

# Chapter 19

## Liquidation of Labour Markets and Adult Education in China

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### Introduction

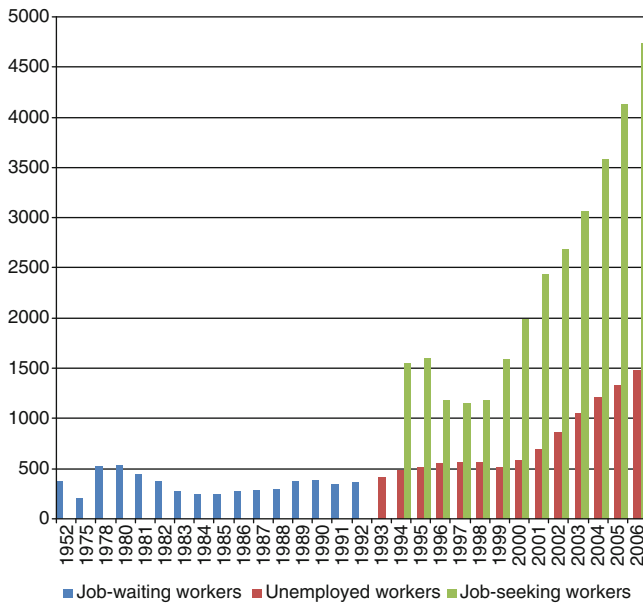
Along with a rapid economic development, the labour market in China is increasingly liquidizing, causing job changes or turnovers to become a normal state. This social phenomenon was triggered partly by the introduction of free labour market of school graduates after the abolition of the job-assignment system for higher education graduates in 1992, which was the last vestige of the socialist system of the Chinese government. The job-assignment system was a labour force management measure, where graduates of secondary education or higher were distributed systematically to production sectors in society based on the forecasts of human resources demand in a planned economy. Nonetheless, in connection with the introduction of market principle, the Chinese government had abolished this system first for secondary education, and then for higher education in 1992, thereby the human resources and labour markets were liberalized at a stretch. Until then, unemployment in socialist China was theoretically non-existent, and thus unemployed workers were called 'job-waiting' workers, or a labour force waiting for a work to be assigned to them. The concept of unemployment, however, was introduced in 1993, and in the following year, unemployed workers were statistically numbered as a 'job-seeking' labour force in the market. The transition of the figures is as shown in Fig. 19.1.

In fact, characteristically speaking, the movement towards the abolition of the above job-assignment system for higher education institutions was not specifically introduced by the government. Rather, it was first led by the actual market condition and later nationally confirmed by the adoption of corresponding political measures. In the late 1980s, the job-assignment system for university graduates was already not functioning properly due to the introduction of market economy. In those days,

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**Fig. 19.1** Transition in number of job-waiting, unemployed, and job-seeking workers (units of 10,000) (1952 to 1992: job-waiting workers/From 1993: unemployed workers/After 1994: job-seeking workers and job-seeking but unemployed workers/1994 and 1995: a total number of registered job-seeking workers/From 1996: number of newly registered job-seeking workers per year) (Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of China 1987*, compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, published by China Statistics Press in 1987. All the source publications listed below are compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics of China and published by China Statistics Press: 1987 (1987 Edition), 1988 (1988 Edition), 1989 (1989 Edition), 1990 (1990 Edition), 1991 (1991 Edition), 1992 (1992 Edition), 1993 (1993 Edition), 1994 (1994 Edition), 1995 (1995 Edition), 1996 (1996 Edition), 1997 (1997 Edition), 1998 (1998 Edition), 1999 (1999 Edition), 2000 (2000 Edition), 2001 (2001 Edition), 2002 (2002 Edition), 2003 (2003 Edition), 2004 (2004 Edition), 2005 (2005 Edition), 2006 (2006 Edition), 2007 (2007 Edition))

a recruitment procedure termed as ‘demand-and-supply meeting and two-way selection’ (a job-seeker and recruiter contact each other and mutually make their decision) was normally practised; a job-seeking university student voluntarily visited a company he/she was interested in, received an informal appointment and then reported it to the university, which in turn ‘assigned’ that company to the student. The government had no choice but to approve that practice by 1989. The official abolition of the job-assignment system for college graduates was tantamount to approving the ‘demand-and-supply meeting and two-way selection’ already implemented and to declaring free labour market, which shifted (in 1995) to the process of ‘two-way selection and voluntary job selection’ (a job-seeker and recruiter mutually make their own decisions and the student voluntarily selects a job) (Zeng 2004, 29–30). This political measure raised the economic development to the second stage after the stagnation caused by the Tiananmen Square crackdown on the democratization demonstrations in 1989, and marked a milestone for the shift in Chinese

society after Deng Xiaoping's southern tour that triggered today's rapid economic development in the country.

