

Spotlight on China

Changes in Education under China's Market Economy

Shibao Guo and Yan Guo (Eds.)



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SPOTLIGHT ON CHINA

Volume 1

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Scope:

Over the past decades China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, mass migration, urbanization, and privatization, which have contributed to the rise of China as an emerging economic superpower. At the same time, China is also facing unprecedented challenges, including rising unemployment, socio-economic disparity, corruption, and environment degradation. *Spotlight on China* aims to bring together international scholars with contributions from new and established scholars to explore the profound social and economic transformation that has resulted from the market economy and its concomitant impact on education and society in China. The series includes authored and edited collections offering multidisciplinary perspectives and most contemporary and comprehensive analyses of recent social and educational changes in China.

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GERARD A. POSTIGLIONE

FOREWORD

Massive changes continue to take place in China, as challenges abound for state and society. The country bears little resemblance to what I saw 35 years ago as I arrive at the beginning of the reform era. China of the 21st Century is a nation of economic power, urban wealth, increasing technological prowess, and a rising international status. Nevertheless, it is still a middle-income country with its sights set on joining the league of developed economies. Its challenges include growing inequality and weak legal protections. Industries need upgrading and farmers need better access to financial services. Energy efficiency is needed to offset over-reliance on fossil fuels, while water security and food safety are urgent needs. If left unaddressed, these can derail gains of the last 35 years. Not surprisingly, education has moved to center stage in the national discourse as the means to meet the challenges, transform the economy, stabilize the society, and project soft power internationally.

The education system is distinguished by almost full-access to nine-years of basic education, with senior secondary education nearly universal in urban schools. Students in Shanghai scored above their counterparts in 60 countries on science and mathematics achievement. Colleges and universities, some approaching world-class status, are educating more students than any other country in the world. Yet, quality assurance measures point to the need to improve learning environments. The rapid expansion of the education system has produced misalignments between schools and universities, and between university graduates and the changing workplace.

China is having higher enrollment rates in tertiary education than European countries did a few decades ago. Chinese students at domestic and international universities have created what Vogel (2003) refers to as “an intellectual vitality that may be as broad and deep as the Western Renaissance.” Yet, Chinese scholars including Cheung (2012) and other scholars question whether China will be “just producing more of the same of the Western-originated contemporary higher education model, or will it be able to unleash a more critical understanding and practice of higher education, a cultural and epistemological reflection of the role of universities as venues of higher learning?”

Economic globalization has made education become an instrument of international competition, as well as an instrument of international cooperation. Since the 2003 Law on Sino-foreign cooperation in the running of educational institutions, hundreds upon hundreds of jointly run Sino-foreign educational programs at schools, colleges and universities have been established on Chinese soil. As the number has increased, so has the concern about their effect on national education sovereignty.

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While China tries to go global, its managing of domestic demands has become more difficult and complex. Rural households pay more and more for an education and demand that it leads to a good job for their children. Employers' dissatisfaction is manifest in their demand that graduates have relevant knowledge and skills for supporting industrial upgrading. An increasingly influential urban middle class demands that education bring with it a cultural capital and social status that advantages their children. This has fueled shadow education and opportunities to study abroad as early as junior secondary school. Meanwhile, rural migrant children struggle to obtain meaningful access to urban schools. Many get left behind in rural areas to be cared for by grandparents and supplementary school services. Finally, the state continues to demand that education be an engine for economic development but also an instrument to prepare leaders, integrate ethnic minorities, promote ideological socialization, and maintain social stability.

Such a market of multiple demands is recalibrated year by year according to how much the economy grows, how much social dissatisfaction arises, and how quickly the urban middle class prospers. If there is a unifying consensus across society, it is for education to transform China from a middle- to high- income market economy. For this to happen, there has to be a strengthened legal system to temper market forces that obstruct equity and social justice in education.

If the debates in education are any indication of what is to come, China is going to be a very different place by 2020 than what it is today, and the education system will have to work hard to keep up with social change. That is why this book by Guo and Guo makes an important contribution. The chapters systematically examine the multiplicity of intended and unintended consequences of market forces in different parts of the education system. The book moves social science research on China's education another step forward by refining the balance between the viability of mainstream western concepts and the analytical possibilities of creating a new scholarship based on a deeper understanding of the historically grounded realities of contemporary Chinese education. Such a framework requires the framing of educational issues in a balanced manner. Some contend that the study of education in China has become more and more about less and less, with microscopic level studies that tell us much about the trees and less about the forest. Yet, past studies of the education forest have often been inaccurate due to projections based on western concepts and limited empirical research. This was unavoidable when access to data on the results of educational reform and development were limited. This volume points to the possibilities of more sophisticated analysis with a growing wealth of data on Chinese education. As this continues, fresh theories of the processes of social and cultural change come to the fore. The next decade may very well become a new age of enlightenment in the study of education in China.

