contribution to her family.

Secondly, Man and Min, daughters of Dong the Second, had dropped out from the *XX Migrant School* and resumed their study at a boarding migrant school called the *Dandelion School*. As told by the two girls, their new school was different from the former one, given its high requirements on the academic performance of the students. To catch up with others, Man and Min had to put more efforts in their study. Dong the Second and his wife found that their daughters became more hardworking. Min, in particular, studied painstakingly hard. Her mother told the researcher that even on weekends, when she finally came back home from school, Min barely played around with other children, but concentrated on her homework. Upon seeing her efforts, Dong the Second and his wife told the researcher that they would consider sending her back to Henan, so that she could continue her education at a local high school in their rural hometown. It seemed that among the children living in their yard, Min and Qin were the two most determined and hardworking children. Whereas, compared to her cousin, Min was luckier, because her parents, especially her father, were more open-minded and willing to listen to their opinions. In contrast, in her cousin's family,

Dong the Oldest not only had the absolute power over everything, but also stubbornly believed that his decisions would always be correct. When asked if he had thought about any new schooling arrangement for his three children, Dong the Oldest replied with a bashful smile, saying that the quality of the *XX Migrant School* was okay and he considered it was fine for the children to continue studying there.

Yet, it was Dong the Oldest himself who had entered another stage of life. He was now the mysterious owner of a brand-new pick-up truck parked in front of their tent. This news was announced by Shun, when he was playing in the front seat. The boy was impressed by this big vehicle and was apparently proud for it was his father's new property. Standing besides the window of the driver's cab, Dong's wife gave her son a quick wink and then said that this truck actually belonged to her brother, Shun's uncle. Shun protested back several times in dissatisfaction, not understanding why his mother could have said so. But for the researcher, she simply tried to cover a fact.

Conclusion to Case 2

It was gratifying to see the family achieve a better economic situation. However, the presence of the pick-up truck also revealed that unlike what had been said by Dong the Oldest in early 2008, he actually had some savings. But the money was not spent by him in exchanging for a better education arrangement for his children. Rather than that, he considered investment in his own business much worthier and more rewarding. Obviously, Dong placed his hopes for a brighter and wealthier future on his business, whereas his three children, including the treasured son had to sacrifice

because of an insufficient education investment. No wonder Bei, his second daughter, used to pass her parents' words to the researcher, asking if she could find her a job after she graduated from the *XX Migrant School*. And no wonder their oldest daughter, Qin, had studied painstakingly hard, as she understood that rather than herself, she could depend on no one else for her schooling. Probably, unlike what had been said by them, Dong and his wife had never truly realized the influential impact of education on reshaping the fate of their children. Otherwise, they would not have overlooked the fact that the academic performance of their children could hardly be compared to that of local students.

CASE 3 AND CASE 4: OPEN-MINDED MIGRANT FATHERS FROM NORTHEAST CHINA

Case 3: Story of Li

Li, in his late 30s, moved to Beijing with his entire family in 2001. Even though the economic development of his hometown in Heilongjiang Province was fairly good, Li still believed that starting over again in Beijing was a wise and worthy move, not for any other particular reason, simply for the fact that Beijing was the place where generations of Emperors used to live. As it is now the capital city, Li considered that very likely everyone would be glad to settle down here. Compared with many other rural migrants who struggled day and night at the bottom of the society, Li could be regarded as quite well-adapted to this new urban environment. In a few years of time, he no longer needed to work for others, but became the owner of a seafood stand at a

local street market. Though such a job alone could hardly make him wealthy, by running his own business, Li was not only guaranteed more stable incomes, but also a source of endless hope for a brighter future.

Being a seafood stand owner could not spare Li from either hard work or economic pressure. Like other migrants, he spent quite a deal of energy on his business. Yet, the final outcomes were usually very limited:

The rental fees charged by the market are too high. Together with the charges for water and electricity, the total amount is more than a hundred per day. So how much can you earn? Now it will be good if the profit is five or six or seven percents. You can only get 60 or 70 yuan for every thousand turnover. How much can you sell a day (Interview with Mr. Li, April 16, 2008)?

Even though, he was openhanded with the education investment for his son. As mentioned, when the interview was taken, his son, a second grade student, was studying at a local junior high school, for which Li paid 5,000 *yuan* as the entrance fee. And he used to spend another 4,000 *yuan* to enroll his son at the best local primary school (For more details about the fees charged by local public schools, please refer to Chapter 8). In addition, Li also hired a private tutor for his son. For him, these investments would be worthy as long as they could pave his son's way to a university. As he said that:

I want my child to be something in the future. I don't care about my economic situation. All I want to do is to enroll my child at the best school to receive the best education (ibid).

So, he found his son a local primary school, he also made sure that the school he found was the best of its kind:

I think that I need to send my child to the best school. In Huang Village, the No. 2 Primary School is the best. So I sent my child there. I didn't care about how much money I have to pay for it, I completely accept it. No matter how much it charged, I sent him there. When he graduated from primary school, he wanted to go to the No. 7 Junior High School, as it is the best middle school here. Maybe he was lucky, he passed the entrance examination. Isn't it just an issue about money (ibid)?

His son was his only child. Li did not have any complaint for this. In contrast, he was rather contented with only having one child. In his opinion, it would be more beneficial for the child to have all their attention and supports, in particular when the parents were not rich enough to afford more children:

I have a boy. People from Heilongjiang Province are rather open-minded. They always look at the bright side of things. If you only had one child and you bought an apple for him, the child would have the whole apple to himself. But, if you had two children, both of them could only have half of the apple. And, if you had three or five children, each of them could only have one bite. Even one child is hard to afford, how many more do you want to have? If I had three or five children, even if

I begged for god-damn food, I would have died before they got enough to eat (ibid)!

Li did not have any relative in Beijing, but he had never been short of friends who also moved to this city from other places. However, not all his friends had attached as much importance as he did to the education arrangements for their children. Therefore, the schools they arranged, according to Li, could not be compared to the school he found for his child:

As to my friends who also come from other places, the majority of them, about 70 to 80 percents, have sent their children to schools like the Yihezhuang Primary School. They are not exactly private schools (He referred to migrant schools). They are also public schools. But my son's school is under the administration of the municipal government. What about those schools? They are schools in the rural areas. You just have a look at Yihezhuang or Dawa, they are simply rural schools (ibid).

When asked why many parents had simply enrolled their children in migrant schools, Li explained that:

As to the reasons, in my opinion, firstly it has something to do with their family situation. Secondly, some parents do not care paying attention to their children, thinking that when they reach eighteen, they can do whatever they could. They can start working if it is necessary. As to the schooling arrangements, some people simply won't think about its impact on the future of their children (ibid).

In addition, Li also identified a difference between local and migrant parents, saying that sometimes the latter paid less attention to their children's education arrangements:

If the parents are coming from a rural background, they might attach less importance to the education of their children, while urban parents would especially value the education arrangements for their children. Isn't it true that all of them want their children to become something (ibid)?

As a junior high school graduate, Li learned from his own experience that a person would only be restricted to under-paid manual jobs, if he or she does not have a fair education background. Their situation would only become even worse in a highly competitive city like Beijing. Having suffered from the disadvantages caused by his lack of proper education, Li sincerely hoped that by receiving more education, his son could have a new fate:

I graduated from a junior high school, so that I have to work around the clock. I will be exhausted at the end of a day. However, in the end I simply can't make any money. We don't need to mention anything else, but how realistic nowadays society is. If you have a university degree, you can earn money simply by moving your mouth...For those people like me, it's difficult to earn money even if you work hard. They'll pay you if they like, otherwise, they simply won't pay you (ibid).

I have worked my entire life for others and I have experienced all these hardships. I don't want my child to follow my footsteps (ibid).

Therefore, Li had looked far into the future of his son. In his plan, the boy would not merely attend a university, but should be a famous one. After graduation, he would find a white collar job. In order to realize his plan, Li took every step cautiously. By sending his son to a local junior high school, Li had successfully completed his current task. Later, he needed to consider how and where to find his son a boarding senior high school in their rural hometown. Quality of the education service was still his primary concern. As he stated that:

After his graduation at this junior high school, since we don't have Beijing hukou, and he isn't allowed to take the high school entrance examination here, I plan to send him back to our hometown. Because no one else can look after him, I'll find him a boarding school where he will spend three years. Nowadays, boarding schools are run by individuals, the quality of the education service is rather good (ibid).

Li was introduced by Wang, the researcher's temporary motor-tricycle driver, as one of his fellow-townsmen whose son was studying at a local public school. His tall figure, humor, and his strong accent all reminded others again and again of his Northeastern origin. At first, Li was reluctant to waste time on a complete stranger who could not offer anything but asking sensitive questions. It was Wang and his cigarettes that effectively persuaded him into giving up his mental defense and be cooperative. Later, since all the questions were about the education arrangements for his son, an issue of his primary concern, Li turned out to be increasingly excited and involved. In the end, to the researcher's surprise, he said with emotion that if the

researcher could really help to solve the problem, he would express thanks to her on behalf of other migrants.

Case 4: Story of Wang

In another corner of Daxing, there was another migrant father who also came from Northeast China. Like Li, Wang also only had a son, who was now studying at a public school in Gu'an. Gu'an is located in Hebei Province. It is the closest small town on the other side of the boundaries between Beijing and Heibe. Benefiting from the continuous southward advance of the urban development of Beijing, real estate in Gu'an starts showing signs of prosperity. Wang rented a small property besides one of the busiest streets in Haizijiao, selling hot-hot-hot, a typical Sichuan style snack (All kinds of food, such as meat, vegetables and tofu, etc, boiled in hot and spicy soup). Because of the good flavor and the satisfactory volume, Wang's hot-hot-hot had won the favor of those living nearby. Therefore, even though the scale of his business was small, it was rather prosperous. Since he was too busy to take care of the restaurant alone, he hired two or three helpers. Most probably they were his relatives, and the oldest one among them might be his son's grandfather.

It was natural to get to know Wang, as the researcher and some of her students were the regular customers of his small restaurant. Finally one day, she brought forward to him questions about the education arrangements for his child. It was not because he was too occupied to answer her questions, as usually Wang was amiable, willing to chat with his customers. But like most migrant parents met in this research,

when asked about taking a formal interview and signing the consent form, his eyes were instantly filled with doubts and hesitation, as if an interview of such would cause him devastating consequences. After a good while of explanation, Wang eventually agreed to sign the consent form and take the interview, however, skepticism was still all over his face. Owing to her understanding towards his worries, the researcher was grateful for his sharing of personal experience.

Wang said that the decision of finding his son a school in Gu'an was basically made based on two considerations. Firstly, Gu'an was not very far away, as a single bus trip between it and Huang village would only cost about half an hour. Secondly, the school had a boarding sector, which could provide accommodation to those students whose family did not have enough time to look after them. So, his son lived at the school during the week and traveled back home for the weekend. It sounded pretty hard for a little boy, but Wang said that it was the best choice he could make. The reason why he insisted finding his child a local public school was because he was unsatisfied with the quality of migrant schools. When mentioning migrant schools nearby the neighborhood, Wang gave a disdainful look, saying that the quality of those migrant schools was simply awful, including the *XX Migrant School*. Like Li, Wang had high expectation for his son, hoping that one day his boy could find himself a position in this metropolitan city.

Conclusion: Case 3 and Case 4

The stories of Li and Wang revealed the existence of another type of migrant parents. On one hand, they were not under the negative influence of the outworn feudal concept which regards sons as superior to daughters. On the other hand, they had realized the importance of education and would like to pay whatever cost for a quality education for their children. Owing to their efforts, their children were studying at local public schools, which, as expected by them, would build a more solid foundation for their children's future success.

CASE 5: A TEENAGER AT HIS FIRST INTERSECTION OF LIFE

The Confused Teenager

Peng's family moved to Beijing from Liaoning Province about four years ago. His older sister arrived here earlier and found him the *XX Migrant School*. Unlike their urban counterparts who were now exposed to the huge pressure caused by the approaching senior high school entrance examination, Peng and his classmates, though also in their last year of studies, were rather unoccupied and idling. Since they did not need to take the examination in Beijing, attending school at this last moment became a mere formality, so was teaching meant to their teachers. The majority of the students were absent-minded in class, as they had no mood for learning. They were idle all day, which was a real waste of time. In fact, most of them had already got a vague idea of what they would do after graduation. However, this did not necessarily

mean that they knew clearly what they wanted from their own future. On the contrary, they were very much confused and perplexed, unable to see clearly the uncertainties lying ahead. Peng caught the attention of the researcher in her first English class by his thoughtfulness, and in particular, by his confusion. The following was what he had written on a piece of paper, explaining his expectations on his future:

To be frank, I don't know what to do! Go to a vocational school, but I don't know what I can study. So, I feel quite depressed. I am not sure about anything! Teacher, you had chosen a wrong school. The school is very bad. Teacher, if I have any problem that you don't like, please don't mind (A note handed in by Peng in the first class).

It turned out that many of Peng's classmates were also disturbed by a similar kind of confusion. Given the unavailability of educational opportunity, unlike their urban counterparts whom, most likely, would be admitted by senior high schools, migrant children very often had to cope with difficult questions such as where they should go or what they should do at an unreasonably young age. They were barely grown-ups, but teenagers, however, the decisions they were about to make or the arrangements they were about to accept might have a far-reaching impact on their lives. Even though he had no idea about what he would like to study later, Peng knew that his parents would find him a local vocational school and choose for him the most appropriate major, which would be good for his future.

His Mother's Headache

Peng's mother earned a living by taking care of a small laundry opened by a local resident in a neighborhood in Hiazijiao (For more information on the neighborhood and their living condition, please refer to Chapter 6). As someone who did odd jobs and only earned a monthly salary slightly more than 1,000 *yuan*, Peng's father could not contribute much to the family finance. Unlike most migrants interviewed in this research, Peng's mother did not agree that moving to Beijing had improved their living standard. On the contrary, now she had more pressure than before:

I can't feel any improvement. I just think that I have more pressure. Because now if we can't earn money, we won't have food to eat... Our incomes are less than our expenditures. My two children need to go to school. Isn't it costly to feed the entire family? I feel that the life back in our hometown is much better. After finishing the work on the farm, I can take a rest and chat with others. My current job is rather tiresome (Interview with Mrs. Shao, April 7, 2008).

Even though the pressure caused by living in Beijing only reminded her of the relaxing living style she used to have in the countryside, Peng's mother still chose to settle down in Beijing for the sake of her children. She understood that Peng and his sister would never be happy again if they had to live in their rural hometown and work on the farm. Besides, she agreed that a metropolitan city like Beijing would provide young people with more opportunities and a more interesting life, which would be beyond the wildest imagination of rural villagers. So far, she had seen some preliminary rewards for her sacrifices. Her daughter, who was a couple of years older

than Peng, was rather considerate and diligent. The girl had spent a year studying accounting and just passed the examination for becoming a bookkeeper. Started in February this year, the girl had been studying at a local college for the accountant qualification. Peng's mother felt both proud and sorry for her daughter, because the girl, in order to achieve her ambitious goal, had to work her way through all these courses. However, she understood that for those young people striving for a brighter future in the labor market, fair education background and competitive vocational qualifications were indispensable:

If you don't have education, it will be rather difficult for you to find a job. My daughter actually can do all kinds of jobs, as she has started working at a fairly young age. But since she doesn't have those certificates, she can't take the jobs (ibid).

In view of the demanding and realistic side of the urban life, Peng's mother originally also had high expectations for her son. She admitted that as long as the boy could study harder, she had been prepared for investing more on his education. However, the constant poor academic performance of Peng had eventually persuaded her into giving up. She realized that her son was not good material for studying. Therefore, she thought that probably some practical skills would be more suitable for him. In private, she liked to compare Peng with her nephew, who was one year younger than Peng but did perfectly well in his studies. She bitterly hoped that Peng could be as comforting as that boy:

As long as he could study well, we'd like to do everything to support him. My younger sister's son is one year younger than him. That boy studied in the second year of a junior high school. He studies so well. To tell you the truth, when I see that boy, I feel so envious... Just looking at him makes me feel envious. You have a look at my son! After coming back from school, he will only watch TV or play outside. Or otherwise, he is idling all the time. Before moving to Beijing, I said that if Peng was like this, what would be the point for us to spend several thousand on him, if he did nothing but playing around. If he won't make a change, I really don't want him to go on studying. To be frank, I want him to learn some skills (ibid).

Coming from a big family, Peng's mother had never been short of support from other relatives. Her brother-in-law, a university graduate who was now also living in Beijing, was her reliable think-tank. Enrolling Peng to a local vocational school was his suggestion. Majored in electronic engineering himself, her brother-in-law suggested that Peng should be an electrician. Anyway, both of them were rather realistic, not wishfully thinking the boy could make a fortune in the future. What they wanted for him was an ordinary and stable life:

His uncle said that those who graduated from vocational schools could earn over a thousand (per month). My youngest sister has also brought her nephew here. That boy doesn't have any training before or any certificate. He gets paid 800 yuan (per month) as an electrician. It said that 1,300 yuan is for those vocational school graduates, while 1,800 yuan for those who are experienced. If he can learn well, he can find a job like this. I won't expect him to earn 3,000 or 5,000 yuan. It

is simply impossible. As long as he can earn one or two thousands, it will be fine. That's not too much here. But in our hometown, it's rather good already (ibid).