After that, the labour market in China was rapidly liquidized and the pressure to proceed on to higher education was heightened. Particularly, since the end of the 1990s, while taking up higher education was rapidly promoted, pervasion of basic level education in inland regions was coming to full implementation and thus secondary education, mainly on vocational courses, began to be pervaded. This development exerted an effect of pushing out young workers in poverty areas to the urban areas in the eastern coastal zone as an industrial labour force. Along with the transformation in people's employment status, not only the labour force liquidity in the urban area was activated, but also the population fluidity intensified on a nationwide scale. Especially, a large number of migrant workers began to flow out and into the urban areas in the eastern coastal zone (Makino 2006, Chap. 6). The floating population of 34,127,607 in 1985 increased to 144,390,748 in 2000. Most of such floating population were migrants from rural to urban areas and from inland poverty districts to the affluent eastern coastal zone (P. R. China, Population Census Office 1993 and 2002).

In the midst of such a phenomenal social change, a community-based, educational security scheme called 'Community Education' has been rapidly disseminated and developed, especially in metropolitan areas, as a kind of safety net measure. This, on one hand, assures opportunities of vocational education and technical training for promoting stable life and employment against intensifying job transfer and turnover and, on the other hand, provides learning opportunities in rapidly liquidizing urban areas for fostering mutual understanding and recognition among the residents as well as for responding to the increasing interest in various cultures in order to stabilize urban life and public safety (Makino 2006, Chap. 7). This educational programme is integrated also with the trend for recurrent higher education and changes in advanced vocational education over the existing adult education.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to clarify the relationship between the current situation and the education provided in Chinese society, where floating populations are intensifying particularly in the urban area, focusing especially on the relationship between the drastic expansion of higher education and transformation in adult education, while giving consideration to possible measures for educational schemes that can address the social changes stemming from liquidation of labour market, with a view to comprehending the movement towards a new society wherein social changes and education are intertwined with each other.

## **Social Change and Education – From 'Unit' Socialism to Individual Market Economy**

### ***Trend of Educational Reform in the 1990s***

The transition in the decade of educational reform in China after 1992 can be generalized as follows (Makino 2006, Chap. 6): generally speaking, an education system structured as a national policy is socially established or reformed at times in the

process of conflict and formation of a mutually complement relationship between the national goal for economic development and the citizen's desire for improved household budget. Against this background, what kicks off a reform for an education system, which is a product of planning and calculated advantage on both sides of the state and the citizen, is the generation of a devastated condition among the children who receive the education and the collapse of mutually complementing relationship of the state and the citizen, which in turn causes failure in assuring the people of education opportunities, or stagnation in economic development, which curbs the prospect of improved household income despite acquiring higher education status.

The pervasion of public education system and the formation of an academic career-based society in China is also basically a reflection of the features of the modern public education system. This can be plainly recognized in the rapid pervasion of basic education and rise in university enrolment rate; the expansion, amplification as well as diversification of secondary education and the sharp transition to an academic career-based society, especially in the urban area, and worsening negative effects of such development, particularly after 1992. Against such a background, the following educational reforms had been attempted throughout the 1990s.

First of all, as for the devastated condition of school children resulting from excessive competition and selection in an academic career-based society, measures were taken for a changeover from the information force-feeding teaching style aimed at entrance exams (cram education) to a kind of education that helps students cultivate an inquisitive capacity for developing their own abilities by themselves and stimulate their various natural qualities (quality education). Further measures were also established for improving university entrance examination and for utilizing a variety of educational resources in local communities (Makino 1998a , b).

Secondly, vocational education, which was conventionally regarded as an adult education programme that can be received while being hired, was incorporated in the curriculum of secondary education or higher. In other words, it was shifted to public education, and consequently, a variety of vocational secondary schools as well as vocational universities were set up in each locality, thus promoting the structuring of an academic career assurance system for vocational education.

Thirdly, adult education, which was recently included in the official administrative terms of the Chinese government, quickly disseminated and was accepted among the general public after the Decision on the Reform of the Education System was made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1985. In addition, an adult education system was rapidly prepared in the 1990s as an independent education system, separate from the public school education system (Makino 1998c). Moreover, the contents that compose adult education underwent considerable changes as follows: (1) Adult education started as a measure against a loss of human resources and deterioration in labour force quality due to the Cultural Revolution, and to provide vocational training to employees and academic career-targeted education in response to the formation of an academic career-based society. (2) In the early 1990s, post-graduation education with a prospect of lifelong learning was incorporated. (3) And then in 1995, with the enactment of the Education Act of People's Republic of China, vocational training for employees was removed

from the category of adult education and in turn, a vocational education system was regularized, and also cultural and liberal arts education, which can be regarded as civic education, was incorporated in time (Makino 1998c).

Fourthly, as adult education came to be characterized more strongly as lifelong learning, although it still acted harmoniously with public education, it had begun to establish its new role as a unique education system rather than being a system that complemented public education. For example, Community Education had been actively implemented in each community in conjunction with the movement to form a learning community through structuring a citizen learning system in the smallest administrative districts. Also, adult higher education focusing on recurrent education had been rapidly promoted in connection with academic career education or continuous education.