Looking back into the past few years, Peng's mother could not feel any improvement taken place in the area of education for migrant children, or at least, such a good thing did not happen to her. As far as she remembered, when they first arrived in Beijing, the miscellaneous fees charged by local public schools were beyond their affordability. After three years, when she once again thought of finding Peng a local public school, to her surprise, the fees not only were still being charged, but the amount was even higher. Since compulsory education was already free in the countryside, she used to think of sending Peng back to their rural hometown to attend senior high school. However, she eventually canceled this plan. Warned by her straightforward relative, a teacher in their hometown, it would be a dream for Peng to catch up with others given his current academic performance:

I've thought of sending him back to our hometown. But my brother-in-law, who is a teacher, said that a student like him could hardly catch up with others, as schools at my hometown are very strict and demanding. If he had studied harder, I would have sent him back. I wouldn't have allowed him to idle around. But he doesn't do well in his studies, so that I have no other choice but let him finish his studies here first (ibid).

While Peng's mother was taking the interview, Peng's classmates came to their home, asking if the boy could join them playing outside. Peng immediately gave his mother a smile, and before seeing her shaking her head abjectly, he had already run

away. Peng's mother sighed in helplessness, admitting that her son was not a good material for studying.

Conclusion to Case 5

Adolescence is a difficult period of life, often characterized by struggles for individual independence. As an adolescent boy, Peng was both confused and not quite happy. By probing into the very source of his confusion and depression, it could be found that the boy had suffered from an insufficient sense of control over his own fate. Peng understood that he should more or less bear some responsibility for his own disappointing performance, because if he had studied harder, he would not have become a complete headache for his mother. However, at the same time, he vaguely felt that it was inappropriate to blame him for all these disappointing results. As explained by him, he used to get good grades at the school in their hometown. It was after he moved to Beijing that he started to care less about his studies. On one hand, the new school was not as strict as the former one. On the other hand, its teaching quality was merely average. As time went by, Peng became less interested in studying. In the end, he fooled around every day and wasted a great deal of precious time.

Moreover, Peng himself had the least control over his own life. Peng felt that he had never been in real charge. For instance, it was under others' arrangement that he left his hometown for Beijing. Also, because of others' arrangement, he was enrolled in the *XX Migrant School*. Soon, as arranged by others, he would be sent to a local vocational school and be trained as an electrician. However, in his opinion, all these

arrangements made by others had not maximize his interests but caused him a chain of troubles. So, how about those arrangements to be made sooner or later? Would they be good for him? Standing at the first intersection of his life, Peng felt himself caught up in a great deal of uncertainty.

CONCLUSION: FOUR TYPES OF MIGRANT PARENTS

Lacking proper education is a problem commonly faced by migrant families on their move. Usually the general public attributes the disappointing education provision for migrant children to the exclusive *hukou* system and the unequal public education system. However, it was discovered in this research that when coming to the specific cases of different migrant families, in addition to the *hukou* system and the public education services, another stakeholder, namely migrant parents themselves, also exerted an influential impact on the education realization of migrant children. In fact, the hardships faced by migrant children could either be sharpened by the wrong decisions made by their parents, or relieved to the minimum by their efforts and clever moves. In this research, the researcher had met dozens of migrant parents who came from a variety of backgrounds and held a series of viewpoints. By analyzing their differences and similarities, migrant parents could be conveniently categorized into four different groups in light of their attitudes and manners in handling education problems of their children.

First of all, Chen's mother represents those migrant parents who were not only influenced by the negative impact associated with their migrant status, but also

suffered from individual problems such as unemployment, low salaries, problematic parent-children relationship or failed marriage. Though, nowadays, these problems were common even among urban families, their lack of formal and informal supports made migrant families more fragile in face of these problems. This in turn would jeopardize the education arrangement for migrant children. In the first story, Chen's mother experienced a failed marriage years ago. However, even now she was still shrouded in its negative impact. Owing to her lack of education and experience, she could not find a better job which could bring more income to their family. On the other hand, the hatred caused by the failed marriage had cut off the bond between them and their relatives, which meant that they could barely get any support from them, either. Therefore, Chen's mother had to face up to the huge pressure of raising the family alone. But, as a young and careless girl, Chen failed to be more considerate. Instead, her disappointing school performance had further chilled her mother's heart. As a result, Chen's mother wanted to give up and send Chen away. With this case, the researcher meant to say that, sometimes, in order to help migrant children, it is necessary to first render assistance to their troubled parents, as most choices regarding the education arrangements for migrant children were made by their parents. If troubled by their own limitations and problems, they might unwisely make incorrect decisions, which will lead to less opportunity for their children to have a more promising future.

Secondly, Dong the Oldest and his relatives in the second story represent another category of migrant parents who bought blindly the feudal ideology of boys being more valuable than girls. Usually, this type of parents would not stop giving birth to more babies until they got a son. Raising a big family in itself was an expensive

business, which left them with little energy to think about the education arrangement for their children. More often than not, when the miscellaneous fees charged by local public schools went beyond their affordability, they simply turned to migrant schools for an alternative, but not insisting on the quality of the education service. As told by Mrs. G, only seven students in her class were the only child, while the other forty-two students all had brothers or sisters. The connection between the number of children in a migrant family and the schooling arrangement for them should be more than a mere coincidence. Ironically, even boys in such families were less likely to have good education, as their parents simply overlooked its importance. Nonetheless, under such a circumstance, it would always be the daughters who sacrificed most because of the son preference tradition particularly apparent for people with rural origins. When sons were supposed to take over everything from their parents, daughters were just expected to contribute to their families by helping out with the family expenses. Rather than others, it was migrant parents from this category who would deeply affect the future of their children.

Thirdly, Li and Wang in the third and fourth story represent those migrant parents who were wiser and more sensible, or sensitive, to their children's education need. They attached a great deal of importance to the education arrangement for their children. Even though they might also have various limitations, these parents would surrender their last resource on the education for their children, as they believed that a fair education background would pave their children's way to a brighter future. A common characteristic shared by these parents was that they would rather pay for the high fees charged by local public schools, but not send their children to affordable migrant schools. In addition, maybe because they were more open-minded, these

parents usually would only have one child, or at most two. Therefore, they could focus their attention, energy, and investment as well on their children and provide them with the best they could offer. They are also more likely to face up with the troublesome of hopping around until a satisfactory arrangement could be eventually made. As a result, migrant children from these families were most likely to get access to better education, which in the end would be their obvious advantage when compared with their rural pals.

Finally, Peng's mother in the last story represented a considerable number, if not most, of migrant parents, who aspired to educate their children, but in front of obstacles, they simply did not insist. Hashim (2005, pp.17-18) found that in these households, education was seen as one among a range of means of securing their families and their children's long-term welfare. Consequently, the ability and desire to educate all their children was tempered by a child's perceived interest and scholastic ability, by parents' assessment of education as a viable livelihood strategy, and by the need to secure and protect the household's immediate well-being, which might require a reduction in expenditure, such as those associated with educating a child, or a need for labor to ensure subsistence. Thus, whilst most children, initially, were sent to school, as they grew older, and therefore became both more productive and more responsible for maintaining themselves, conflicts arose around which children should continue to go to school and how costs would be met. Consequently, children became increasingly likely either to choose or to be asked to drop out, or forced to, as a result of parents' withholding monies for school levies, uniforms, and so on. Children also made conscious decisions around whether the pursuit of education was in their own long-term interests, particularly since they were increasingly able to pursue their own

work for an independent income and to be expected to cover some of the costs of their education. Thus, a child's own assessment of education as a means of securing his or her future wellbeing might encourage them to drop out or, alternatively, to go to extraordinary lengths to pursue their education (ibid.). Most households, therefore, adopted a strategy of selecting only some children to go to school— those who are most willing, able and determined – while other children were kept at home to ensure the availability of the necessary labor to secure livelihoods and assets (ibid). As to those migrant children who do not show special interests in their studies, forced by the reality, their parents would turn to some more realistic alternatives. A frequently selected choice was to enroll them to local vocational schools to learn some practical skills. These parents would not have impracticable expectation on their children. Instead they would be satisfied as long as their children could find a suitable job and lead an ordinary but stable life in Beijing.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, stories of several migrant parents and their children have been presented, based on which four categories of migrant parents have been identified. From their stories it can be found that in addition to those institutional barriers, such as the rigid *hukou* system and the exclusive public education system, individual choices of migrant parents also play an important role in deciding the education realization of their children. While sensible and wise choices might counteract the disadvantages faced by their children, wrong and problematic beliefs and arrangements might bring to their children even more bleak prospects. Therefore, in

order to improve the education provision of migrant children, in addition to constantly pushing forward the implementation of progressive policies and regulations, education, training as well as assistance aimed at migrant parents should also be organized and provided.

CHAPTER X

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: PUSHING FORWARD VS HOLDING BACK

Another stake holder closely involved in the issue of education for migrant children was the local governments, who were in charge of the formulation and implementation of relevant policies and regulations at the local level. Therefore, this chapter, based on the interviews with two government officials, tries to explore the official stands on both migrant schools in particular and on the issue of education for migrant children in general. Again, government officials and government employees involved will only be addressed by their initials, so as to keep their identities perfectly confidential.

INTERVIEWS OF MR. L

Mr. L, in his early forties, was the director of a department in the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. The domain of his work focused on the supervision and management of the city's basic education system. Regarded by many, Mr. L was a capable young official who had a bright future waiting ahead, as his career had been steadily and smoothly rising. Before entering the commission six years ago, he taught at a local key high school. When he left for the government position, he was already one of the several vice headmasters of that school,

responsible for the day-to-day teaching practices. Since the researcher was once his student, Mr. L accepted the invitation for an interview. However, as the way he put it, he merely wanted to share some of his thoughts on this problem. He refused to sign the consent form or have the conversation recorded, saying that only with approvals from the higher authorities, was he allowed being interviewed. Mr. L also reminded the researcher at least twice not to mix up his personal understandings with the governments' stands. It was clear that Mr. L was an experienced and skillful speaker, as he could answer the questions almost without thinking. His vocabulary was neutral, his tone bureaucratic, and his manner diplomatic. These gave rise to the feeling that it could either be his habit or his strategy to avoid giving clear-cut opinions by offering lengthy answers.

The First Interview

The first interview with Mr. L was taken in July 2007, over the phone. It was initiated by the article of Han in the book *Blue Book of Education 2006*. As mentioned in the Prologue, Han offered a fresh angle to examine the incident of migrant school closing-down. Her findings showed that migrant schools were not as weak as they were usually portrayed by the papers. On the contrary, when they were cornered by the local government, they usually could find themselves some space to get around. The first interview with Mr. L helped clarifying some questions generated from Han's paper.

First of all, as to the question whether public schools in Beijing were willing to take in migrant students, Mr. L firmly answered that no matter they were in favor of

this idea or not, they must receive migrant children, because this order came from the central governments which left no room for maneuver. Mr. L talked about an overall scheme, in which it was the local schools that were entrusted with the responsibility to educate these children. Besides, public schools were also expected to assist them in better integrating to the urban life. However, he added that, under the current situation, public schools were faced with enormous pressure coming both from the central and the local governments. For them, the one and only solution was to adjust their attitudes accordingly and face up to the reality, as there could only be more and more migrant children coming to Beijing in the foreseeable future.

Secondly, as to the reasons why migrant children were not welcome at local public schools, Mr. L explained on behalf of these schools that the hesitation of taking in migrant children came from the uncertainties laid in the attitudes of local parents, which had to be treated with due caution, since even though most people agreed that migrant children ought to be educated, not every one of them favored the idea of sharing their children's classrooms with migrant children. The official compared the current situation to the former U.S. experience and said that in their fights against racial segregation in 1960s, U.S. public schools served as a forefront to integrate black students to the mainstream culture and society. An increasing number of black students were enrolled at public schools. However, the coming of black students triggered the flight of the white. Together with the resettlement of white families to the suburbs, many schools in the downtown areas were abandoned to the black and they started running on an increasingly thinner budget, which in turn caused the deterioration of their overall quality. With this story, the official gently hinted that the U.S. experience might be put on stage again in nowadays China, if the issue of education for migrant children was not properly addressed. He also pointed out that at

present one of the predominant goals of the local governments was to eliminate the gaps between schools of different ranks. Due to historical reasons, a ranking system existed in the education system, causing alarming distance between the best and worst public schools. Since those gaps were no longer desired, now the local governments tried very hard to have the ranking system removed by more equally allocating various resources. This had been one of their priorities over the past few years. Mr. L invited the researcher to imagine what consequences there would be if migrant children concentrated at some local schools. He implied that very likely those schools would be abandoned by local students and their families, ended up with deteriorated quality. For this potential risk, many local schools hesitated.

Thirdly, as to the question if the local government wanted to keep migrant schools, Mr. L replied immediately that they in fact did favor the idea of keeping migrant schools, and they wished an official authorization, as long as they could improve their quality and reach official standard, which so far was still far out of their reach. Some schools were “*Fuqi Dian*” (Stores run by married couples). The others were run by those who originally sold fruits and vegetables by the streets. For them, running a migrant school could bring in at least equivalent profits like their former businesses. Mr. L said that in many cases, they only cared about the economic interests. With such an attitude, their schools, at best, were day nurseries for migrant children, but not schools in real sense.

Finally, Mr. L shared with the researcher some factors which had made the issue further complicated. First of all, the local governments were troubled by the uncertain number of migrant children about to come to Beijing in the following years. As admitted by him, it was not an issue for them to offer free education to the present

420,000 migrant children. However, as he said, the situation would be “scary” if the number jumped to 520,000 or 620,000. He seemed to imply that if the local governments really would obey the policies and public schools take in all migrant children, this would in turn become an attractive incentive to encourage more children to come, which would eventually become an unbearable burden for the local governments. Secondly, their researches identified a considerable number of students who were not real migrant children. They moved here for attending schools, as it was widely known that the education quality of Beijing was more superior to that of many other places, especially superior to the education services in the countryside. Since more and more parents had realized the important impact of education on their children’s future development, some of them came up with the idea of sending their children to Beijing schools. But at the same time, they worked either in their original towns or elsewhere. The local governments found in their researches that some local authorities of other places had encouraged this kind of educational migration, so as to ease their own responsibility in providing education services. Mr. L said that educational migration would only become more popular in the future. Thirdly, he was concerned with what would happen when migrant children grew up. Very likely, they would compete with local young people in the job market. This worry increased as no one so far could predict how employment would be shared among them. In case disaffection broke out in the society for the fierce competition and the lack of jobs, the stability of the city would be at risk.

To conclude, the first interview with Mr. L helped to draw a more complete picture of the situation. As the saying goes: “There is much to be said on both sides”, when reports written from the perspectives of migrant schools flooded the media, it was at least necessary for the local governments to be able to explain for themselves.

After all, to manage a heavily populated city is not an easy task, and they might have their own concerns. Moreover, the example of the U.S. experience reminded that to better integrate migrants to the mainstream society, it bears importance to first prepare the local residents for such a change. A favorable social environment that features more fairness, leniency and acceptance is utterly needed to achieve this.

The Second Interview

The second interview with Mr. L took place in May 2008, at a conference room of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. To arrange an interview with a busy official was difficult, especially when the research was on a sensitive topic. But he finally agreed to squeeze out some time to talk to the researcher. His diplomatic manner did not change at all, but this time, Mr. L allowed the researcher to make a record. Apart from him, Mr. J, a young man working under him, was also present, as education for migrant children was told to be within his remit.

A Special Product of a Special Period of Time

Mr. L started the interview by asking about the situation at the *XX Migrant School*. Knowing that the researcher had spent three months staying there to collect information, he asked for the number of students, the size of the school, the qualification of the teachers, and so on. However, the information could not remind him the school at once. Sitting next to him, Mr. J said that he had been to the school once and met the Headmaster:

I have been to that school once. My impression on it was that its Headmaster complained about the hardships in front of everyone...If you go there to have a look and have a personal contact with the Headmaster, you will consider him sort of strange.

On hearing this, Mr. L's memory was awakened, as he replied that:

I feel like having met with someone like that before, someone who complained about how hard it was, making bows and shaking hands all the time.

If it were not for the manner of the Headmaster, Mr. L might have already forgotten him and his school. It felt as if even this well-known school was not paid close attention to by the local governments, let alone the less famous ones. One possible explanation for their oversight might be the fact that they simply did not regard migrant schools an appropriate type of schooling. As deemed by the local governments, migrant schools were merely a kind of special product for a special period of time, which would disappear naturally sooner or later. Besides, Mr. L seemed to be reluctant to treat migrant schools as a component of the urban education system which, according to him, only consisted of two parts – public schools and civil-run schools. Migrant schools, belonging to neither of these two types, were hardly permanent:

In the education system, we believe that migrant schools are only a special product of a special period of time. We don't regard them official or permanent.

In our compulsory education system, there are only two types of education services, one is public education and the other is civil-run education. In the strict

sense, migrant schools for sure are not run by the governments. In terms of their operation, they are more like run by individuals, and thus they seem to belong to the civil-run education. However, they do not have the features shared by real civil-run schools. In the stage of compulsory education, the quality of the education services provided by civil-run schools should be higher than the basic services offered by public schools, so that people could choose the services they prefer. Otherwise, providing compulsory education should be the responsibility of the governments and it ought to be free of charge.