Fifthly, while adult education had been established as a functioning public education system, much like the conventional one, its financial resources were diverse. For instance, Community Education was managed and funded not by the central government, but by each local community. Similarly, adult higher education was provided by private higher education institutions or new educational instruments managed by existing universities (i.e. adult education or continuing education graduate schools), which had grown quickly by accommodating the citizen's need for higher academic career and advanced continuing education. In this way, the provider of adult education was diversified (Makino 1998c).

### ***New Movement of Adult Education and Growing Liquidation of Society***

The trend mentioned above indicates that a rearrangement of education systems was advancing in China in the 1990s. Under a new situation where an academic career-based society was established especially in the urban area while the pervasion of basic and secondary education was almost completed, the role of vocational education was rearranged or exchanged between the public education and the adult education structured as an education system separate from public education. In a similar fashion, establishment of a new education system based on adult education as well as rearrangement of the existing education systems were promoted with a view to overcoming the negative effects of academic career-based society and to engage the government's goal of economic development and the citizen's goal of higher life standard into a desirable circle.

Additionally, what is signified by this rearrangement of education systems, particularly adult education, is the rapidly accelerating liquidation of Chinese society. Firstly, the speedy diversification and expansion of adult higher education suggest that a sharp increase in the number of people who desired additional or higher academic career in the existing academic career-based society where job transfer or unemployment was becoming a normalcy and a pervasion of recurrent education among the public in the urban area were taking place. It also meant that the liquidity in labour market was growing rapidly.

Secondly, the fact that vocational education was handed over from the conventional training provided under employment or at various in-house schools or training facilities to a standard public education system signifies that corporations or enterprises, which conventionally took the responsibility of providing vocational education, were finding it increasingly difficult to provide such education. In other words, the actual situation no longer regarded vocational education after employment as an appropriate measure.

Thirdly, in local communities in the urban area where basic education had been almost completely pervaded, a movement to acquire cultural and liberal arts education was promoted by the general public, while Community Education that provided a variety of education programmes as a civil service in such smallest administrative segments as towns was actively set up and pervaded. This movement denotes that, for one thing, the major part of the urban citizen life was shifted from the company or workplace of their own employment to the local community where their own lives were located. It could be said that the mode of urban life was being converted from working life as a labourer to community life as a citizen, and such a trend was recognized more and more clearly. As a second point, members comprising a local community were always moving in and out, and thus human relationships in a community had become vague. Thirdly, as a result of a large influx of migrants from outside the urban area, public safety and relationships between the residents were deteriorated, which entailed the need to address the related problems peculiar to each community by means of providing adequate education. In short, the population fluidity advanced rapidly not only inside the urban area but between city and city as well as between city and rural area, or, in other words, the labour market was being formed on a large scale beyond the conventional city borders during the process of the urban area accepting the incoming migrant labour force.

### ***From Unit Socialism to Individual Market Economy***

The above movements surrounding the educational reform since the beginning of the 1990s are interrelated with one another and collectively indicate the following: Firstly, while the rearrangement of education systems began to take place through liquidation of Chinese society and is promoting the liquidation even further, this liquidation of Chinese society has caused a great change in the life of the citizen, who had been a labour force or an employee of a corporations or an institution to which he had belong, to becoming a citizen of a local community away from his own workplace; secondly, interrelated to the first point, the labour market itself is also liquidizing and being formed on a nationwide scale geared by the citizen's desire for a better life, which in turn motivates the migration of labour force; and thirdly, as a result of the previous movement, although corporations or institutions conventionally carried out employee/staff education according to their own needs, provision of such in-house education or training has become difficult or unnecessary since each worker is developing or upgrading his/her own working capacity in his/her own responsibility. This trend implies that citizens are undergoing a process

of shifting from a life mode where their being and lives are regulated mainly by their employers, to where their being and lives are defined individually in the background of each local community in which their lives are based.

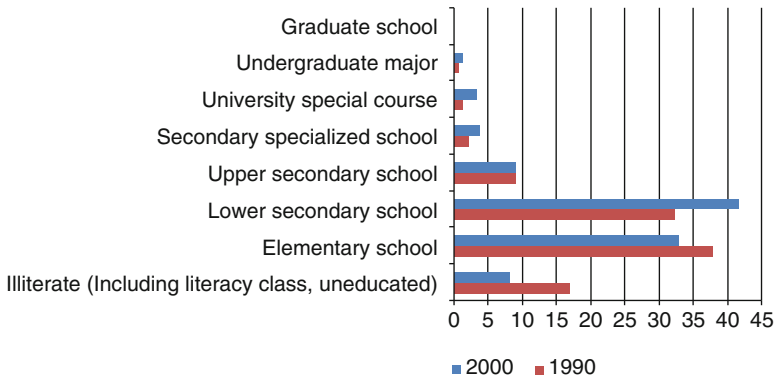
The above-mentioned structural transformation of Chinese society is founded on a large transition in the individual identity of the citizen. In China, a corporate entity (including various administrative institutions) to which a citizen belongs is termed as a 'Unit'. The Unit, as a basic unit of society, was what defined the conventional Chinese socialism, and the people formed their own identity by means of the Unit, while their lives were managed and assured by the Unit which also regulated their social relationships. In other words, the entire scope of citizen's life itself was represented by the Unit. Along with the rapid advancement of market economy, however, the Unit proved to be ineffectual as a welfare function for assuring civil life, and as signified by the bankruptcy of state-run corporations, giving priority to efficiency necessitated outsourcing of various services related to the lives of the people, and thus the people were cut off from the Unit and being forced to live as independent individuals, which in turn began to take on the meaning of free market for the Chinese people. Together with the progress of market economy, as the welfare function of the Unit was socialized and the labour-production function of the Unit was exposed to the efficiency-first principle, citizens were thrown out of the Unit to the market where they live as independent labours as well as consumers who work on their own to earn income and purchase services necessary for their own lives. I once termed this social transformation as a conversion from the Unit socialism to individual market economy (Makino 2006, Chap. 6).