Since they were neither free of charge, nor were they able to provide a service as good as that being offered by civil-run schools, migrant schools belonged to neither of these two categories. As told by Mr. L, the governments had never changed their attitude towards migrant schools. However, their biggest tasks in 2008 were the approaching Olympic Games and the 17th CPC National Congress, for which a favorable social environment was needed while any negative report was undesired. It was under this backdrop that the local governments slowed down their speed in dealing with migrant schools:

Since the very beginning, we have long adhered to the principle that public schools should play the main role in educating migrant children. In regards to migrant schools, we have also insisted on the principle that some of them should be merged with other migrant schools, some closed, and the others granted official status. The overall plan has always been like this, while the only difference is that from 2006 to 2008, we have adopted different approaches to address the issue. Also, the pace of our actions is different, because, from 2006 to 2008, the two major tasks of Beijing are the Olympic Games and the 17th National Congress.

Much work need to be done, so we have adjusted the pace of our work (towards migrant schools). Nonetheless, our fundamental policies and plans are all the same, that is, public schools should shoulder the major responsibility in educating migrant children.

Thanks to these two historical events, migrant schools earned themselves a precious time to recover from the effects of the incident of school closing-down.

The Lack of Efficient Supervision

Moreover, Mr. L seemed to have reservation on the quality of migrant schools. As he said, problems might commonly exist there, though they did not know in details, because both their status and the existing condition did not allow them to carry out more exploratory researches. The information they knew was reported by migrant schools themselves, including their incomes, expenditures, payments for teachers, services offered to students, and so on. He would not rule out the possibility that the information they offered was not partially fake:

In fact, we have got the feeling that problems might exist at migrant schools. But we don't know in detail.

It is certain that the problems of these schools would be dealt with step by step. But the problems might have already been common even in those authorized ones. More or less, they have problems of such.

Mr. L attributed the problems of migrant schools to their ambiguous status, which had excluded them from official supervision and management. Besides, migrant schools were allowed to handle their finances by themselves, which meant that they were given a financial freedom which was no less than that given to civil-run schools. With this financial autonomy, they could decide their own charges in line with the costs, and there would not be the so-called miscellaneous fees at migrant schools. Mr. L admitted that their finance was in a gray area:

The reason why it is like this is because in the past few years there was not any strict supervision or management over the financial situation or the teaching activities of migrant schools.

For administrative departments, it is not their duty to supervise the finance of civil-run schools. Therefore, when being regarded as civil-run schools, migrant schools are not under the supervision of the local government in regards to the tuition fees they collect. The amount is decided in line with their costs. You can check the law on civil-run education. The law has granted school owners or legal persons a great deal of space. As long as they do not evade taxation, they can manage their accounts by themselves. Therefore, at civil-run schools, there are not the so-called miscellaneous fees, nor is there any standard on the tuition fees charged. From this viewpoint, migrant schools, even those authorized ones, are in a gray area.

The lack of proper supervision on migrant schools allowed them to operate in a grey area. Under this circumstance, the interests of migrant families and migrant students might be jeopardized even without being known by the outsiders.

“Quasi-public Schools”

Thirdly, as to the measures the local governments might adopt to deal with migrant schools, Mr. L said that they would not rule out the possibility of turning some of them into public schools. By this he meant that some migrant schools would be integrated into the urban public education system. In regards to concrete methods, Mr. L suggested that the government might keep the qualified ones and gradually take over their bills:

If the school owners really have a sense of social responsibility, then under some certain arrangements, it is possible for them to keep their schools. You can pay some attention to the situation in Shanghai. Shanghai has already adopted this method. The government will gradually take over the bills of migrant schools and be responsible for their operational and maintenance costs. At the same time, tuition fees would be abolished. As long as you are responsible and willing to run a school, you just try your best to make it good. And then, it is possible that these schools might be turned into “quasi-public schools”, which eventually might become public ones.

However, Mr. L then added that it would be difficult to carry out this idea, because firstly, very few migrant schools nowadays were qualified enough for the official authorization; secondly, because of the economic profits of running schools, seldom a school owner would like to have his school taken over by the local governments:

There are obstacles. Maybe you have already noticed that these schools have become an interest group. In the name of helping the governments to shoulder the responsibility of educating migrant children, in fact, these school owners are going after their own interests. Therefore, our readjustment will unavoidably affect their profits. That's why they have insisted on their positions and put up fierce resistance to our proposal, and that's also why they have made good use of the media coverage. All these are motivated by the interests.

Mr. L once again mentioned the incident of migrant schools closing-down in Haidian District, which for him was a fine example illustrating how fiercely migrant school owners would fight for their interests. According to him, at that time relevant local schools were already prepared to take in those migrant students and the governments had made financial arrangements. However, out of their expectation, in face of the threats to their interests, migrant school owners spontaneously united and obstructed the implementation of the order in every possible way:

Migrant school owners tried whatever they could to stop the order from being implemented. For instance, since it is common that the school owners and the student's families came from the same origins, they just made good use of the trust of their countrymen and persuaded them not to send their children to public schools.

Ending the semester in advance and avoiding giving the government's notice to migrant parents were said to be the other tricks played by school owners, so as not to lose their student sources and keep their schools. But those migrant children involved in the incident lost a precious chance to study at local public schools for free.

Conclusion

The interviews with Mr. L shed lights on the official attitudes and interpretation towards migrant schools in particular and the issue of education for migrant children in general. All in all, migrant schools, as deemed by the local governments, were merely a special product of a particular period of time. Rather than a recognized schooling arrangement, they were a temporary compromise made by the governments at this critical juncture. In their overall scheme, it was local public schools that were expected to take up the responsibility of educating migrant children. Since their actions towards migrant schools were held back by the 2008 Olympic Games and the 17th National Congress, the local governments might start dealing with migrant schools sooner or later in the Post-Olympics era. Moreover, the lessons they learned from the negative impact of the incident of migrant school closing-down might also make their future actions appear to be more considerate and acceptable.

INTERVIEW OF MR. Z

Impression of Mr. Z

Mr. Z, in his 60s, was an official recently retired from the *Chaoyang Education Commission*. His looked tough and stern. But in fact, he was a nice and warm-hearted person. He said that it was a pleasure to communicate with young people and help them with their meaningful researches. His forty years' service in the education system made him an experienced educator and administrative staff. He also had rich knowledge on the issue of education for migrant children, because he was among the

officials who had been confronted with the problem since the very end of 1990s. After his retirement, Mr. Z was re-employed by the commission as a member of a research team, which, as he told, was to make some kind of contribution over his remaining years. The interview was taken in May 2008, in a conference room borrowed by him from a local primary school. Unlike Mr. L, Mr. Z signed the consent form without hesitation. However, he added with due caution that he did not want his remaining impact and his responses to cause any trouble to the education commission:

Even though I am retired, my status still means some certain influence. What worries me most is that my responses will have a negative impact on the work of the Chaoyang Education Commission. That would be no good. (My responses) should be beneficial to their work. Our opinions and our words should be in the interests of the education development of the Chaoyang District. This is what I call a responsible attitude (Interview with Mr. Z, May 13, 2008).

Clearly, he was loyal to the commission for which he had served for decades.

Passive Involvement at the Early Stage

According to Mr. Z, the issue of education for migrant children did not attract much of their attention at the beginning. On one hand, at that time the number of migrants in Chaoyang District was rather low. On the other hand, as the unwritten law which prevailed in the government system goes: “As long as the people do no report, the governments would not interfere.” Since there was not any report on this problem, the commission regarded it unnecessary for them to take the initiative in

studying this newly emerged phenomenon. Mr. Z said that the common practice in the governments was that the lower authorities would passively wait for instructions from the higher authorities, without which, the lower authorities would not act on their own:

The problem was not as serious as it has been in recent years. In the past, though we were aware of its existence, we didn't list it on our agenda, just as the saying goes, "As long as the people do not report, the governments would not interfere". So, since there were not too many troubles, we just didn't take the initiative in working on this problem. You know why? It's because no one had either granted us the power to be involved, or required us to take care of it (ibid).

Over the following years, the migrant population in Beijing grew steadily and rapidly. This aroused the great concern of the local governments. Around 2003, they finally realized how pressing the actual situation was. Together with the expansion of migrant population, the number of migrant children also soared. For these children, the lack of appropriate schooling was the most devastating hardship hampering their interests and development. To meet the education needs of migrant children and to fill the vacant market, a large number of migrant schools run by individuals sprang over in Beijing:

Even the governments didn't realize the existence of such a kind of schooling. But this problem, once it took shape, had never ceased developing. Together with the expanding migrant population, migrant schools mushroomed all around Beijing. In particular, around 2003, the situation became increasingly serious (ibid).

In face of the unmet education needs of migrant children, the local governments started doing researches. However, at this stage their researches were carried out in a passive manner, as they were insufficiently motivated:

When we started studying the issue, we were just passively involved, rather than exploring it actively. In fact, it was an entirely new phenomenon, and such schools had never existed before. They were the products of a deepened market economy. And they emerged in the urbanization process of Beijing...It was an acute problem. Also, it was a huge challenge faced by the governments (ibid).

It was believed that the issue of migrant children in Beijing was first discovered by journalists around mid-1990s. However, the local governments started their investigation roughly eight years later. In this sense, the sudden outbreak of SARS not only marked a turning point of the issue, but also recorded the image of the unprepared governments taken by surprise.

The Outbreak of SARS as the Turning Point

In 2003, the sudden outbreak of SARS brought the whole country to a standstill. State economy stagnated. Companies, factories and schools were all closed to reduce the spreading of the disease to the minimum. However, it was exactly the outbreak of SARS that provided the local governments with a rare opportunity for on-the-spot investigations in the city's suburban areas:

In 2003, SARS broke out in China. This infectious disease had aroused panic in big cities. Under this backdrop, our investigation was carried out...According to our statistics, in 2003 there were 141 migrant schools in Beijing. Classes were suspended due to the outbreak of SARS. So, we got the chance to go to the suburban areas to have a look (ibid).

Their investigation found that most migrant schools had about one hundred to two hundred students, while some small-sized ones only got thirty to forty. Regardless of their size, migrant schools shared something in common, that is, almost all of them were poorly equipped. Back in 2003, SARS spread great panic in the whole society. The poor hygienic condition of migrant schools posed a threat to the safety of migrant children. What haunted the local governments most was the idea that this fatal disease might break out exactly at migrant schools given their poor hygiene, which might even cause death:

Rents for school properties were usually very low. Some schools were opened in pigsties, some others built next to garbage yards, close to piles of rubbish. During breaks, students played on the garbage hills...Outside these schools, sewage flowed all over the ground and flies flue into our faces. It was just as dirty as that (ibid).

Against this backdrop, the local governments decided to first close down those schools in the worst condition. Public schools nearby were required to take in migrant children:

We were determined to close down those schools which were in the worst physical and hygienic condition, as they were hidden dangers threatening the health of migrant children...We decided to ask nearby public schools to take in those children. They were enrolled like local children, and there wasn't any additional requirement, such as the sponsor fees or etc. Sponsor fees had been strictly banned (ibid).

The outbreak of SARS in 2003 marked a turning point of the issue. Since then, the local governments started dealing with the problem in a more cautious manner. In addition, 2003 also witnessed the arrival of an ever increasing public attention on this issue. The mass media, the academic circles as well as the NGOs all became active players in this particular domain.

The Dilemma Faced by the Local Governments

The number of migrant children in Chaoyang alone increased from 60,000 or 70,000 in 2003 to 100,000 in 2008. According to Mr. Z, two factors had contributed to this growth. Firstly, the massive constructions for the Olympic Games in Chaoyang outnumbered those in the other districts, which had brought in a large number of migrant workers who came to the city with their families. Secondly, among different districts, they lacked a commonly agreed approach to deal with migrant schools. While migrant schools were strictly banned in some districts, they survived in others. Chaoyang was among the districts that treated migrant schools in a much milder approach. As a result, it had been seen by the expelled schools as a relief and a shelter. So they moved to Chaoyang, bringing with them a large number of migrant children:

Urbanization construction proceeds faster in Chaoyang than in any other district or county in Beijing, because the major stadiums for the Olympic Games are all here. So its urbanization process is far more impressive than that of other districts. Thus, a great number of migrant workers are needed. Due to the concentration of the migrant population, the issue of how to educate their children became increasingly pressing in the recent years (ibid).

Chaoyang has witnessed an increasing number of migrant schools, because both Haidian and Fengtai have expelled them. Some other districts have also strictly banned migrant schools. When they heard that the policies here were milder and more humane, and there wasn't any extreme practice, they just came (ibid)

According to Mr. Z, orders from the higher authorities in 2003 were rather clear and strict. Migrant schools were regarded illegal and the local governments were required to close them down efficiently. Mr. Z joked that at that time when the officials met, they greeted each other by asking: "How many schools have you wiped out?" Sometimes, the responses came with a bitter smile. Despite the tough orders from the higher authorities, districts and counties in Beijing had adopted different approaches based on their own situations. Unlike others, Chaoyang's attitude was milder. As explained by Mr. Z, the conclusion they got from serious consideration was that it bore a great deal of importance to proceed from the reality and give priority to the interests of the children:

At that moment, we were expected to close down those illegal schools in the name of preventing the spread of SARS...The order was clear, that is, those schools must be closed. But when coming to the implementation, the Chaoyang Education

Commission decided to proceed from their very reality. Why was that? It was because, after all, tens of thousands of migrant children were studying at those illegal schools, which was by no means a small group, but a rather huge one. In this sense, the education of these children became a social problem. It was not an isolated problem. So, we had to be very cautious when handling it. We used to discuss about the rights of these children to education. Their rights are given and protected by the laws. Wherever they are, either in their hometowns or in Beijing, they all have their rights to education (ibid).

At that time, we had to consider where those children could go if we close down those schools. We keep them solely for protecting the interests of the children (ibid).

Since they could not allocate each of these 100,000 migrant children a place at local public schools, the local governments of Chaoyang decided to keep migrant schools. As told by Mr. Z, at least it was better for the children to have schools to attend. However, this compromise would not change the fact that migrant schools were only a temporary relief, but not schools in a real sense. Apart from poor physical environment, migrant schools also failed to win the trust of the local governments for their unqualified operators. As found in their 2003 researches, the quality of school runners was questionable:

In fact, there were all kinds of school owners, a wide range of variety. They came from all walks of life. Sometimes, even those who are illiterate came to run migrant schools. The most ridiculous example was that a cook who used to work for our education commission also opened a school in the rural area of Chaoyang.

His name was Zhang Dashan. When we were doing researches in the rural area in 2003, upon entering a village, I just saw a big sign showing Da Shan Primary School. I went inside to have a look. Then he ran out. So, I asked him: “what are you doing here?” He answered that he was the headmaster. “You are the headmaster!” I sighed. “You can be a headmaster?” A temporary cook from the education commission could run a school (ibid)!

Apparently, even years later Mr. Z still felt that it was ridiculous to see a cook changed into a headmaster. As believed by him, without qualified headmasters and teachers, the quality of migrant schools was questionable:

So, the quality of their teaching is...imaginable (ibid).

Do you agree this is a big headache, especially when some schools may even name themselves as Beijing Chaoyang District Da Shan Primary School? Without official authorization, they just have named themselves as such. Then you tell me what should we do? If we close them down, where would the students go? But if we kept them, given their quality, those children would be misled (ibid).

Mr. Z was loyal and devoted to the education system in which he had served for four decades, so that as regarded by him, it was unacceptable for those migrant schools to name themselves after the three words - “Beijing Chaoyang District”, because it was more or less an insult on the overall education system. Mr. Z said that public school headmasters and teachers were also reluctant to recognize their migrant counterparts for the huge difference between them. On the other hand, due to the lack of a commonly accepted approach, measures employed by different districts and

counties were incoherent. This had not only delayed the coming of a final solution, but also placed the local governments under a great deal of public criticism for their incapability.

Difficulties Faced by the Local Governments

According to Mr. Z, various difficulties had forced them to make the compromise of keeping migrant schools as a temporary relief. First of all, they lacked the sufficient resources to take all migrant children up:

We have difficulties with resources. There are neither enough classrooms nor sufficient equipment. If we have closed down all those illegal schools, restricted by the limited material condition, public schools would find it difficult to take over all those children. They don't have enough teachers. Nor do they have enough quotas for students (ibid).

Secondly, sometimes, given various reasons, migrant parents themselves refused to send their children to local public schools. For example, this might be caused by the lunch fees which stood at 6 *yuan* (USD 0.94). Mr. Z said that this amount would not be a problem for local families. However, some migrant parents thought it too expensive to afford. Therefore, they preferred enrolling their children at migrant schools. Also sometimes, it was the children who did not want to come to public schools, because they were afraid to be looked down upon by their urban counterparts:

Sometimes, it is them who choose not to come to public schools. Rather than we don't allow them to come...Many realistic problems have stopped them from attending public schools...For instance, they can't afford the school lunch. But we simply can't reduce the charge only because you are migrants (ibid).

Moreover, there were those migrant parents who failed to see the importance of education. They did not care about the school quality, as they would not expect more from schools than a cheap day care. Since such services were available at migrant school at a lower cost, they seldom considered public schools for an alternative:

Some parents sent their children to schools not for their studies, but for having them taken care of by others while they are working and making money. Learning some knowledge is merely less important...As long as their children are safe and have food to eat, it would be fine. There is nothing about the quality. Not any requirement at all. As long as their children are alive and not bullied, it would be fine. That's all (ibid).