It can be said that the above rearrangement of the education systems centred on adult education was a social reform, which was inevitably promoted for citizens who were thrown out to the market society where they had to live as independent individuals in the midst of transformation of life from the Unit socialism to individual market economy. On the other hand, it is already evident that in such a society, public education is utilized as a system or tool for assuring an improved life, and that along with the rapid advancement of people's awareness towards higher education, it undergoes a substantial change from information force-feeding, academic career-oriented society to a learning society that focuses on recurrent or continuing education in pursuit of ceaseless knowledge upgrading.

## **New Situation Surrounding Liquidation of Society and Education – Focused Higher and Adult Education**

### ***Drastic Expansion of Higher Education and Employment Shortage***

Such a rapid formation and progress of an academic career-based society is directly manifested by an upgraded academic career distribution of workers as well as a rise in the enrolment rate to higher educational institutions. As shown in Fig. 19.2, the



**Fig. 19.2** Transition in academic career distribution among employed workers (*Sources: 1990 Population Census of China (Volume 2)*, compiled by the Population Census Office under the State Council and the Dept. of Population Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics, published by China Statistics Press in 1993. *2000 Population Census of China (Volume 2)*, compiled by the Population Census Office under the State Council and the Dept. of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics, published by China Statistics Press in 2002)

upgraded academic career distribution can be recognized outstandingly in the comparison between the figures of 1990 and 2000. The figures include employed illiterate workforces, whose ratio has been reduced to half in a decade, while the number of basic education career has decreased and lower secondary education graduates increased by about 10%, exceeding the 40% mark, testifying to the rapid pervasion of the 9-year compulsory public education. On top of that, although relatively small in absolute number (or percentage against total), secondary specialized school graduates increased by about 1.5 times, university special course graduates soared by roughly 3 times and those who completed undergraduate majors almost doubled, thus clearly indicating that the academic career distribution saw a substantial improvement in the 1990s.

Concerning the expansion of higher education opportunities, after the abolition of the job-assignment system for graduates of higher education institutions in 1992, the Chinese government adopted a political measure to suppress the rise in enrolment rate by fixing enrolment capacity during the twentieth century in an effort to avoid a rapid expansion in higher education. However, the public pressure to progress onto higher education drastically intensified while universities began to accept privately funded students, who were not included in a budget frame set by the state higher education policy. As a result, the state-led higher education policy was shaken and the measure for fixing enrolment capacity collapsed. The government officially approved in its ordinance in 1995 the acceptance of privately funded students and those not subject to job mediation (Zeng 2004, 30–31), and then issued a tuition collection standard in 1999 that thoroughly granted universities to collect school fees with a view to expanding enrolment capacity. Consequently, admission



capacity for higher education in China soared, and the number of enrolling and graduated students increased substantially.

As universities were allowed to admit a certain number of students to enrol as out-of-plan students and collect school fees from them in 1992, which was also the year the job-assignment system was abolished, the student admission capacity expanded. The number of graduates only slightly increased around 3–4 years later, but as the enrolment capacity boosted from 1999, the number of graduates also showed a remarkable increase after 3–4 years after that. (This phenomenon is due to the fact that in China, university students can choose between a special course of 3 years and a major of 4 years. In this chapter, the former is termed as the university special course and the latter, the undergraduate major.) As a result, the number of graduates from full-time regular higher education institutions, which was about 1 million in 2001, jumped to about 2.4 million in 2004, to 3.07 million in 2005, and to 5 million in 2007. In addition, a new type of higher educational institutions, namely, private higher education institutions have begun to send out their graduates to society since 2005 in units of half a million every year. As a result, graduates are facing difficulty in finding employment, which aggravated recruitment competition and avoidance from being employed.