Thirdly, the local governments were afraid of the “*Heat Island Effect*”, by which it meant that the better the problem was solved, the more attractive the city would be for migrant population. However, the bearing capacity of Beijing was not without an upper limit and its population must be well-managed. Therefore, how to keep the balance between the two tasks posed a tough challenge to the local governments:

We ought to provide quality education to migrant children. However, it might give rise to other problems, if more and more migrants come to Beijing. It in turn will cause pressure to the management of the city. That's another thing to be taken

into consideration...Because migrants might come to Beijing since the education services here are better (ibid).

Fourthly, the limited bearing capacity of the education system and the soaring bills were another two concerns of the local governments. In 2008, among all the children within their jurisdiction, roughly half were migrants and roughly half were local. About 50% of these migrant children were enrolled at local public schools. In particular, they were already the absolute majority at suburban public schools. Besides, the coming of migrant children had also created a huge financial pressure to the local governments. Over the years, education expenditure of Chaoyang had been increasing by a large margin:

The number of local kids is merely around 100,000. In the past, we didn't have the other 100,000 students, right? But now altogether we have 200,000. For us, the pressure is already big. It is hard for the local education system to absorb all these children (ibid).

I heard that two or three years ago the total amount spent by the Chaoyang governments on education was slightly more than 1 billion, around 1.1 or 1.2 billion. But now it is more than 2 billion. The amount has been doubled (ibid).

Finally, even though the central orders were explicit and left no room for maneuver, they did not come with detailed rules and regulations which could guide the work of the local governments. The lack of detailed rules and regulations at least led to two negative consequences. First of all, the unified central policies were implemented by incoherent local practices. The local governments had frequently

changed their measures. Secondly, owing to the absence of concrete rules and regulations, governments at local levels, especially those working in the forefront, had to feel their ways in the work, which had effectively delayed the coming of a final solution:

It's not like that whenever there is a policy from the central governments, we just could do this and that at will...The lower the levels, the more realistic the problems are...We will come across with all kinds of concrete problems, for which there wasn't any detailed regulation. That's why it is so difficult. Nothing can be done without detailed regulations (ibid).

We need to create favorable conditions and that costs time. It's not like that whenever the higher authorities issue a policy, those at the lower levels just could be prepared. It's not like that at all. If it were so, all the problems in China would have been easily solved. After publishing an editorial, everything just changes overnight. That's simply impossible (ibid).

Nonetheless, at the end of the interview, Mr. Z highly remarked the central policies issued around 2003, saying that for the first time they had seen clearly where their work was heading to:

A good ideology or a good policy serves as the precondition, without which there won't be anything. With this general direction, we just know where our exploration is heading to...We dare not to say with full confidence that everything has been done perfectly. But we are trying our best to realize this goal (ibid).

Policies issued in 2003 confirmed the local governments that to educate migrant children was within the scope of their official duty. Besides, it was the local public schools that were assigned the decisive role. Though there was no detailed guidance, a general direction was finally established.

Conclusion

For long, the local governments had been blamed for their failing to provide migrant children with an equal education. However, the interview with the retired official from the *Education Commission of Chaoyang District* showed that the local governments were not without any difficulty. Especially for those in the forefront, they had to cope with the pressure from the central governments, while dealing with the concrete barriers in the reality. It was possible that the incapable and irresponsible image of the local governments frequently appeared on the mass media or in the academic papers was a partially biased portrait, which was a reflection of the tension and conflict between the various stakeholders involved in the issue.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, interviews with two government officials have been presented, by which it could be found that, in the official opinions, migrant schools were merely a special product of a special period of time. They were kept as a compromise at a critical juncture. Due to their unsatisfactory condition, migrant schools were unlikely to be regarded by the local governments an appropriate type of schooling. Therefore,

the chance for them to be integrated into the urban education system was rather slim. Instead, it is more possible that after local public schools gradually further expanding their bearing capacity for migrant children, a good timing will be finally found by the local governments to pass their sentence on migrant schools.

Moreover, in fact, another two interviews with government employees had been attempted in the research, but eventually they were both turned down. It felt that the local governments were not open enough, because if it had not been for personal contacts, the interviews with the two officials could not be accomplished. Moreover, the interview with Mr. L showed that, usually officials made the decision on what to tell and what not. Questions were addressed by them in a selective manner, that is, when some of the questions were answered rather elaborately, the others were just like being touched on the very surface. Both their rare availability and their selective manner had caused an invisible but vividly felt distance between them and the other stakeholders. No wonder when tragedies of migrant schools flooded the various media, those on what had been done by the local governments were merely numbered.

CHAPTER XI

SUPPORTING ROLE PLAYERS: ACADEMIC, MASS

MEDIA AND NGOs

One of the interesting aspects about the peculiar case of the *XX Migrant School* is its effectiveness in building up a network of support from different sectors. In fact, it has made efforts to establish a close relationship with the mass media and NGOs; it has also attracted attention from people in academic circles, including scholars from local institutions as well as from overseas, such as Hong Kong. In fact, the issue of migrant children education has been attended to by academic studies as it is really an eye-catching phenomenon developing alongside economic reform. The way it has been constructed in academic debates and the information generated by academic study also played an important role in shaping policy reaction to it. It would be therefore necessary to have a closer look at the dynamics flowing in the midst of these parties. This chapter is going to summarize the involvement of these parties in the issue of education for migrant children in general, then, focus on the interactions between them and the *XX Migrant School* in details. A brief introduction about these stakeholders will help to draw a more comprehensive picture on how the issue of migrant children education is constructed and presented to the society, and in what way this is shaping the societal reaction to it.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE THREE PARTIES

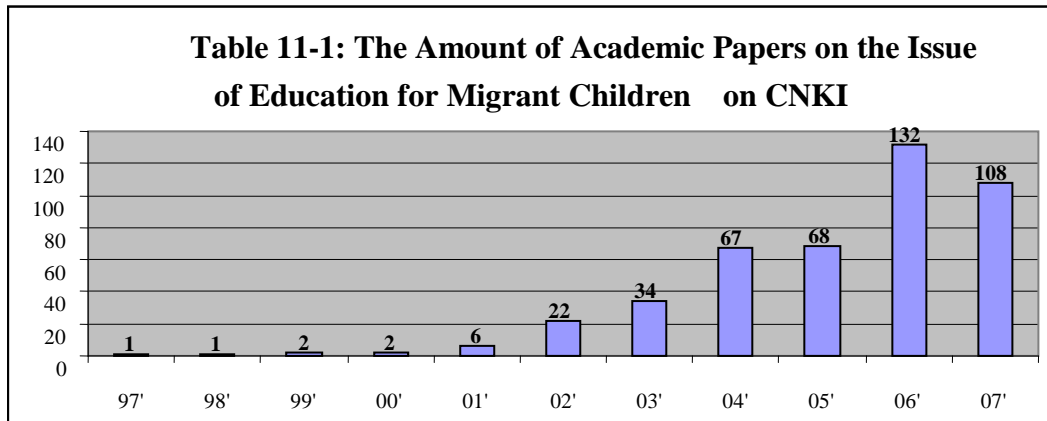
The Academic Circle

It is generally believed that the first academic research on this issue was published around 1997 (Yin & Yang, 2008, p.31). However, a few others believe that it can be further traced back to as early as 1994 (Bai, 2007, p.101), or even to 1988 (Duan & Xiao, 2008, p.226). Despite these disagreements, the contribution made by academic circles in this regard is widely recognized, as it not only helps to bring the tragedy of migrant children into public vision, but also comes up with many enlightening policy recommendations, promoting the development of the issue. The contribution of the academic circles can be best summarized as follow.

Academic Research

Firstly, there are increasingly more academic researches on the issue of education for migrant children.

After the issue of “1998 Provisional Measures”, more people from various domains in academia started to pay attention to this problem. Over the years, researches on relevant issues increased by a large margin (See Table 11-1).



(Source: Yin & Yang, 2008, p.31)

It is also agreed that researches relating to this is with a significant growth of their academic value, as perspectives stemming from social sciences, political sciences, economy, psychology and laws, etc. all have been employed by researchers studying this issue (Yin & Yang, 2008, p.32). Besides, various kinds of research methods are employed, too. No longer satisfied with only using conventional methods such as survey and interview, researchers started applying new methods to their studies, so as to have more discoveries on different aspects and from different angles. For instance, in their research on the schooling of migrant children in Guangdong, Liang and Chen employed various research methods, including historical research, case study, sampling interviews, comparative study and logistic regression (ibid).

All in all, academic researchers have not only deepened the overall understanding on the issue, but have facilitated the generation of many practical and valuable policy recommendations.

Strengthened Cooperation

Secondly, there is increasingly more cooperation between the academic circle and migrant schools. On one hand, given the uniqueness of the issue and the distinctive characteristics of migrant schools, studying them closely will be a precious experience for many researchers. On the other hand, because of their lack of resources, migrant schools are also willing to gain some attention from academic circles, for the latter usually are generous with providing voluntary services. Sometimes, they can even be introduced to potential donors. It has been quite frequent that university students offer to come visiting migrant schools and volunteer in some school-based services for migrant children. These enthusiastic university students were not confined to social welfare and related disciplines but may be majoring in all kinds of disciplines. Of course, among them, students from the professional area of “social work” are more often those who are most concerned. Some background information on the development of social work education in China might be helpful for a better understanding (See the Box 12-1):

Box 12-1: Development of Social Work Education in China

- Social work was first introduced to China in the 1920s, but was eliminated in the early 1950s both as a discipline in the universities and as a profession in the country, due to the dominance of leftist ideologies in the newly established People’s Republic of China.
- After a lapse of over 30 years, social work was restored to the university curriculum in 1988 because of the growing need for social work professionals to help in resolving escalating social problems triggered by the introduction of the open-door economic policy in 1979.
- While social work training programs and welfare services rapidly expanded throughout China during the subsequent decade, the social work profession was not at all visible and did not receive much public recognition in the country.

- But since the late 1990s, China has undergone deepening reform and re-configuration of its political, economic and social security systems which have had lasting impact on the social work profession.
- In 2006, the Chinese government announced its national directive “to construct a harmonious society” and issued new policy initiatives “to establish a grand team of social work professionals” to help in the achievement of this national goal. These policy initiatives have not only quickened the professionalization process of social work, but have also drastically shifted the trajectory of social work development in China

(Source: Yuen-Tsang & Wang, 2008, pp.5-6)

Against this backdrop, the emergence of various social issues relating to migrants and their children, including the education tragedy faced by the children, has provided an area of concern as well as an entry point for the engagement of social work to social betterment. Impoverished and marginalized migrant communities, migrant homes, and migrant schools are ideal arenas for social work majors to implement their knowledge and skills. In this sense, cooperation between academic circles and migrant schools are mutually beneficial. It was quite common for social work students and scholars to go visiting those migrant communities and migrant schools for academic projects and research. Some social work educators also work out papers of different types to address the issues. Social work students were also sometimes assigned to have their fieldwork practice in migrant communities and migrant schools.

It is quite common that academic discussion on the issue tends to be critical to the existing policy of the government and in particular cynical to the practice of the local governments. Understandingly and comprehensible is the over-riding principle of “education for all” always comes up top of the agenda, the resulting sympathetic

orientation to migrant children and to the difficult situation of migrant schools are reasonably following.

Mass Media

Like the academic circles, mass media also play an important role in the development of the issue of education for migrant children. As remarked by Irwin (2000), a Shanghai-based Canadian journalist, it was the pressure both from the media and several delegates from the National People's Congress that urged the changes in the law in 1998. In addition, reports on the issue carried out by various media have demonstrated an increasing breadth and depth, which can be best summarized as follows:

Firstly, rather than focusing on the situation in several big cities like Shanghai and Beijing, mass media gradually extended its coverage to small and medium-size cities and towns all around China. For instance, it is reported in 2002 that after reconsideration, the education department of Shenyang, a city in Liaoning Province, decided to resume the practice of collecting transient student fees from migrant families, for the cancellation of the fees had added the financial burden of both local farmers and local public schools, and the relevant government bodies could not solve the problem through allocating its funds (CHINANNEWS.COM, 2002). With such reports, it becomes increasingly clear that the education difficulty faced by migrant children is by no means a local problem confined to a few big cities. Rather, it is a common phenomenon occurring all around the country.

Secondly, foreign mass media have actively joined broadcasting the education tragedy of migrant children, only with a more far-reaching impact. Their reports have aroused great concerns from the international community, which, in turn, became some sort of headache for the Chinese government. For example, a feature on the webpage of Voice of America (VOA) reported that more than ten schools for migrant children in Beijing were to be registered legally, giving them the same treatment as state-funded schools (Fincher, 2002). However, the article further remarked that this action still did not go far enough. It kept on calling for the final removal of all legal and bureaucratic barriers as the long-term solution for the issue of education for migrant children. Caring about its international image, such strong remarks are apparently disturbing for the government. Yet many people believe that the pressure foreign media exert on the government is going to be beneficial for urging both the central and local governments to do something so as to silence these type of reports down. Obvious enough, some are with the hope that this is going to be positive for a quicker handling and long term settlement of the issue.

Thirdly, unlike previous reports which are usually composed in descriptive language and with limited themes, in recent years, some news reports start to demonstrate more breadth and depth. Their discussions are thorough, their views and consistent, and their criticism sharp and to the point. Take a report from the HUAXIA.COM (2009) for instance. It points out that it is wrong to place the hope of achieving education equality on the reform of *hukou* system. In fact, the issue of equal access to compulsory education as well as the issue of equal participation in the university entrance examination should be brought forward of their own, and as more urgent problems. Such viewpoints and seriously sharp tone, reports of such somehow

contribute to arouse social awareness, appeal to policy options sorting, and to elevate communal eagerness to have the issue duly handled.

NGOs

NGOs have been growing rapidly in the past decade and are making significant contributions to different aspects of social welfare. Concerning migrant children, contributions of NGOs are largely in several aspects. Firstly, some NGOs have provided various kinds of high quality services to migrant children and their families. Take the Compassion for Migrant Children (CMC), a foreign NGO in Beijing, for example. The CMC Voluntary Handout says that (2006, p.5):

CMC is a nonprofit organization founded in early 2006 to help China's urban migrant children, primarily through offering social and educational programs. It aims to provide holistic and relevant assistance to children of migrant workers in China through engaging them with social and education programs. To achieve these goals, the organization will facilitate individuals, organizations, and companies in the work of nurturing the growth of the children through multiplying and sustainable programs that cover education and teacher training, counseling, mentoring, life skills training, health, child advocacy, physical needs, sports, and camps.

Efforts of this kind from NGOs have become very important in offering service programs, trainings and support in the interests of migrants and their children. The

living standards of migrant families could be uplifted directly, and the quality of education for migrant children is also indirectly improved.

Moreover, NGOs, more often than not, are in possession of an extensive social network and rich human resources. The former enables them to mobilize various resources and carry out better cooperation with each other. The latter, as their valuable assets, guarantees both their daily operation and their general directions. Again, take CMC for instance. Apart from providing services to migrant children and migrant schools, it also sees to advance its goals through action committees that deal with poverty alleviation, migrant rights awareness, and advanced schooling opportunities (ibid). In addition, CMC is multicultural and multinational in scope (ibid). Being a foreign NGO, it has advantages both in attracting foreign presses and organizations, and in mobilizing volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. This enables CMC to do something less likely to be managed by other organizations.

Conclusion

In this section, roles played by academic circles, mass media and NGOs in the field of education for migrant children have been briefly introduced. It helps to draw a general picture on the three very important stakeholders involved in the issue. In the following section, attention is to be focused on the concrete interactions between these three stakeholders and the *XX Migrant School*.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THEM AND THE XX MIGRANT SCHOOL

Interaction between Academic Circles and the XX Migrant School

Firstly, as written on the Headmaster's report, since its establishment, the school had attached great importance to various kinds of academic researches. Researches and theoretical studies like these, as said in his report, had accompanied the school's development constantly. Some examples are listed as follow (2007, p.9):

- *The school has actively participated in various symposiums on the issue.*
- *Right before the school was founded in July 2007, one of the school's establishers, a master degree candidate, Mr. Li had just conducted a research with another two candidates on the owners of 114 migrant schools, by which they preliminarily sized up the marginalized situation of education for migrant children.*
- *In view of the welfare-oriented mass education, education theories put forward by Tao Xingzhi, as well as the practice of the subjectivity education, the Headmaster put forward his own theory – the “theory on the education for sustainable development”, so as to solve the issue of education for migrant children.*
- *From February 2004 to February 2007, the school had participated in a project called “Research on the Operation Mode of Migrant Schools and the Action”, which was sponsored by the Ford Foundation and aimed at investigating the existing circumstances of migrant schools all around the country.*

Secondly, apart from academic researches, voluntary services, free lectures and training programs also counted considerably in the overall cooperation between the *XX Migrant School* and the academic circle. Information on its website shows that:

- *On April 1st, 2008, Wang, an expert on family education, had delivered a lecture to the staff and migrant parents.*
- *On December 11th, 2007, two students from the China University of Geo-sciences had voluntarily taught paper-cuts, a traditional Chinese folk art, to the students.*
- *On the same day, Yu, a mental health teacher from Beijing 101 Middle School, had delivered a lecture about personal skills on how to make decision and seek for assistance. (The third lecture of a sexual health education program sponsored by the Ford Foundation).*
- *On December 1st and 2nd, 2007, the whole faculty of the XX Migrant School had been invited by a civil-run school in Beijing to take part in a training.*

Lastly, since July 2007, a registered social worker graduated from a Hong Kong university started serving at the *XX Migrant School* as the first on-campus social worker in Beijing. Owing to her excellent performance, she was highly remarked by the Headmaster:

Students used to be introverted, timid, and have problems in communicating with others. It was all thanks to the coming of Miss C. (the social worker) that they had become more cheerful and optimistic (Chinanews.com, 2008).

Also hired by the *XX Foundation*, the social worker simultaneously served as a bridge connecting the school with the network of the foundation. Moreover, considering her connection with the academic circles in Hong Kong, she also helped to introduce the issue to Hong Kong. In 2008, two groups of teachers and students were invited by a Hong Kong NGO to join their activities in Hong Kong. Then, in 2009, students from two Hong Kong schools paid return visits to the school.

It can be said that the Headmaster of the *XX Migrant School* had made connections with academic circles quite conscientiously. The Headmaster himself actively attended academic meetings, seminars and conferences held both local and overseas. He made presentations to the academic field to gain their support and attention. He also collaborated with people from different institutions, again some were from Hong Kong, to conduct projects and other academic activities.

These activities, in their own right, did uplift the quality of teaching staff, exposed teachers and students to new experiences, and, most important at all, developed a wider support base for the *XX Migrant School*.

Interaction between Mass Media and the *XX Migrant School*

As explained by the Headmaster, it was the touching stories of the students, teachers and the school that had won them enormous attention from the mass media. However, in fact, enormous media exposure was made possible also for its strategies in mobilizing various resources to advertise itself. The Headmaster has highly

remarked the work done by mass media in pushing forward the development of the issue (2007, p.11):

The XX Migrant School has deeply moved various media, both home and abroad, with the hardships it has endured over the years, with the dedicated spirit of the teaching staff, as well as the fervent eagerness of the students to receive education. Owing to their lofty minds and their sense of historical responsibilities, both Chinese and international mass media have actively and promptly covered the operating experience of the XX Migrant School, and call upon the public to take care of those migrant children who are living in the margin of the society.

According to his report, more than forty media had interviewed *the XX Migrant School*, including the most reputable ones such as the CCTV, People's Daily, Youth Daily, Reuter's News Agency, NHK, and Phoenix TV, etc. To a great extent, abundant media coverage had sped up the development of the *XX Migrant School*. Also, the school had made its contribution in such cooperation. As it is stated in the report that (ibid):

Mass media have played an active role in assisting the operation of the school. Meanwhile, the school has also cooperated closely with mass media in unfolding in front of the public an objective and comprehensive picture of existing education provision for migrant children in China. This is the other way how the school could fulfill its obligation.

In their cooperation, the school got fame, and later, resources, with the mass media harvesting all kinds of eye-catching stories and pictures.

As early as the school was set up, its management team, primarily the Headmaster himself, just succeeded in catching the attention of various media. In their reports, the school's management team was made up by those with strong educational or professional backgrounds: the Headmaster had a Masters Degree from the Beijing Normal University; the other founders were last-year Master students of the same university. Concerning most other migrant school owners were with poor education background, this at once became a selling point of the school. Some reporters had high expectation for the school, hoping it would be a model for the disorganized migrant school market:

Among the hundreds of migrant schools in Beijing, some of them only focus on making profits. They do not care if the students could receive a quality education. Some school owners have even disappeared after collecting tuition fees from migrant families. If the education for migrant children could be seen as a market product, the market is indeed not in order...Otherwise, if there was a regularized environment, and if there were those righteous people who would join in the cause of providing education for migrant children, they would play the role of driving the bad schools out of the market. In addition, they would find a way out, and set up a model for the education of thousands and thousands of migrant children in China (Wang, 2001).

Over the following years, a series of news reports had almost recorded every step made by the school, for instance:

- *July 14, 2001 – with merely 2,000 RMB borrowed elsewhere, XX (the Headmaster) started out to set up his school. After confirming the location of*

the school, he managed to raise a donation worth of 10,000 RMB. Also, he succeeded in collecting some desks, chairs, computers, projectors and other devices from the society (Mozixue.cn, 2004).

- *August 06, 2001 – the school started to recruit students (ibid).*
- *November 29, 2001 – the students of the XX Migrant School would remember this particular day forever. Located in Hua Village in Fengtai District, Beijing, the widely known migrant school was forced to be closed. Its students and teaching staffs had experienced the darkest day in the school's history (Wang, 2001).*
- *September 10, 2004 – the Teacher's Day...the school obtained the official authorization...the Principle is preparing setting up another school...as said by him, within the next ten years, he would popularize the model and brand of THE XX Migrant School all around China (Mozixue.cn).*
- *January 05, 2007 – the principal of the XX Migrant School sent an application to the education committee of Daxing District and asked to be closed down, which made it the first migrant school in Beijing who asked for a close-down of its own accord... (He) asked for closure... for the reason that over the five years since its establishment, the school had all together run up a debt of 500,000 RMB (News.cn, 2007).*
- *February 04, 2007 – The XX Migrant School all together received a donation worth of 2,020,000 RMB (Sohu.com, 2007)*

- *July 2007 – The first on-campus social worker started serving at the school (Sohu.com, 2008).*
- *September 01, 2007 – Sponsored by the XX Foundation...The XX Foundation will provide the school with a fund as much as 1,000,000 RMB. The school is to be led by the Principle under the guidance of a School Board. It supposes to absorb social resources, and endeavor to realize a low-charge but quality education (News.cn, 2007).*
- *January 18, 2008 – after reforming its management, XXX migrant school held its first School Board meeting...it is something new in the history of migrant schools. Even in the history of education in China, School Board is also something newly born. It bound to bring about historical changes to the civil-run education in China (Shineseed.cn, 2008).*
- *July 2008 – A group of students from the XX Migrant School left for Hong Kong to participate in a camp held by Breakthrough, a non-profit youth organization in Hong Kong. It was the first camp held in Hong Kong for the children of migrant workers from China's Mainland (Webpage of the XX Foundation, 2009).*

Interestingly, the school could always satisfy reporters with good material, like all those “first of its kind”, all those ups and downs, twists and turns. It was not only favored by many reporters, but by a dramatic destiny as well.

Interaction between NGOs and the XX Migrant School

In a report entitled “Worldwide NGOs Aid Chinese Social Progress” the Headmaster remarked that (Peoples.com.cn, 2005):

NGOs came from the grass-roots of Chinese society and should serve the people with a running mechanism based on the Chinese domestic situation. And to achieve a harmonious society was the common task of all countries dedicated to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Would there be any other migrant school headmaster who might talk like this?

The Headmaster borrowed the concept “non-profit” to advertise his school. Though, with basically same charges, adding this word to the school’s name would not make too much sense to migrant parents, however, it would to academic circles, the mass media, and the NGOs.

The school was most closely related to the *XX Foundation*. According to its website, the foundation was founded in May 2007, as a private non-profit foundation, with a registered capital of 100 million *yuan* offered by a business group, focusing on the issue of education for migrant children. Apart from allocating funds for research projects and voluntary services organized by non-profit organizations, its primary program was to build a hundred schools (or take over existing migrant schools from the owners) in the next five to ten years. In accordance with their give-and-take conditions, the administrative power of the headmasters would be taken over by the School Board, but an amount of 1 to 2 million would be given to those schools joining

this program to upgrade their physical condition and meet the standards of the Foundation.

The *XX Migrant School* once again became the first one chosen for the program, as a fair model for the successors.

Furthermore, from late 2006 to early 2009, some groups or individuals from various NGOs had also served at the *XX Migrant School*, including the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center, the Beijing Volunteers Association, the Junior Achievement China, etc. In addition, the school had also attracted NGOs out of China's Mainland. For instance, in July 2008 a group of students was invited by the Breakthrough, an NGO in Hong Kong, to join a summer camp. In April 2008, organized by Asia Society, a group of twenty-eight school principals from the U.S. had visited the school (Website of the *XX Foundation*, 2008).

In view of these, it can be said that while offering education services to migrant students, the school was also busy expanding its connection with these three stakeholders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF OBSERVATION

To sum up, in this chapter, the involvement of academic circles, mass media and NGOs in the issue of education for migrant children has been introduced, with the case of the *XX Migrant School* as the focus of the discussion. It seems that all these three stakeholders have helped greatly to popularize this school, and finally made it

widely recognized among the masses. As told by the Headmaster, such cooperation was mutually beneficial. However, on second thought, it was felt as if, rather than benefiting the students, they had brought more interests to the school owner, thinking about his fame, connections, over even, as shown by the fieldwork, personal interests. So, isn't it necessary for the three parties to know more about the schools they are about to help first, before they pour their attention, efforts and labor into them?

No matter what the answer to this may be, what is undeniable is the fact that the academic circles, Mass Media and NGOs are to different extents involved in how the issue of migrant children education is to be conceptualized, defined, and presented to the society. They have indeed become stakeholders of the issue, each with their own ways of involvement, commitments and interests when the issue of migrant children education is developing and transforming. With their specific roles and the authority they have in today's society, it is therefore reasonable to conclude that their continual involvement is going to be significant for the on-going definition and redefinition of the issue. The long term policy discussion and options sorting for the proper handling of the issue is also sure to have their fingerprints.

PART THREE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, fieldwork observations on six aspects have been presented and discussed. The shows put on by these so called “stakeholders” have been described and analyzed. In this part, Chapter 12 provides a scheme of measures which are perceived as “counter-acting” those determinants of vulnerability of migrant children when they make attempts to arrange for schooling when they are “moving around” with their families. Chapter 12, on the basis of the scheme, tries to conceptualize education as social protection in the context of China, through recommending a series of policies and regulations regarded important by the researcher.

CHAPTER XII

CONCEPTUALIZING EDUCATION AS SOCIAL PROTECTION IN CONTEXT

In the previous chapters, fieldwork observations on six aspects have been presented and discussed, they include the context of migrant communities and migrant homes, the situation of migrant schools and local public schools, the roles and perspectives of migrant parents, the local governments, as well as the positions and orientations of academic circles, mass media and NGOs. The ways these so called “stakeholders” are shaping the perceptions, discussion and the formulation of measures as well as strategies to deal with the issue of migrant children’s education have been highlighted.

Based on what has been observed and generalized from the fieldwork, this chapter is going to provide a scheme for the development of concrete policy, strategies and measures to materialize education as social protection for migrant children.

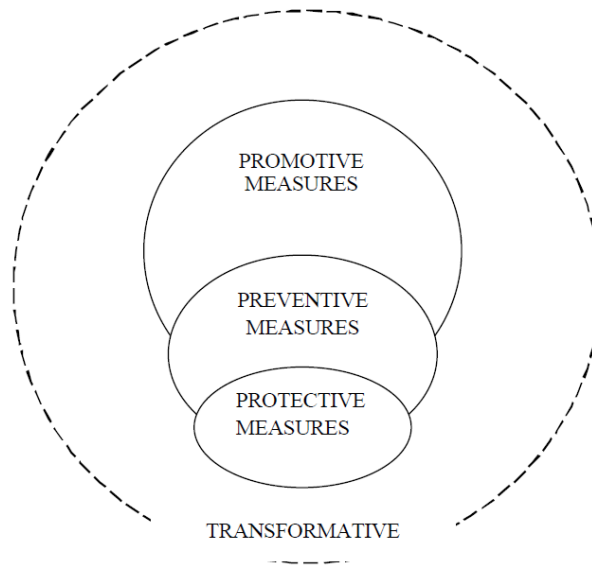
“Social protection” is referred to as *“all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized”* (Devereux, Ntale & Sabates-Wheeler, 2002, in Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, pp.10-11). In view of the various kinds of problems generalized from the study, and by summarizing the determining factors leading to the vulnerability of migrant

children, some counter-measures, which fit the above mentioned definition, will be proposed. Then, as Sabates-Wheeler & Waite (2003, p.8) stated as basic for social protection, these proposed measures are regarded as being “protective”, “preventive”, “promotive” and/or “transformative” in nature (ibid, p.10). With this problem listing and policy option sorting exercise, concrete action plan could then be drawn and proposed, and this is going to be the justification for policy recommendations which will come up in the following chapter.

RETHINKING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT

In order to conceptualize the social protection framework for this research, it is necessary to first look back at the framework proposed by Wheeler and Waite again. This “Social Protection” perspective transcended the conventional idea on social security (See Figure 12-1), attempting to deal with the issue of poverty, underdevelopment, deprivation as well as vulnerability more effectively and more comprehensively, but not focusing on the mere economic transfer of the “safety net” approach. The essence of their framework lies in its emphasis on the promotive and transformative elements.

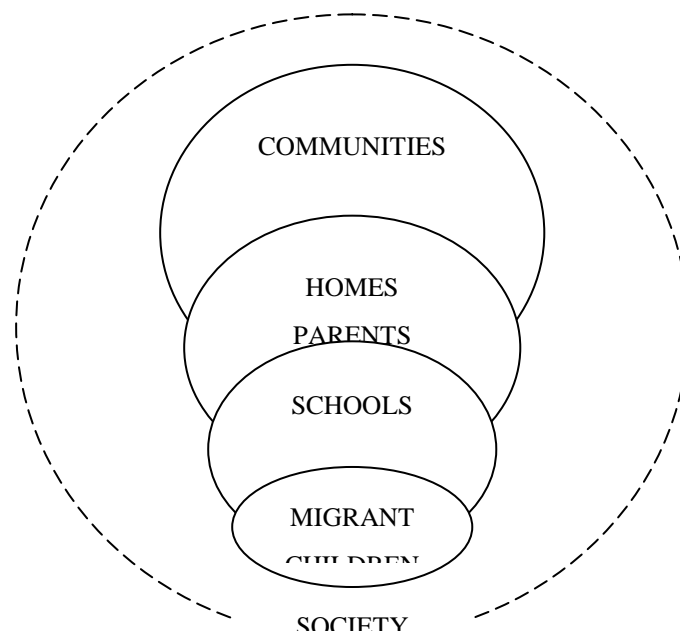
Figure 12-1: Conceptualizing Approaches to Poverty and Vulnerability



(Source: Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, p.10)

When this framework of social protection is put into the context of migrant worker and the issue of education for migrant children, those stakeholders involved could be positioned to their relevant axis where they are going to contribute dealing with the issue (See Figure 12-2).

Figure 12-2: Stakeholders Involved in This Research



It would be necessary to emphasise the responsibilities, obligations, proper roles and potential contributions for those stakeholders involved. As discussed in the previous chapters, each of these groups do have their ways to conceptualize the issue of migrant children education; each of them have their diverse interests, strengths and mission on this; and all of them are with their blind spots as well as limitations when encountering the issue. It would be unrealistic to expect any single one of these stakeholders to effectively deal with the issue and to ensure adequate and proper education for migrant children. It is also unrealistic and practically impossible for any one of these groups to pull migrant children up from their vulnerability which is closely knitted with their specific status. It could only occur through proper division of labor, recognition of each unique roles and responsibilities, and to coordinate efforts among them, so that the ideals of education could possibly become attainable. Education, here being conceptualized as one of the major components in the social protection framework, and as the major social protection measures for children, particularly for migrant children, could be put into the context of this study so as to derive meaning as well as offer the base for the development of tangible measures.

Migrant children should be the focus of this and to protect their very rights to education should be accomplished by coordinating efforts by the migrant families themselves, the school system, the community, and the society at large.

Most basic of all, it is important to make sure that education opportunities are adequately offered in accordance with the legal obligations as stipulated by the 1986 Compulsory Education Law of the PRC and as it is repeatedly stated in the Compulsory Education Law amended in 2006.

It would be essential for local schools, be they state-run, civil-run, or simply migrant schools, to offer quality education within their strengths and ability. The basic standards and quality of provision should not be compromised to the extent that proper learning and other aspects of school life are going to be jeopardized. Local public schools in Beijing, and in other migrant receiving cities alike, have to shoulder the public responsibility and should not create man-made hurdles in any form to exclude migrant students. There will not be any justifiable cause for public institution like public schools to act against the mission and policy goals put forward clearly by the central administration. Unfortunately, some local public schools are really practicing that way, and misinformed migrants have been constantly turned away. How well children could make the best use of education opportunities is dependent on various factors, it is understandable that the school itself is just one of the many to make the ultimate goal of education work out. However, school administration should at least ensure that access to education opportunity is equally available to all, and children, from rural or from urban alike, are minors and should have to be prevented from dropping out simply because of the place of origins. From what can be learnt from the study, the school authorities, the relevant government bodies and officials responsible local education obviously can do more and should do more to make this guaranteed.

Even with education opportunities available to migrant children, it is obvious that migrants themselves are the ones to utilize the opportunities appropriately. Migrant families have to be alerted of the primacy of education as basic rights of children, as legal responsibility for the parents themselves to take children to schools, and as long term investment in the future of children and families. Parents should also stand up right to protect their children from the risk of being deprived of such an opportunity.