As a remarkable tendency, the survey conducted by the Graduate School of Education of Peking University signifies that the expansion of opportunities for higher education triggers difficulty in job finding, thereby diminishing students' positive attitude for finding employment. Also, the following factors supposedly account for such a change in students' awareness: (1) the master degree holders have an overwhelming advantage in finding employment over undergraduates taking majors, and there is little difference between those who have completed undergraduate majors and university special courses; (2) gender has a large bearing on the advantage in employment with the male having an overwhelming advantage; (3) high-scoring students, those having a state-authorized English ability certificate, or those who have served on a student body association, have an advantage in finding employment, while scholarship, Communist Party membership, or double-major diploma does not have a meaningful effect; and (4) those coming from a family with rich social resources, especially financial and cultural resources, have advantage in finding employment, particularly those whose families are based in the urban area (Yang 2008).

Having said the above, in order to overcome such disadvantageous factors and to prevail over the competitors in the job market, students need to seek for even higher academic career. In other words, they would make it their goal to advance to a master's degree course to secure future employment, and consequently a situation called 'over education' would present itself, which refers to a condition where a person receives a level of education needlessly higher than the type of work intended to be engaged in. According to a survey taken by the Graduate School of Education of Peking University, due to the drastic expansion of higher education opportunities, over 46% of university graduates have constantly admitted to receiving over education on a self-assessment basis (Wen 2008). Such phenomenon and awareness of receiving over education seems to have an effect on further liquidation of labour market.

## ***Transformation in Adult Education and Learning Towards Vocational and Technical Education***

Against the background of the afore-mentioned transformation in Chinese society and changes in deployment as well as characteristics of adult education, the issues involving adult education in China can be grasped from the following three angles: (a) construction of adult education and lifelong learning/learning society, (b) relationship between lifelong learning and public education, and (c) relationship between vocational education or adult education and lifelong learning (Makino 2006, Chap. 7).

### **Construction of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning/Learning Society**

Conventionally in China, adult education was structured to be characterized as if ‘walking with two legs’. Adult education was designed as an informal education system, in comparison to the regular public education system, whereby a variety of educational services such as academic career compensation education or vocational education could be provided to adults over the school age or to employed adults with a view to cultivating human resources contributing to the society needs of the time, especially economic development, as well as to giving people an employment assurance. In there, all stages from literacy to higher education were incorporated. Moreover, the idea of ‘walking with two legs’ has come to be applied to the recent situation amid the quick development of market economy wherein the realm of public education assurance and that of private sectors are co-existing while maintaining their segregated scopes even in adult education system. In such a context, adult education has been advanced to a system that not only complements public education but has its own independent system.

In the wake of the expansion of labour market and economic development as well as subsequently intensifying population fluidity in China, particularly after 1992, the mode of civil life has shifted from the ‘one-off employment’ in the framework of job assignment in the Unit socialism system to ‘multiple employment opportunities’ or an employment mode of repeating job transfer or turnover as a free labour force in the labour market, which is becoming a standard employment practice, while the public demand for education is also shifting to a new mode of ceaseless upgrading of knowledge, skills, and techniques by means of recurrent education. At present, public education is required to make a changeover from the conventional function of providing academic career as well as succession, handover and accumulation of knowledge, skills and techniques to a function of lifelong learning, and this is where the fusing with the conventional adult education has become increasingly evident. Establishment of a lifelong learning system has become indispensable to reorganize public education from the standpoint of incorporation of adult education, with a view to building a learning society where public education and adult education are integrated together.

### **Relationship Between Lifelong Learning and Public Education**

In connection with constructing a learning society, the relationship between the intended lifelong learning system and the existing public education system shall be brought into question. What is being considered currently is a rearrangement of the functions of public education, while maintaining its function, from the standpoint of adult education to implement what is called a 'one-school, multifunction' system. The idea is that, while maintaining the system of schools and its function as a public education system, this function is to be modified to be multifunctioning by opening it to society in view of lifelong learning. This idea has been adopted in positioning schools in Community Education. Under the circumstance where a citizen is forced to change his/her identity from a worker whose life is ensured by the Unit to an individual who has to take the responsibility of living on his/her own, an attempt is being made to restructure a local community as an education community with an expectation for education to assume a new role as a measure to smoothly promote the changeover of social position of each citizen and their retention into a local community while supporting job transfer and turnover, ensuring their lives and promoting an integration between the existing and incoming citizens. The Community Education is the mean designed to handle such expectations. To open a school to a lifelong learning system equals to providing the educational function of a school to this Community Education. A school is not a place of cultivating citizens or human resources in isolation from society, but rather is one of Community Education bases open to the community, as well as one of important educational resources available to the local community, and further an important pillar for structuring an educational community. Moreover, through incorporating local educational resources, the unique educational function can be enriched and also the people in the community, who are a part of such educational resources, can receive educational impact in return.

By embedding and opening the school in a local community from the standpoint of lifelong learning, not only the school can be incorporated in the lifelong learning system but its innate, unique function itself can be reinforced. It provides a prospect of responding to the needs of people living in the local community and structuring a lifelong learning system that caters to the needs of the school.