For people from the village, their original economic undertaking in agriculture may have undermined their awareness of the significance of education; their own educational background may also make it difficult for them to appreciate the potential returns from education investment; their relatively low quality of living may drain away their concern for their children's education as the return from it is always less tangible and remote when compared with the day-to-day struggling for a living. For many migrant households interviewed in the research processes, some worshipped education and vowed to do everything possible within their efforts to make sure that their children could have better education and a brighter future; while some others were rather passive, uncertain or even ignorant towards the right of their children to get proper education. In their harsh and detached living - detached from their roots, detached also from the mainstream of the city where they are now dwelling - they may have difficulties and various limitations to make arrangements for education for their children; some may even put "earning for a better living" on top of their agenda and would accept that education for their kids is just one of the many items they have to forgo. Therefore, when the society is increasingly aware of the need to protect the rights of the disadvantaged migrant workers, and while some advocate for various benefits and entitlements for migrants, it would be equally essential to heighten the awareness and consciousness of the migrants themselves, that they have the most responsibility to protect the education right of their children.

With adequate education resources and responsive migrant parents, the communal strengths could be aggregated to promote the development of a learning community, which in its spiritual aspect is a supportive atmosphere for everyone to make the best use of educational opportunity and an optimal utilization of educational resources. Hopefully in the long run, this is going to escalate the rural residents from their

impoverished social position which might have been inherited from generations to generations. For migrant workers, their families, and the migrant communities, their relatively deprived living conditions, their constantly being excluded social status, their disadvantaged competitive edge in the economy, as well as their cultural incompatibility with social progress could be transformed eventually with educational opportunities secured for their coming generations.

DOS AND DON'TS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

For all those stakeholders, the way they were found to have been performing as to extending the vulnerable situation of migrant children will be identified. In light of this, counter-measures to act against those determinants of migrant children's vulnerability will be proposed. The nature of the proposed measures making reference to the four levels of objectives of the social protection framework will also be recognized. Upon these, relevant themes of attention will also be listed for these stakeholders.

Below is a tabulation of what can be derived from the above discussion. Measures and actions should be targeted to major actors directly influencing and making education related decisions for migrant children. These actors may also be constantly acting, reacting and working in a way to provide or withhold education opportunities, or are facilitating or deterring the effective use of education opportunities. Therefore, migrants schools, local state schools, the migrant communities, migrant households and the local community/society are what these measures and actions are designed for. The governments, central and local, are the prime initiators for these actions and

measures, while those stakeholders who are always playing supporting roles to address the issue of migrant children education, including academic circles, the mass media and the NGOs, are supposed to be allies for this set of actions and could perform constructive efforts to improve the effectiveness of these measures.

Migrant Schools

Determinants of Vulnerability	Counter-Measures Proposed	Nature of Counter Measures
Questionable teaching quality;	Providing guidelines, better supervision & better legislation;	Protective & preventive measures
Teachers' qualification;	Providing guidelines, better supervision & better legislation;	
Questionable management;	Better supervision & better legislation;	
Poor physical condition;	More investment & financial supports	
Poor Sanitation;	More investment & financial supports; providing guidelines for proper practices	
Profits-oriented;	Better monitoring, supervision & better legislation;	

Problematic foundation for further study;	Providing guidelines, better supervision & better legislation;	
Too much extra activities;	Providing guidelines & better supervision;	
Headmaster's attitude /orientations towards running school;	Better supervision & better legislation;	

Themes Emerged:

To safeguard the interests of migrant children:

- 1) Actions should be designed for “protective” and “preventive” nature: i.e. to protect migrant children receiving quality education and to prevent abuse of the migrant schools.
- 2) Education quality and management of migrant schools should be improved by providing guidelines for practices, better supervision and monitoring by the government will be necessary, better legislation may also be needed.
- 3) More investment and financial supports should be arranged so as to improve the physical condition and faculty configuration of some migrant schools,
- 4) The roles and responsibility of the central and local governments are stressed.
- 5) The roles and contributions of academic circles, mass media and NGOs would be necessary to better monitor the situation

Public Schools:

Determinants of Vulnerability	Counter-Measures Proposed	Nature of Counter Measures
<p>Enrollment difficulty;</p> <p>High fees;</p> <p>Need contact for enrollment;</p> <p>Insufficient place/ school resources</p> <p>Keeping aloof from migrants;</p> <p>No tailor-made services for migrant children;</p> <p>Discrimination;</p> <p>Language and cultural barriers;</p>	<p>Providing guidelines, better supervision & better legislation;</p> <p>Better supervision & better legislation;</p> <p>Better supervision & better legislation;</p> <p>More investment & financial supports</p> <p>To motivate public schools to bear more responsibilities.</p> <p>Providing guidelines, better supervision, better legislation, anti-discrimination campaigns & inclusive education</p> <p>Better supervision, better legislation, anti-discrimination campaigns & inclusive education</p> <p>Anti-discrimination campaigns & inclusive</p>	<p>Protective, preventive & promotive measures</p>

	education program;	
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Themes Emerged:

To safeguard the interests of migrant children:

- 1) Education quality and management of migrant schools should be improved basically by providing guidelines for practice, better supervision and monitoring by the government will be necessary, better legislation may also be needed
- 2) Actions should be designed as “protective”, “preventive” and “promotive”: i.e. to protect migrant children getting access to education opportunities from state schools, to prevent them against discrimination, and to promote integration of migrant children into the urban society.
- 3) accessibility of public schools and elimination of extra fees should be further guaranteed by better supervision and better legislation,
- 4) inclusive education should be practice to facilitate the integration of migrant children into the urban education system,
- 5) anti-discrimination campaigns should be carried out to provide migrant children a favorable environment,
- 6) The roles and responsibility of the central and local governments are important, relevant public bodies should carry out the duties accordingly.
- 7) The school administration of local state schools, which is regarded as a part of the state apparatus, is therefore to be held responsible too.
- 8) The roles and contributions of academic circles, mass media and NGOs would be necessary to better monitor the situation.

Migrant Households / Migrant Communities

Determinants of Vulnerability	Counter-Measures Proposed	Nature of Counter Measures
<p>Poverty, material deprivation,</p> <p>Isolation and Marginalization – physical isolation, segregation, and social exclusion</p> <p>Unfavorable physical conditions and cultural conditions of households and community</p> <p>Lack of public infrastructure appropriate for children;</p>	<p>Better social security measures and services for migrants; open up more economic opportunities for migrants</p> <p>Better social security measures and services for migrants; Promotional actions for integration & anti-discrimination campaigns;</p> <p>More social services, investment in infrastructure</p> <p>investment in infrastructure</p>	<p>Protective, Preventive Promotive and transformative measures</p>
<p>Themes Emerged:</p> <p>To safeguard the interests of migrant children:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To develop better community setup and to improve household conditions so as to maximize their utilization of opportunity to education 2) Actions should be designed as “protective”, “preventive”, “promotive” 		

and “transformative”: i.e. to protect migrant children getting access to education opportunities without being deterred by familial deprivation; to prevent premature drop out, to promote a community atmosphere conducive to learning, and to transform the rural community from its long term deprivation as well as to motivate them for higher aspiration for education.

- 3) Investment from the state and initiatives from different levels of government is necessary. Better communal facilities have to be developed, more investment in infrastructure needed, more social security and services have to be provided to combat poverty, and measures to promote integration is also desirable.
- 4) The roles and responsibility of the central and local governments are important, relevant public bodies should carry out the duties accordingly
- 5) The roles and contributions of academic circles, mass media and NGOs would be necessary to better monitor the situation. The NGOs will be of particular importance to promote integration and to provide services for poverty relief.

Migrant Parents

Determinants of Vulnerability	Counter-Measures Proposed	Nature of Counter Measures
Lack of awareness to the significance of education for the children;	Campaigns and Parent Education on the importance of education;	Protective, preventive, promotive & transformative measures
Lack of family strengths and capacity to make school arrangement for children	Better social support (e.g. guidance services) for migrants in the admission	

<p>Lack of ability to assist their children to get the most from education opportunity</p> <p>Other: “male preference” mentality in making education decision;</p>	<p>processes</p> <p>Better social support, school support for parents and students.</p> <p>Anti-discrimination (e.g. towards girls) campaigns; guidance and support from government</p>	
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Themes Emerged:

To safeguard the interests of migrant children:

- 1) To enhance migrant parents to make appropriate decision on education and to facilitate better utilization of education opportunity.
- 2) Actions should be designed as “protective”, “preventive”, “promotive” and “transformative”: i.e. to protect migrant children’s basic right to education by preventing improper parental decision; to promote a supportive family atmosphere to make good use of education opportunity, and gradually transforming the passive mentality of the rural family to education.
- 3) Better social support, educational programs for parents and ongoing supervision are necessary; supportive policies should be issued to cater to the special needs of migrants and their families,
- 4) The government should bear primary responsibility while schools could also give a hand.
- 5) The roles and contributions of the academic circle, mass media and NGOs would be necessary to inform the migrant families and to monitor the situation. The NGOs will be of particular importance to provide supportive services to migrant families.

The Local Community/ Urban Society

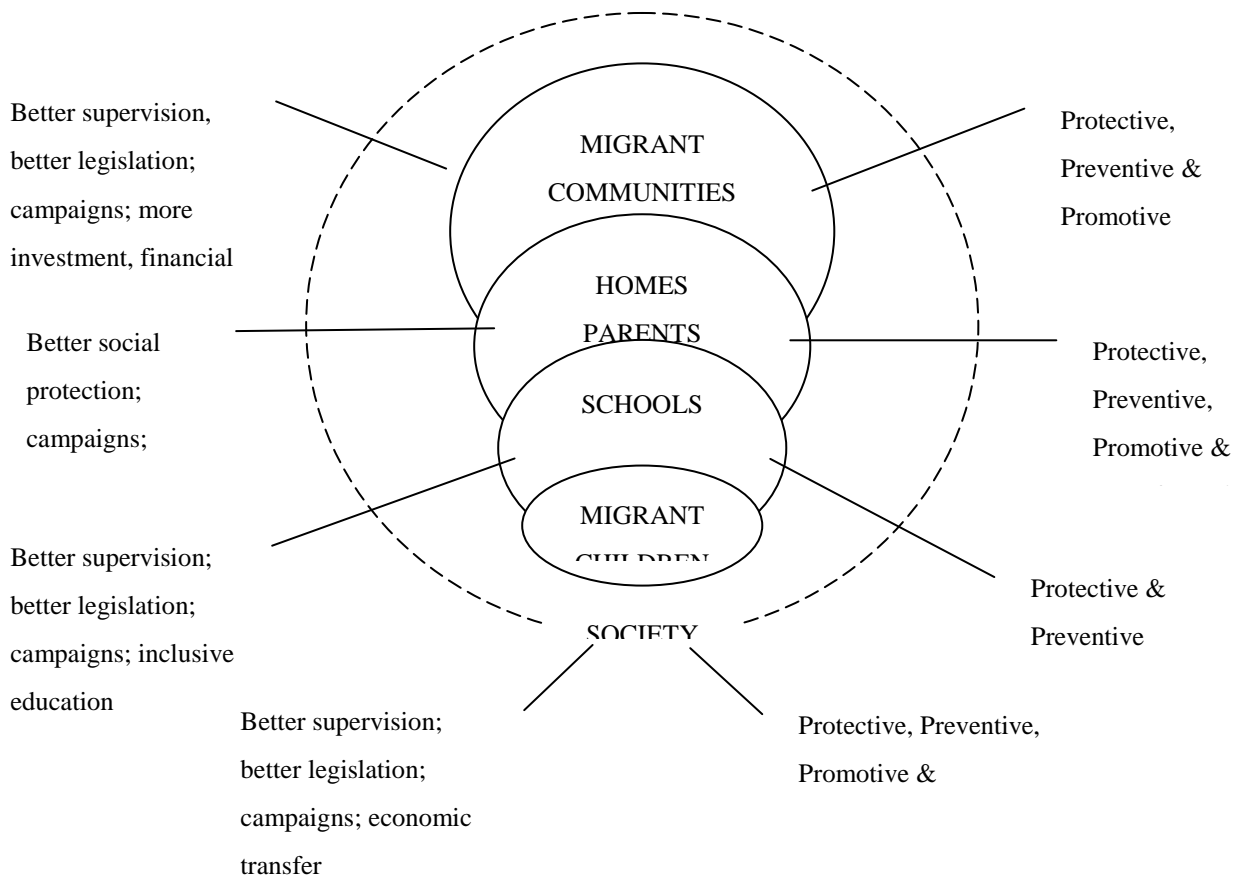
Determinants of Vulnerability	Counter-Measures Proposed	Nature of Counter Measures
<p>Lack of Resources to provide education for migrant children</p> <p>The Tendency to exclude the “alien” , and the resulting discrimination, prejudice, as well as exclusion.</p>	<p>Additional Resources for education</p> <p>Public education, propaganda, anti-discrimination campaigns; integration program/ project, etc</p> <p>Legislation against discrimination,</p>	<p>Protective, preventive, promotive & transformative measures</p>
<p>Themes Emerged:</p> <p>To safeguard the interests of migrant children:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To protect migrant children against unfair treatment and get access to education, to prevent discrimination, to promote integration and harmonious community and to transform the urban society from outdated attitude and practice. 2) Actions designed are therefore “protective”, “preventive”, “promotive” and “transformative” in nature: 3) The government should take the lead on this, while local schools could also initiate measures to integrate migrant children and local children. Schools could also enhance a higher level of acceptance on migrant students by educating local families. 		

- 4) Again, NGOs could play an important role to promote integration and prevention against discrimination. The Mass Media as well as the academic circle could also play a role to monitor the situation

SUMMARY

This chapter provides a scheme of measures which are perceived as “counter-acting” those determinants of vulnerability of migrant children when they make attempts to arrange for schooling when they are “moving around” with their families. The list may not be exhaustive, yet the measures proposed so far are relevant to what has been observed and generalized from the study. To act against those determinants of vulnerability, measures have to be a combination of “protective measures”, “preventive measures”, “promotive measures” and “transformative measures”. The “promotive” and “Transformative” elements, as elaborated in Chapter 4, are what the social protection framework emphasized (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003, p.8). All these measures are going to be distributed to various stakeholders according to the ways they are acting on and reacting to the issue. With a coordination of these comprehensive measures among stakeholders, the social protection model for education for migrant children in the context of China, or more specifically in the context of the cases studied in Beijing by this research, could be summarized by Figure 12-3.

Figure 12-3: Policy Recommendation Framework for the Issue of Education for Migrant Children in China



With this scheme, the next chapter is going to put forward some concrete policy recommendations.

CHAPTER XIII

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: ACTUALIZING EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

With the scheme outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter is going to highlight some essential policy options to actualize the various dimensions of the social protection framework. It would be impossible to provide an exhaustive list of what is to be done. It is also not necessary to do that as contextual factors have to be taken into consideration for every local administration and every local school to consider which and in what combination of those measures are practically feasible and functional within their own realm of operation. Though the following is not intended to be exhaustive, what are to be discussed are regarded as of utmost importance and with practical urgency in order that the disadvantaged situation of migrant children is to be remedied as soon as possible. On the other hand, the principles embedded with the proposed items are also considered to be of ethical significance.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Cover Migrant Schools with Unified Evaluation Mechanism

Undeniably, an obvious flaw of many migrant schools lies in the insufficient attention paid to the academic performance of migrant students, which might lead to

narrowed opportunities when the future development of these children is concerned. Policies and regulations, therefore, are badly needed for improving the quality of migrant schools, as they are, at this moment, still heavily relied on by migrant families. One of the options is to integrate these schools into a unified evaluation mechanism, as to have their performance traced and monitored. By a “unified evaluation mechanism”, it means that migrant schools should be made subjected to regular check-ups, enacted through examinations jointly taken by them and their public counterparts. Results of these check-ups would have strong implications for their teaching quality.

Such an arrangement sentences the end of an era, in which the quality of migrant schools can hardly be measured by convincing criteria. The exclusion faced by migrant children in the urban education system has saved their schools from pressure relating to the rankings of the school, or to the performance of students in entrance examination to a higher level education institution. In this sense, both migrant schools and their students are not formal “players in the field”. Therefore, for most migrant schools, how to survive in the severe general environment is the issue of primary consideration, while the quality of their services has just been overlooked. In the long run, it is the students who are about to suffer most for their lack of adequate education, without which, their future perspectives would be severely impeded.

With a unified evaluation mechanism, the quality of teaching at migrant schools could be regularly examined by examinations jointly taken by local public schools and migrant schools. Results of these examinations would act as a fine reflection of their teaching quality. In the fieldwork it was that recently some migrant schools have already started using the examination papers used by local public schools (Interview

with Mr. S, May 22, 2008). Such a practice, as believed by the researcher, should be more vigorously encouraged and more widely spread. Though it might sound narrow to assess students with their academic performance, this practice can yet be regarded as an effective measure to monitor the performance of their schools.

Strengthened Supervision on Migrant Schools

Firstly, in view of the findings of this research, it is suggested that more attention should be paid to the faculty configuration of migrant schools. There is no denying that teachers play a decisive role in influencing the education outcomes of their students. In Beijing, public schools select their employees through a series of requirements, among which a professional qualification and a degree from a recognized university are a must, whereas, at migrant schools, teachers might be recruited in a less serious manner.