### **Relationship Between Vocational Education/Adult Education and Lifelong Learning**

In addition to the above, when incorporating and reorganizing public education into adult education system, the positioning of vocational education becomes an issue to be addressed. The conventional vocational education was arranged exclusively in the framework of adult education and positioned as a part of employee education in the Unit. As already mentioned, however, the job-assignment system in higher education was abolished in 1992, and the distribution of labour forces through the market was institutionalized, even pushing some of the state corporations into bankruptcy, which consequently shifted Chinese society to the age of individual market economy

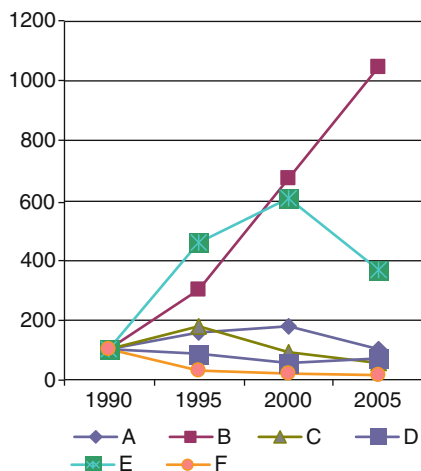
whereby workers constantly leave, change or find new employment. Since lifelong employment is no longer ensured for the employees in the above process, vocational education and training provided by the Unit had become a burden to the Unit, since assurance of employment came to lose its meaning. From this point on, the vocational education positioned as part of adult education was forced to be independent from the adult education system both from public and private standpoints and was required to establish its own system. Thus, the vocational school system began to be structured into the systems of lower education up to higher education as an independent system separate from the Unit. One of the manifestations of such a transition was the change in the designations of responsible departments. What were formerly called the Department of Adult Education of Ministry of Education in the central government administration and the Division of Adult Education of Education Bureau in a local government or similar were renamed as the Department of Vocational Education and Adult Education and the Division of Vocational and Adult Education, respectively, around 1995. In this way, vocational education was expressly designated as an independent administrative policy.

Against such a development surrounding vocational education, the adult education that had incorporated vocational education as one of its components was to expand its scope to continuous higher education, including short-term vocational training, recurrent education or evening schooling in response to the growing cases of job transfer or career build-up in the rapidly expanding labour market. For example, the existing full-time higher educational institution had set up an adult education school or continuing education facility for providing more highly advanced specialized knowledge and career. Also, Community Education collaborated with a full-time higher education or vocational higher education institution to open short-term training classes with a view to establish facilities and organizations that could accommodate the diversified education needs of the people. This trend had led to the establishment of a new role of adult education as a key system for structuring a lifelong learning system.

### ***Sophistication and Recurrence of Adult Education***

These three issues represent one major aim to which adult education shall be directed, namely, adult education is going to be reorganized into a lifelong learning system with recurrent-type vocational education as its core. Such a development is clearly suggested in the adult education reforms since the 1990s. The quantitative transition in adult education since 1990 is as shown in Fig. 19.3, which shows the changes in various types of adult education on an index basis with the figure of 1990 represented as 100.

As clearly recognized at a glance, in the 1990s, the ratio of the education for providing academic career, equivalent to primary education in terms of adult education (referred herein as ‘academic career education’), declined whereas the demand for higher education sharply grew. Also, the demand for the adult secondary school as



**Fig. 19.3** Quantitative transition in adult education (Index: 1990=100) *A* Adult higher education (majors and university special courses, except for the adult education department such as correspondence and evening courses at full-time higher education institutions), *B* The adult education department such as correspondence and evening courses at full-time higher education institutions (the figures of ‘*B*’ for 1995 and 2000 include the full-time adult education department in addition to correspondence and evening university courses), *C* Adult secondary specialized schools (2 years or more), *D* Adult secondary schools, *E* Adult technical training schools, *F* Adult primary schools (Sources: *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China 1990*, compiled by the Department of Planning Construction under the State Education Commission of the People’s Republic of China, published by People’s Education Press in 1991. *Educational Project Statistics Yearbook of China 1995*, compiled by the Department of Planning Construction under the State Education Commission of the People’s Republic of China, published by People’s Education Press in 1996. *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China 2000* (the cover is entitled, *Educational Project Statistics Yearbook of China*), compiled by the Department of Development & Planning of the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, published by People’s Education Press in 2001. *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China 2005*, compiled by the same department as the previous yearbook, published by People’s Education Press in 2006)

an academic career education institution that provided specialized vocational education increased in the early 1990s, but started to decrease in the latter half of the 1990s, while adult technical training schools that offered short-term vocational training on technical matters were constantly and strongly demanded. Such a transition implies that the compensation education or academic career assurance education for adults who lost the opportunity for learning due to the Cultural Revolution finished their mission, and through the great change in the governmental policies targeted for market economy, the demand for vocational education and technical education was to expand throughout the 1990s even in the realm of adult education.

However, the age in which acquired career or learning given by public education could be effective in one’s working life had already gone, and in turn, an economic structure has been rapidly created wherein the workers are required to learn and upgrade their own knowledge, skills and techniques continuously even after being employed. Also, as already mentioned, as a result of the formation of a new labour

market in the early 1990s that included those with higher education diploma, the pervasion of primary education in the public education system as well as the normalization or institutionalization of vocational education had been promoted, causing highly academic career structure of the workforce, which in turn accelerated the liquidation of the domestic labour force in China that consequently enhanced the level of and extended the period of adult education to be a lifelong learning process.

In addition, the demand for adult technical training schools that provide short-term vocational training constantly increased during the 1990s, which indicates that as the market economy quickly developed and the distribution of the workforce was shifted from the Unit socialism to individual market economy throughout the 1990s, the employee education, which was conventionally carried out inside the companies, were being outsourced, which in turn further promoted the liquidity of the workforce.

Furthermore, since 2000, the demand for short-term vocational training has declined, but the market has grown for a continuous, more advanced type of education provided by regular higher education institutions that can be received while still being employed. This trend suggests that, in the process of growing liquidation of labour market, the required intelligence and technical standard exceeds the level of secondary education and advancing even higher, while the education demand in response to such a development is also increasing. It can be observed that the demand for human resources was becoming higher and extending over lifetime.

Another interesting point is that the quantitative transition in various adult education schemes mentioned above has been following almost the same track as the shifts in the priority of the Chinese adult education policy, or the changes in the issues to which the adult education policy places the highest priority. The term 'adult education' was clearly entered into the official document of the Chinese government for the first time in 1985 in the Decision on the Reform of the Education System made by Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, wherein adult education was positioned as an important, integral part of the Chinese education system along with primary education, vocational education and regular higher education. Later, in 1986, a national adult education work conference was held for the first time since the foundation of the country, which gave importance to adult education in the frame of the national growth strategy, and in 1987, the Decision on the Reform and Development of Adult Education was promulgated by the State Council, expressly stating a strategic emphasis on adult education. At that time, the scope of adult education was (1) vocational training while employed, (2) complement for primary education, (3) academic career education (especially, higher education and secondary specialized school level), (4) continuous education (upgrading of knowledge and skills after finishing the major of higher education), and (5) culture and liberal arts education, but an emphasis was given to (1) vocational training while employed and (3) academic career education of the five elements.

After that, in 1993, based on the results of the educational reform and development that took 15 years after implementing the Reform and Open-Door Policy, the Chinese government promulgated the Guidelines for the Reform and Development of Education in China, jointly signed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council, which stated the basic policy and goals of educational

projects in view of the Chinese education prospects in the 1990s and beyond. In this guideline, adult education came to be positioned as a backbone ‘system’ that comprises a lifelong learning system closely linked with public education. Thereby, an emphasis was given to adult education as a ‘system’. Also, the guideline stipulated the priority of adult education to be (1) vocational training while employed, (3) academic career education, and (4) continuing education for further advancement of this education system of the above five elements.

Furthermore, in 1995, the Chinese government instituted and promulgated the Education Act of People’s Republic of China that fundamentally characterized education in China. This act gave a new role to adult education. Specifically, the structure of lifelong learning system was reviewed on the premise of pervasion of the 9-year compulsory education and normalization of vocational education, or in other words, improving it as part of public education, while positioning adult education as a basis of such learning system. However, a clear demarcation was drawn between the vocational education and the vocational training provided by the company after being employed, giving them clearly different roles. In this stage, a direction was given to the restructuring of the scope of adult education, that is, to remove the above (1) vocational training during employment from it, but to incorporate (3) academic career education (at the level of higher education), (4) continuing education as a more sophisticated form of education, and (5) cultural and liberal arts education as a type of civil education.<sup>1</sup> The liquidation of workers in labour market is now growing and expanding beyond control, and in response to such a movement, adult education is intensifying its recurrent characteristic with vocational training or technical training at its basis.

As can be clearly observed, the Chinese policy on adult education itself has been developed to respond to social transformation, through reorganizing its substance in such a way to adapt to the manner of economic policy changed from the already mentioned Unit socialism to individual market economy, and was even forced to accommodate the demands from the market, which was further liquidized beyond the political intention. Its phenomenal quantitative transition is what represented in Fig. 19.3 exhibited above.

### ***Intensifying Liquidation of Chinese Society and Transformation in Education***

The above-mentioned transformation in higher education and adult education in China presumably indicate the following: for one thing, population fluidity on a national scale; secondly, a change in academic career distribution among the employed population; and thirdly, increase in job transfer and turnover cases. In other words, (1) along with the introduction of free market economy, the job transfer and turnover of workers, especially that in the urban workforce, became a normal practice, which stimulated the liquidation of labour market and in turn, promoted the population migration, while an academic career-based society was formed in the urban city