The case of the *XX Migrant School* sheds light on this aspect. Saying that the absolute majority of its teachers are universities graduates, the school boasted for a highly competitive faculty. Nonetheless, observation in the fieldwork seemed to suggest that it was merely a self-advertisement, as it turned out that the school was an intern base for the third year students from a normal university in Northeast China. Barely with any teaching experience, these students came to the school to learn how to teach. But to become experienced in teaching simply cost time. While in this process, migrant students had to constantly adapt themselves to these young teachers. Besides, when their intern program finished (which usually lasting for a semester), these juniors had to leave for their own school, working on their thesis and preparing

for graduation. They would be replaced by another bunch of students. Concerning the frequent change of teachers, it is merely conceivable that the study of the students would be exposed to negative impact.

Given to their limitations and constraints, migrant schools could hardly compete with public schools for qualified teachers. Their staffs are more than often migrants themselves. For those recent university graduates from other provinces, teaching at a migrant school is more or less a springboard in Beijing. They are ready to leave whenever better opportunity is arriving. While, for some other staffs who might be less competitive, teaching there is a passable employment. Both of them are lack of long-term commitment to teaching migrant children. Therefore, certain requirements should be set up for the recruitment of teachers at migrant schools, maybe through the establishment of a baseline. Those with a qualification beneath the baseline should not be allowed to take up teaching positions at migrant schools. Meanwhile, the local governments are strongly recommended to carry out strict supervision in this regard, so as to make sure that migrant schools are acting accordingly. In case some schools violate relevant requirements, corresponding measures should be adopted to urge these schools to make a change.

Moreover, school finance should be another emphasis of the strengthened supervision. To protect the interests of migrant families, the local governments should monitor the tuition fees and other charges collected by migrant schools, so as to make sure that they are not overcharged. Moreover, general check-ups on school finance should be arranged, as there might be large amounts of charity funds, donations, government subsidies, or other kinds of additional income received by migrant schools, which are possible to fuel some inappropriate conduct of the school operators.

Undeniably, apart from those run by the NGOs, the majority of migrant schools go after economic profits. So, it also ought to be made sure that they would not spoil the goodwill of the general public.

Further Expand the Capacity of Public Schools

Though it might sound like a cliché, when it comes to public schools, first of all, it is important to forbid any kind of extra fees. For long, miscellaneous fees have successfully blocked migrant children out of local public schools, so have they succeeded in surviving underground. Despite a series of policies and regulations vowing to abolish them, they are still charged by some local public schools behind the screen. Two factors have fueled their boldness, firstly, without enough government subsidies, for public schools, educating migrant children is like running a business at a loss; secondly, given the absence of unified approaches, even the local governments might turn a blind eye to the fees collected by public schools.

To speed up the abolishment of miscellaneous fees, at least two aspects need to be addressed. Firstly, subsidies should be allocated to local public schools, assisting them act against the negative effect caused by a weakened school budget. Secondly, a stricter manner ought to be employed by the local government in their supervision on public schools. In case any school violates the spirit of compulsory education, disciplinary actions should be carried out correspondingly.

Moreover, public schools are suggested to better publicize themselves among migrant families. From the case of *Guang'an*, it can be seen that as long as public

schools more proactively publicize themselves among migrants and facilitate their enrollment procedures, very likely they can attract more and more migrant children and their families.

It was discovered in the fieldwork that many migrants are sometimes misinformed. Having no idea about the changes taking place in the policy arena, they might hold tightly to the belief that migrant schools are their one and only choice. Dong interviewed in the research is a typical example for this type of migrant parents. He was convinced that public schools were unaffordable, because as early as 2000, he was told that they were out of his reach. Given their lack of information, some migrant parents automatically exclude their children from the benefits they might have been able to be accessed.

One adequate explanation for their lack of information is that not all public schools in Beijing have actively publicized themselves among migrant families, for they might hold the view that migrant children, without local *hukou*, are barely within their obligation. Many public schools nowadays still stick to the idea that only local children are the targets of their services. Consequently, they willingly overlooked the education needs of migrant children, not to mention any thoughtful service tailor-made for the special needs of migrant families.

Therefore, in order to better integrate migrant children into the urban education system, local public schools must stretch out to migrant families. They should have the vision that migrant children have lawful rights to compulsory education, regardless of where they come from. Besides, they need to realize that the coming of migrant children is an irresistible historical trend and they are in fact summoned by

the ride of history to face up to the challenge of integrating the younger generation of rural migrants to the mainstream's society.

Finally, for the convenience of migrant families, enrollment procedures at public schools should be further simplified, because not every migrant parent might have those required documents. For those who are self-employed, doing small business or taking odd jobs, it is simply impossible for them to get a working certificate from an employer. Their lack of certain documents simply cannot be used as an excuse to block their children out of public schools. These documents should no longer be required as preconditions for registration.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES RECOMMENED

Counteract District Disparities by Lifting More Responsibility to the Municipality

In the face of the fact that migrant children are unevenly distributed in Beijing, and certain districts or counties are indeed not financially capable to absorb all the students, it is suggested that the municipal government should take over the major responsibility of educating migrant children.

Under the current situation, the public education system is run by district governments, thus both their financial capabilities and their attitudes would result in different outcomes concerning the education for migrant children. For instance, located in the city's centre and headquartered with many government apparatuses,

Dongcheng enjoys a much stronger local economy. Since it has invested handsomely, public education in Dongcheng is known for a higher quality. In 2006, among its 6,615 migrant children, 6,241 were admitted by public schools, while the other 374 were attending an authorized migrant school. By contrast, among the 47,143 migrant children in Daxing, 12,208 studied at authorized migrant schools and another 16,650 were enrolled in unauthorized migrant schools (BMEC, February 9, 2007). In this sense, the education realization of migrant children is closely related to which district they live in.

In fact, even though social and economic disparities are common among different districts in Beijing, they are hardly an impassable obstacle, as long as the municipal government could be more actively involved through allocating specific education funds for migrant children. The funds, raised by the municipal government, should be allocated to district governments based on the number of migrant children they actually have. By lifting the financial responsibility from district governments to the municipal government, gaps among different districts would be less an issue.

Balance Administrative Responsibility with Financial Power

For long, local governments and public schools have been criticized for their negligence and apathy in educating migrant children. It is only recently that increasing attention is placed on the unsatisfactory contribution made by the central government. It is believed that the predominant obstacles impeding the education realization of migrant children are structuralized and institutionalized, deeply embedded in the country's overall system. An important obstacle of such is the

mismatch between the administrative responsibility and financial power of the local governments.

Massive rural-urban migration itself is a rather new phenomenon. Educating migrant children, thus, is a new administrative responsibility added to the workload of the local governments. Even though it has been clearly stated in recent policies that the local governments should educate migrant children, the local governments of different levels do not have corresponding financial powers to implement these policies. They can only get limited supports from the central government, as the financial transfer mechanism for educating migrant children has not been well-established.

The state's failure to provide extra funding implies that a very low priority is given to the task of educating migrant children (Goodburn, 2009, p.503). Without concrete supporting measures, in particular, without reforming the current financial transfer system for education, it is very difficult for the local governments to willingly take up the responsibility. Therefore, to better guarantee the education rights of migrant children, it is suggested that the central government should play a leading role in educating migrant children, and it should increase the amount invested by a large margin. Playing a supportive role, the local governments should assist the central government by better implementation of policies and regulations.

Invest More in Public Education in General

Take a look at a county in Zhejiang Province first. In 2005, the county spent more than 39 per cent of its total fiscal expenditure on education, yet, the education needs was not fully met. In Beijing, in 2006, there were 366,000 migrant children, among which 58.4 per cent, namely 214,000 migrant children, studied at local public schools, with 173,000 in primary schools and the rest 41,000 in secondary schools. In 2006, the average education subsidies per head were 5,401.1 *yuan* for a primary school student and 7,063.76 *yuan* for a secondary school student. To educate these children, 934 million *yuan* was needed for the primary school sector, 290 million for the secondary school sector. In order to further integrate the other 41.6 per cent migrant children in to the public education system, another 872 million was needed. By their own financial capacities the local governments can hardly handle the issue of education for migrant children alone.

In fact, the financial pressure faced by the local governments has resulted from insufficient investment of the central government in the overall public education system. The central government intended to raise the proportion of education input to national GDP to 4 per cent at the end of the 20th century. It is still, however, less than 4 percent. The latest statistic for fiscal input in education is 3.48 per cent of GDP, in 2008. A report released by the Asian Development Bank states that of the world's 190 nations, more than 170 provide their children with free compulsory education. Included in the list are poor Asian countries like Laos, Cambodia and Nepal, whose per capita GDP amounts to just one third of China's (China.org.cn, 2006). At the same time, most developed countries have 12-year compulsory education and are advancing toward a 15-year scheme. Even in underdeveloped countries, 12-year

compulsory education is becoming the norm (Bjreview.com.cn, 2009). However, it was since 2006 that China started exempting rural students in the western area from compulsory education fees, and it was until 2007 that this policy was extended to the central and eastern regions. Nonetheless, migrant children living in the cities are still being kept in a policy vacuum, given the absence of specific education funds for them.

Access to compulsory education is identified as a fundamental human right in the international community. The U.N. Millennium Development Goals stipulate that every school-age boy and girl complete a full course of primary education. However, the dream of free compulsory education is far from being realized in China. County and township governments continued to foot the education bill in China's vast rural areas. About 77 per cent of education expenses were paid by township and county governments in 2008 (See Table 13).

Table 13-1: Fiscal Input in Education (100 million)

Year	Total Education Expenses	Central Government	Local Governments	GDP	Proportion to GDP
2006	6348.36	538.33	5257.28	209.047	3.04%
2007	8280.21	1076.35	6578.56	257.306	3.22%
2008	10449.63	1603.71	8081.85	300.670	3.48%
2009	Unknown	1980.62	Unknown	335.353	Unknown

(Source: CanadaMeet.com, March 1, 2010)

In light of this, to boost the development of public education in China, it is essentially necessary for the central government to fulfill its commitment, and realize

its goal of raising the proportion of education input to national GDP to 4 per cent as soon as possible.

PROMOTIVE MEASURES RECOMMENDED

To Promote the Idea of “Education Rights”

To protect the education rights of migrant children, it is important for the general society to develop a commitment to protect and serve the children, which first should be achieved by raising the society’s awareness of its obligation. At such moment, how to understand the relationship with education and migrant children becomes a critical factor, deciding whether the public will act upon calling.

The right to education should be perceived as a fundamental human right, a right every individual, irrespective of race, gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or political preference, age or disability, is entitled to. This right is explicitly stated in the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), adopted in 1948:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit... (Article 26)(Hrea.org, 2009)

In addition, as said by Katerina Tomasevski, former United Nations' Special Reporter:

There are a large number of human rights problems, which cannot be solved unless the right to education is addressed as the key to unlock other human rights. Education operates as multiplier, enhancing the enjoyment of all individual rights, freedoms where the right to education is effectively guaranteed, while depriving people of the enjoyment of many rights and freedoms where the right to education is denied or violated.

Rights to education are thus regarded of particular importance for migrant children, as it is the rights to education that offer these children accessibility to other rights. Staying at the bottom of the society, migrant children need to depend on education to promote them to higher positions in the society.

To promote “Inclusive Education” in local schools

The government should shoulder a directive role in education. It is only the state that could command resource mobilization and redistribution to direct relevant public investment on education in general and in particular to those who are without the bargaining power to negotiate for equal treatment. For the local governments, many reservations and worries hinder them from acting on education for migrant children proactively. However, as the stata apparatus, the local governments have no justifiable excuse to shy away from acting on the issues which fall within their realm of administration. This principle is equally applicable to the local school system, as an

extension of the state apparatus, and as a professional division on education, the local school administration should have the political responsibility as well as professional commitment to cater education opportunities for migrant children, instead of erecting walls and setting hurdles to bar them away.

To start with, the local commission on education and local school administration should adopt an inclusive mentality when encountering migrant influx and the resulting needs on education. In fact, as revealed by this study, most local governments did possess the financial strengths to accommodate migrant children. It is Mr. L from the BMEC who confirmed that the local government he was serving has the financial capacity to provide education to migrant children within his boundary. But with a risk-free seeking mentality and without the compassion on the issue, that local government chose not to act in accordance with the mission as state in the education law. With the ability to do that but choose not to do that, this implies something more than just capacity.

Some local schools have made attempts to cater for migrants' needs, one public school interviewed in this research started to intake migrant children in 2003, the financial situation of that school was sound, the facilities and education equipment were also in no way inferior to other schools. However, this inclusive attempt is being offset by local parents as they choose to vote with their feet and draw their kids away from that school, making it eventually a public school for migrant children. These two different cases reveal clearly that at the core of the problems, resources and capability are not fundamental, administrative arrangement to admit migrant students is also not practically difficult. It is the readiness and determination that are of utmost importance.

It is therefore necessary to be directive in actualizing this from the top down. With clearer and uncompromising central policy, local governments and local schools should take the lead to make change. Start from developing in themselves an “inclusive mentality”, they should devote their effort to promote an “inclusive culture” in the local school system. Integrative education for migrant children and local children have to be ensured; inclusive program should be organized to “educate” and to re-orientate local parents; “anti-discrimination” should be incorporated into the school curriculum so as to facilitate integration among students.

To Promote Inclusive Education by “Social Engagement”

Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. Focusing particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual. The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion. With a setup for integration and inclusion, what has to be done is to sustain the effort and to promote the effort further and make this orientation diffusing from school to the community at large.

For the migrant communities and migrant families, it is necessary to provide them with appropriate social support, relevant supplementary services, and guidance for them to sustain the schooling process, first to get access to the system, then to stay behind in the system without being dropped out prematurely. The interviews conducted in this study revealed that, under some occasion, it is not merely local parents or local children who chose to exclude migrants, it may be the migrant

families and migrant children themselves who refuse to knock on the door of local schools just because they feel uncomfortable with the feeling of being looked down at. In these aspects, resources should be made available to engage NGOs and other community groups to provide accessible service at the locality level. Campaigns and other means should also be held to promote better understanding and mutual acceptance between migrants and locals.

The media has been a platform for different purposes on the issue of migrant children education. Some migrant school operators are smart enough to appeal to media attention so as to generate wider support and more generous donation. The 2006 attempt of the local government to close down some substandard migrant schools was reversed with substantial media coverage and arousal of public objection. The media has become a powerful institution in modern day society. However, the media should not be just a tool to appeal for public sympathy in time of critical incident. It could act constructively to heighten public awareness and concern to the inalienable right of migrant children to education. Most basic of all, the media should still be vested with the social obligation to report malpractice and improper treatment to migrant children so as to alert what have to be avoided when facing an expanding migrant community. On the constructive side, by offering updated information and to increase the transparency in policy making as well as school administration, the media could also educate the public on the importance of education inclusion and community integration.

Academic circles are themselves members of the education sector. People from academia understand education well and should treasure education. As described and analyzed in Chapter XI, this sector has been playing a very important supportive role

on the course of policy change to education provision for migrant children in the last two decades. In the way of promoting inclusive education, academics could be provided with resources and rooms to conduct academic research on related topics, so as to foster better understanding and wider appreciation of the potential contribution of education to those vulnerable sectors, such as migrant children. Academics should also be encouraged to sort out policy options and to advocate for further policy changes favoring the development of an inclusive social culture. On the practical side, academics could also play the role and advisors or think tank for the administration, so that guidelines for inclusive practice could be developed, and good practice on inclusive education could be identified. ,

To promote a better social atmosphere for “Learning” and “Education”

In view of the significant impacts of the migrant community on both the education outcomes and the healthy growth of migrant children, measures aiming at promoting a better social atmosphere for “learning” and education” are badly needed. Two specific approaches are recommended as follows:

Firstly, a favorable environment inside communities could be achieved through increasing investment in infrastructure. As it is revealed in the fieldwork, located on the urban outskirts, migrant communities usually lacked reliable infrastructure for children and youngsters, such as library, after-school center or basketball pitch. Lacking access to sufficient proper extracurricular activities after school, some migrant children, especially boys, might end up strolling around on the streets or being addicted to some activities inappropriate for their age, like drinking and

smoking. At these places, they not only whiled away a good deal of time, but were also exposed to potential risks of coming across with inappropriate information and bad people. Therefore, it is recommended that more recreational places and facilities should be provided to migrant communities. Libraries, not necessary to be rather big, are considered to be a good choice. After-school centers are of special meaning for those children whose parents usually come home late. Basketball pitches or small football court for sure will be welcomed by many children. Better infrastructure would not only provide migrant children with recreation and entertainment, but are also constructive to a favorable overall atmosphere.

Furthermore, since living in migrant communities might prevent migrant children from better integrating with the urban society, community-based cultural activities are recommended so as to bridge the physical and psychological gaps between these children and the city. These cultural activities can be carried out in a variety of ways, covering a series of themes and topics. It is through these kinds of community-based activities that the strengths of the academic, mass media and NGOs can be given their full play.

TRANSFORMATIVE MEASURES RECOMMENDED

In education, transformative measures of social protection have to be built up on other measures. Transformative measures could be regarded as something coming out from the aggregated impacts generated by the interplay of the above mentioned measures. It is going to come out spontaneously when other dimensions of social protection are guaranteed. In other words, if the rights of children to education are

properly protected; if the risks of education deprivation and immature drop out are prevented, the possibility of being subject to discrimination, prejudice and unfair treatment are also prevented; and if inclusive and integrative strategies are adopted and promoted, then the society will become far more perfect than it has been. In this sense, the society is transformed or transcended to a new height. In the existing situation of China, in particular for migrants and their children staying in Beijing, transformation still seems moon-distant.