through ongoing economic development wherein the people came to give importance on higher academic career or new knowledge and skills for new job opportunities or career build-up, which in turn promoted the sophistication and pervasion of education. (2) The rapid development of economy, particularly the second industry in the urban area and growing liquidation of the labour market, had expanded the urban population fluidity over to the inland area that was capable of supplying lower cost labour forces, which in turn triggered a shift from the fluidity within the urban area to the migration outside the area, especially a population influx into the urban area. In this process, the sophistication of the inland education level had raised their cultural standard and equipped the people who otherwise could not have been employed as industrial labour forces, enabling the substantial and smooth migration of labour forces from the inland area to coastal metropolises. (3) In addition, such a constant demand for new knowledge or higher academic career stemming from the economic development and population liquidation expanded the physical basis and social demand of education, and thus rapidly advanced the educational undertaking. (4) Each of these three factors were the causes and likewise the effects of one another in a circle relation, but the stage wherein these three factors form a closed loop to promote economic development has come close to an end. Nonetheless, utilization of this loop by the general public is further accelerating the social liquidity that creates a new demand of a higher level of human resources, which then necessitates the society to provide recurrent education based on vocational technical education, or the recurrent education equivalent to higher education for advanced technical and specialized profession.<sup>2</sup> In this context, ever since China adopted the policy of Reform and Liberalization, the mutually dependent relationship of economy and education, based on the slogan of educational development that ‘economy should rely on education, and education should serve economy’,<sup>3</sup> has begun to be disintegrated and has stepped forward to the next stage. The new stage has already passed the period of shifting from the Unit socialism to individual market economy and has moved onto the phase of market liquidity.

In this process, education is what accelerates the looped circle by mobilizing the people, and with this circle functioning as a main axis for population fluidity, education itself acquires a new function to develop itself into a new being. In other words, the afore-mentioned transformation of higher education and adult education, which are phenomenally represented to respond to the growing social liquidity, generates the movement of people which keeps this loop functioning as a reality, and by also applying a force to change this loop to be more open, the liquidity of people is promoted further.

## **Conclusion: Future of Adult Education in the Urban Area – As a Measure Against Growing Liquidity of Individuals**

As discussed above, liquidity of the population is rapidly accelerating especially in the urban area along with the economic development in China. It is an indication of the social transition that began around 1992 when the Chinese society shifted its



helm from the Unit socialism to individual market economy, wherein the people's identity changed from the Unit staff, with their life protected and assured, to a mobile labour force who voluntarily repeat job transfer and turnover in the labour market for better employment while improving their value as a labour force. What the people found valuable under such a circumstance was academic career and upgrading of it as well as a continuing process of developing their own labour ability through recurrent education, mainly based on vocational and technical training. Subsequently, in the midst of a large influx of migrant labourers from the inland area into the urban area, the need for education on civil integration and cultural refinement for the formation and stabilization of a new community was concurrently emphasized. In addition, most of these migrant labourers are dispatched workers who always play a role of labour market adjustment, repeatedly losing employment and constantly flowing about in the urban area. An employment assurance by means of vocational education will be required also for social stability. In this way, the governmental goal of economic development and civil desire for improved life have been combined by means of the national system of public education and gone beyond the formation of a favourable complementary promotional relationship.

At the same time, the improvement and upgrading in their material life along with the economic development as well as the excessive interest and education that the parents give to their child, promoted by the only-child policy, together with the sophistication in public education, namely, the advancement of higher education and escalation in career competition, a concept of taking employment as a means of self-realization has been formed among the young labour forces. With the spread of individual market economy, the changing labour awareness has generated intense liquidity of the labour market. In that situation, it is necessary to provide vocational education and cultural/liberal arts education as a recurrent learning scheme given to and for stabilizing the life of low-income labourers, low academic career holders and migrant bread earners, or collectively those who are underprivileged in the market economy. Putting it another way, Chinese society has entered into an age of expedient recombination of its fundamental education system in the background of growing social liquidity wherefore, not public education but adult education shall be provided in local communities on various subjects widely ranging from cultural education to highly advanced academic career or vocational technical education at higher education institutions, particularly in the urban area.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Interviews conducted by the author on Zhang Chiming, Manager, Vocational and Adult Education Division, Shanghai City Board of Education; Yifeng Luo, Deputy Manager, Shanghai Institute of Vocational and Technical Education, Shanghai Academy of Educational Science (March 29, 2002 at Shanghai City Board of Education); Wei Hu, Manager, Non-governmental Education Institute, Shanghai Academy of Educational Science (on March 30, 2002 at the Institute); Min Han, Chief Researcher, National Centre for Education Development Research, Ministry

of Education of the People's Republic of China; Xia Gao, Researcher, China National Institute for Educational Research (on March 25, 2002 at the residence of Min Han); and Zhimin Gao, Professor, Research Institute of Vocational and Adult Education, East China Normal University and Suju Liu, Lecturer, East China Normal University (11 December 2007 at the institute).

<sup>2</sup>Similar points have been mentioned in the above interviews on Zhang Chiming, Yifeng Luo, Min Han, Zhimin Gao and Suju Liu.

<sup>3</sup>The educational reform slogan termed from the statement of Deng Xiaoping, 'science and technology are the primary productive force', in the speech at the opening ceremony of the National Science Conference (18 March 1978) and also from *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)*, Beijing, People's Publishing House, 1983, p. 83. The slogan was quoted in Article 3 of the General Regulations of the Education Act of People's Republic of China (draft), drawn out and deliberated in the formulation process of the Education Act of People's Republic of China that was institutionalized in 1995.

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