To adopt measures to transform the physical settings where education is taking place would be relatively easy. Therefore, as the previous section describes, the government should invest in the infrastructure of the migrant communities so as to facilitate learning and education. This may include more libraries, better cultural facilities, more programs to promote literacy, reading, and learning, and etc. This physical or infrastructural facelift is relatively easy. In fact, put into the context of Beijing, it is obvious that most local governments have the fiscal strengths for this. Is it not Mr. L of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission (Chapter X) who was interviewed in this study stated clearly that the Commission possessed the full strengths to provide free education for all migrant children in his district? Obviously, with the fiscal strengths and the administrative autonomy to do that but choose not to do that implies something beyond mere infrastructural or physical. For that local school which has to bring in migrant children, finance and equipment seem no hindrance for it to comply with what were assigned to it, the physical environment of the school was in no way inferior to other school premises as well. However, as more migrant children are being brought in, parents of local school choose to vote with their feet and leave all school places nearly totally to migrant children (Chapter IIX). Again, this implies something beyond the mere infrastructural or physical.

Indeed, the human mind is very often the most difficult part to transform. The discriminative and excluding local communities, the unprepared and misinformed migrant parents, the poorly acculturated migrant communities, resource tight and administratively rigid state school system, the reluctant and risk-free seeking officials, all of whom have to make significant reorientations in behaviors, in values and in belief before real transformation could really happen. Therefore, a combination of the above mentioned measures, including protection measures, preventive measures and promotive measures is here regarded as the necessary preconditions to achieve the transformation goal of social protection. However, a whole bundle of them is still not necessarily the sufficient condition for transformation. It may take time, it may need firm beliefs, it may demand persistent efforts, and it may call for patience before transformation could really take place.

Difficult it may be, actions need to be taken for it is already too late. Education, especially early age education is not easy to make-up when the time for it passed. Basic education is more than just an end in itself. It is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development. It is also the building block upon which further levels of education and learning of other types have to rest on. Delay in education related decisions may have lasting impacts for a whole generation. It has taken two whole decades for the government to become more proactive in dealing with the issue of migrant children education. We can afford no more delay.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has the right to education.

This simple and straightforward statement is what is explicitly stated in the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Subsequent international treaties have repeatedly stated and established education as a basic human right to children regardless of race, nationality, gender and religions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty, reaffirms the right to free and compulsory primary schooling and emphasizes child well-being and development. With the exception of those extremely poor nations or for those *fragile states* which are consistently troubled by warfare, natural hazards and other factors making governance extremely difficult and unstable, the gradual elevation of the overall economic conditions and standard of living have raised the expectation of education rights too. For nations with a comparatively stable situation and promising economic and social progress, it is reasonable to have an expectation that not only should early education at the primary level be secured for all children, wider opportunities for advancement to early secondary should also be made available. At the national level, the government has the indisputable duty to translate this conception of "education right" into legislation, to set up relevant public administration mechanisms to enforce and monitor its actualization, to mobilize public resources to implement what have been accepted as national responsibility, and to realize the national goals and standard on education. .

In the year 1990, the *World Declaration on Education for All* adopted at Jomtien confirmed the international goal of *Education for All*. It stated explicitly that:

Every person — child, youth and adult — shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy,

and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning” (UNESCO, 1990, p.14).

Then at the *World Education Forum* in 2000:

164 governments, 35 international institutions and 127 non-government organizations adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, promising to commit the necessary resources and effort to achieve a comprehensive and inclusive system of quality education for all (UNESCO, 2007, p.11).

The World Education Forum put this up with a firm belief and strong consensus that literacy is a fundamental human right. It is also a “springboard for reducing poverty and broadening participation in society”. For people from the rural sector in China, this is highly relevant even 10 years after the Forum. For migrant workers in particular, the generally low literacy level if left not uplifted will surely further marginalize them and their families, children included, and to prevent them from participating in the social development even if they spend another ten or twenty years as migrants.

With enviable economic development and social progress in the last three decades, China has indeed made significant progress in many fronts. However, lack of access to education is still not uncommon in the rural sector. In the case of migrant children, no access to education, or simply being barred from education because of

their place of origin, is still an issue even in some prominent cities like Beijing. Moreover, improving the quality of education remains a challenge. As revealed by the migrant school that was studied in this research, even it is being regarded as “one of the best of its kind”, the education quality is still questionable. Inadequate national investment is one of the fundamental explanations for this contradictory phenomenon - rapid economic growth for two decades, while the improvement made in education has been slow. Since 1993, fifteen years after the economic reform and open-door policy was adopted, the Central Government announced the national goal to allocate 4% of the GDP on education. From then, another fifteen years have already passed. This policy goal is still something to wait for until 2012.

Although it is fairer to say that access to education for most urban children has been guaranteed, rural kids are still lagging long behind. For children of migrant workers, the situation is still far behind satisfactory.

In the urban context, education is going to face up with increasing enrolment pressures as more people from the rural areas come settling down, migrant workers in China have the additional impact to education as they are quite often in the cycles of settling down and moving around, school administrations and local governments may find it difficult to accurately project needs and to make sensible planning. How to make urban schools to accommodate the children of these migrants is indeed a pressing policy concern. Difficult it may be, the international commitment mentioned and the public obligations as stated in the Compulsory Education Law leave no room for the government to evade. Moreover, China is no longer a fragile state lacking those factors, such as financial capability, administrative strengths and stable policy environment, to offer better education to migrant children. What is lacking now is the

policy will, a long term vision, as well as the determination to get it done the sooner the better.

The comprehensive list of actions proposed in light of the protective, preventive, promotive and transformative dimensions as put forward by the Social Protection Perspective is considered a practically feasible approach to deal with the issue. It may appear idealistic and without modeling on costs and resources implications. Yet all those measures are indeed tangible and practically feasible. Even if not at the national level, to pilot this in some selected localities is believed to be highly possible.

As mentioned, the central government and some local governments actually possess the strengths to try this scheme out. Moreover, the government, when promoting the actualization of education rights, is not alone as it is backed up by an actively involved alliance. Nowadays, the civil society of China is developing rapidly, NGOs, as well as other organizations in the informal sector, have been playing an increasingly significant role in social development. The media has become more and more socially conscious and has more rooms for social intervention and social monitoring in its professional ways. Academic circles are also becoming more actively coming out from the ivory tower so as to perform their role as social consciences as well as think tanks for proper policy.

The scheme proposed here is therefore not just a demand for state commitment, but a process of social engagement. Even with all those problems and improper practice exposed, with the limitations of the various stakeholders identified, and with the difficulties of migrants themselves explored, the prospect for improvement is still optimistic if different sectors in the society are genuinely concerned with education

and are engaged as an alliance to have those issues properly dealt with, to prevent deprivation, to have the education right of migrant children protected, to promote inclusion and integration, and to transform the society into one that treasures learning and improvement, so as to make it the building block and social capital upon which the national quality be uplifted and further transformed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

NOW, LOOKING BACK

Take a deep breath.

In the last stage of the study, I have been functioning like an octopus, working at the same time on many fronts, writing the last part of the thesis, checking the bibliography, polishing the language and changing the format. The workload was getting me down, so that I started making jokes about the various kinds of side-effects of taking an M.Phil program and comparing this moment to the darkest hours before dawn. I know that soon after I submit the thesis, I will instantly feel relieved.

However, in the heart of my hearts, I am holding on tightly to the last piece of my work, feeling so reluctant to let it go. I have enjoyed every part of it, and, I am emotionally attached to it.

I have picked a meaningful topic (might deserve a scoffing smile for saying so, as hardly any other researcher does not regard their researches meaningful and rewarding). The study sent me to a group of people who originally should have little contact with my life. As a native Beijinger, I have been exposed to the rapid development and growing affluence of this capital, growing up together with the hastening economic development. As a result, I am totally unfamiliar with what had been happening everyday for those migrant children from the migrant communities.

While getting closer to them, I found that their stories are so appealing and complicated. The children, in particular, touched my heart. Seeing them unfairly treated in the society, making me feel that it is my obligation to help them voice out their hardships, let other people feel their miseries through my work, and most importantly, call for changes to them. It is this feeling that encouraged me to go on working whenever I lost my patience working like an octopus.

There is the obligation that connects me to the work, making me emotionally attached.

Will it make me sound arrogant to say that I feel sorry for those children? Being raised up in the capital makes me feel afraid to see things through my limited angle, but fail to grasp their interpretations. I admit that the majority of migrant children I met in the fieldwork enjoyed their lives on the urban outskirts. However, according to my observation, they were feeling so simply because they could now live together with their parents. It rarely has anything to do with those benefits (mostly imagined by us) given to them by an urban life. In fact, they are generally poor, some are extremely poor. A few who are better-off are just “comparative” to their immediate communities.

Many of those children were in fact born and growing up in Beijing, never have they returned to their hometowns. Most have no plan to turn back. However, because of their very background as migrants and their lack of local *hukou*, they seem to be destined to stay behind in migrant communities. For instance, those girls and boys from the family of Dong, over their years living in Daxing, have only been to the city

centre a couple of times. None of them has tried the city's subway; not to mention other more expensive facilities.

The city has hardly done anything good to them, failing to demonstrate its hospitality.

Almost every family visited in the research is trapped in certain kinds of poverty. The deepest impression is the impoverished living context those migrant children and their families are experiencing every day. Given the tiny piece of space, poor lighting, poor hygiene, and the collection of broken furniture, their homes are by no means ideal places for school-age children. The majority of the families I visited could not afford a desk or a desk lamp for their children. Outside their homes, a glance at the surroundings would simply suggest that, given their lack of facilities and resources, migrant communities can hardly benefit migrant children, either. On the contrary, temptations of all kinds might also drag them away from their studies, making them end up idling on the streets, or even start developing unhealthy habits like smoking and drinking. As education is taken for granted by most, they have to struggle for it. Even if they can get access, the cost, both economic and personal, would be huge, while the quality of education they receive is just “promising” if the principle of “some schooling is always better than no schooling at all” is to be taken. Lacking adequate education would simply exert a devastating impact on their future, impeding their long-term interests in a variety of ways.

While parents are supposed to prepare kids for education, it is not always the case for migrant children. For the impoverished and the marginal sector in the society, nothing is absolutely indispensable, and education for children is often something

they can afford to do without when other fundamentals to living are in pressing need. I agree that the majority of migrant parents treasured education and have been trying very hard to get it and keep it for their children. However, there are simply some migrant parents who are restricted by their own limitations. Like the big horizontal family of Dong, it is their tradition to honor only the male children. With too many children to support, they simply could not afford a quality education for their children. And it is always the girls who suffer most. For many other migrant parents, even if they wanted to treasure education, they are just without the ability to work through the various economic barriers and administrative hurdles to secure their children a place in public schools. Migrant schools, as an alternative, or as a reasonable option for some migrant families, are just what they deserve to have.

In light of all these, in the early state of my research, I started reviewing literature on the birth rights of children to education and development. So have I collected evidence pointing to the needs of the children that the society is obliged to fulfill. And the theoretical underpinnings of this research became much clearer when I suddenly have a much deeper understanding on the concept of social protection, the very inclusive concept that could embody the above two aspects of my considerations. I am convinced that conceiving education as a fundamental social protection provision is the best way to secure migrant children a brighter future and transform them into genuine members of the mainstream's of the society.

Personally, I agree to the idea of “transformative aspect” of social protection most. Unlike the traditional “safety net” which evolved around basic means for a living, transformative measures of social protection propose fundamental solutions to

transcend them from their vulnerabilities, to work through those life situations caused by the unfairness and the inequality deeply embedded in the overall system.

Social protection seemed to me the best means to call for a complete change.

THOSE PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

Players in the field, including migrant schools, public schools, migrant parents, local governments, academic circles, mass media, and NGOs as well, surely have further condensed the complexity of the issue. Their various performances on the stage have dazzled our eyes. Usually, these individual parties have their own angles to address the issue. Some would have their own interests to take care of prior to those of the migrants, which in turn may have weakened their roles in helping migrant children.

The most unbearable aspect is the bureaucratic response of some officials to the issue. Apparently they lack passion and commitment, sticking to red-tapes, unwilling to take risks, and without courage and motivation to think outside the box. Remember Mr. L from the BMEC who refused to sign the consent form? The official answered all the questions in such a diplomatic manner, refusing to disclose more information. However, is it truly necessary for them to keep this issue to such a sensitive level that information collected in their own researches has to be kept confidential? And, is that necessary for the government to be so detached from the other stakeholders?

The answers are “probably not”, as long as they could consider switching their channels to programs truly benefiting the vulnerable groups in the society.

However, it could be a mistake to overlook the effort made by some of those officials working on the frontline. The very existence of Mr. Z, an experienced educator and retired official, reminds us of the fact that there are indeed quite a number of officials, rather than neglecting the education needs of migrant children purposefully, are held back by the lack of strong support from central government. Without backups of all kinds, they are forced by the administrative power to absorb migrant children with insufficient financial budget and the absence of concrete measures to follow. Just like the saying goes: “even a clever housewife cannot prepare a meal without rice”. Those governments working along the frontline should be provided with more substantial assistances, rather than some grand principle and guidelines printed on the paper. In this sense, the central government is very important in the issue, not only for its directive role, but also for its more generous financial supports.

Likewise, local public schools on the frontline have to be viewed more objectively. Lacking strength, financial particularly, public schools are exposed to the pressure exerted by the local governments. Meanwhile, rejection from local families is another headache of theirs. Some of them, like *Guang'an*, are willing to try to help migrant children, but at huge cost. Some others make hurdles, such as heavy fees and complicated enrollment procedures, to save themselves from the trouble of taking up migrant children. This means that different approaches should be adopted to deal with them.

As to migrant schools, even though, at this stage, they are playing an indispensable role, in the long-run, they are merely of transitional character. In order to safeguard the interests of those migrant children attending them, better supervision and monitoring are badly desired.

Finally, academic circles, mass media and NGOs could contribute greatly to the development of the issue, as they somehow demonstrate significant impact to shaping the social discourse. But on one hand, they have to be made better informed so as not to be misguided by some self interested school operators. On the other hand, they could consider expanding their services to more diversified areas, but not confined to voluntary services such as teaching, training and psychological consultation.

Again, we can depend on the social protection for a better cooperation and coordination among these various stakeholders, because apart from statutory provisions, social protection also emphasizes a broad range of non-statutory welfare arrangements and institutions. In the framework put forward by ADB, micro and area-based schemes are an important component, in which stakeholders like academics, mass media and NGOs could give full play to their abilities. In order to truly benefit migrant children, we must draw on the strengths of social protection to integrate these various resources.

A LITTLE PIECE OF ADVICE FOR FUTURE RESEARCHS

Firstly, of course, there is a desperately strong need for more and more researches focusing on the social protection for migrant children. By reviewing the social

protection agenda and conceptualizing the social protection framework in the context of China, this study is a preliminary attempt. It offers to all an enlightening perspective to examine the impact of education for migrant children, points to a general direction for academic research, and proposes a practical theoretical framework to shed light on further attempts. This research is like a frame, and future researches along this line are expected to fill it with flesh.

Any social welfare needs to be supported by systematic fiscal plan, so does the social protection for migrant children. Researches endeavoring to build up a fiscal scheme for it are thus urgently needed. Also, further attempts to formulate much concrete measures, supporting policies, and detailed guidelines are also needed.

Then, there are enough researches on migrant children's accessibility to education, why not shift our attention to the quality of the education received by them? After all, it is the quality of the education service they have that will critically influence their education outcomes, and in turn shape their future lives. Moreover, in light of the existence of different education providers, it is a good idea to compare the education outcomes of these children attending different types of schools. To make it even grander, why not drag left-behind children into this comparative study scheme, to explore where and how the children of migrant workers can be ensured a better perspective regarding their academic careers?

Finally, since staying longer in the field may lead to a completely different understanding towards the units under observation, I sincerely suggest other researchers to spend longer time doing their fieldwork. As far as I am concerned, the

emotional attachment between the qualitative researchers and the migrant children is the best reward for doing researches in this aspect.

TO CONCLUDE

Take another deep breath.

So, reluctantly, I have to say goodbye.

in Hong Kong

APPENDIX 1

ENGLISH VERSION OF CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

The interview is conducted on _____ in _____. The interview is conducted by Miss Qi Ji, who is a research student of the Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University. This is going to constitute part of the research study on Education for Migrant Children in Beijing. The interview is solely for the purpose of academic study. The research student guarantees that all personal information collected during the discussion will be used exclusively for no other purpose; all identification data would be concealed; all voice records will be destroyed after reasonable period. The interviewee(s) is/are duly informed of this and herein sign to indicate consent for the interview.

Signature of Interviewee:

Date:

APPENDIX II

CHINESE VERSION OF CONSENT FORM

同意书

本次采访日期为_____月_____日。采访者祁霁，现就学于香港理工大学，应用社会科学系。本次采访所得信息将用于以“在北京流动儿童所受的教育”为题的论文。本次采访的目的仅限于学术研究。采访者保证访问中所涉及的个人信息不会另作他用；所有涉及被采访者身份的信息都将被保密，所有语音记录在一段时间后都将会被销毁。被采访者已被告知以上信息，并且同意签署此文件。

被采访者签名:

日期:

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