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SHIBAO GUO AND YAN GUO

1. CHANGES IN EDUCATION UNDER CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

An Introduction

Since launching the “open door” policy and economic reform in 1978, which gradually shifted its centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system, China has constantly been in the world’s spotlight. This focus was obvious during the successful hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, but most of this attention has been on China’s economic development over the past 38 years. In commenting on China’s economic growth, people often refer to China as “a rising economic superpower” and “the world’s most dynamic and successful economy” (Harvey, 2005, p. 135). It is surely the case that China has experienced “an economic miracle” (Dutta, 2006) and a “massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge” (Brandt & Rawski, 2008, p. 1). In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the United States in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). More recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised China’s ranking to number one economic superpower in the world, surpassing that of the United States based upon the purchasing power parity of GDP indicator (Kamrany & Jiang, 2015). The IMF reported that China produced 17% of world GDP in 2014, exceeding the USA’s 16%.

TRANSITIONS TO THE MARKET ECONOMY

China’s economic ascent rests on a series of economic and social transitions. The first step in China’s reform was to liberalize the agricultural sector by introducing the household responsibility system to replace the collective commune. Measures were also taken to reform industry, in part through encouraging joint ventures with foreign companies. However, foreign direct investment (FDI) did not take place until the mid-1990s after Deng Xiaoping’s famous southern tour and proclamation of an intensified shift toward the market economy. Finally, with its accession to the WTO in 2001 and the subsequent completion of its market opening pledges in 2006, China has formally entered the age of the market economy. Over the past decades China has experienced unprecedented industrialization, privatization, economic liberalization, mass migration, and urbanization, each of which has contributed to the rise of China as an economic superpower.

Industrialization was a key constituent of China's economic reforms, and led the economic transitions by expanding China's industrial capability, scale, and output. When economic reform began in the late 1970s, Chinese industry was largely state owned and urban, with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) delivering 78% of industrial output (Brandt, Rawski, & Sutton, 2008). Industrial reform introduced incentives in its initial stages in an effort to encourage the development of township and village enterprises (TVEs). Crucially, these new economic drivers were able to take advantage of labour released from farming with the introduction of the household responsibility system. As a result, the 1980s witnessed rapid increases in the number of industrial firms, which employed close to 50 million workers. The number of firms further rose from 377 thousand in 1980 to 1.33 million in 2004, and the number of enterprises in construction jumped from 6,604 in 1980 to 58,750 in 2005 (Brandt & Rawski, 2008). Beginning in the mid-1990s, a range of market measures were introduced to restructure China's industries, including privatization of many TVEs and a massive layoff in the SOE sectors. In the process, marketization and privatization became the key forces underlying China's industrial transformation. Close to four decades of reform have made Chinese industry stronger and made it the world's No. 1 manufacturer.

Industrialization has pushed China into global prominence as a leading exporter of manufactures. Following liberalization of international trade and investment structures through the 1980s and 1990s, international trade soared from \$21 billion in 1978 to more than \$1.1 trillion in 2004, making China's the third largest trading economy in the world (Branstetter & Lardy, 2008). We have also witnessed major shifts in the composition of manufactured exports, from textiles, garments, toys, and other labour-intensive products to a more sophisticated mix led by various types of machinery and more recently electronic and information technology products (Brandt et al., 2008). Branstetter and Lardy (2008) claim that China's adoption of one of the developing world's most open trade and FDI regimes stands as "one of the most significant accomplishments of the reform era" (p. 676).

Another important consequence of China's economic reform is unprecedented internal migration. China's booming economy has triggered a massive migration. According to China's national census, China's migrant population reached 221 million in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). While globalization has contributed to the widening inequality between northern and southern countries internationally, within China, this has manifested as a gap between eastern coastal and western regions. Many migrants are moving to China's more prosperous cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. It is claimed that China's domestic migration is the largest in human history (Fishman, 2005). Migrant workers are often referred to as temporary workers from China's rural areas. They work in urban construction, manufacturing, food and domestic services, and provide an abundant source of cheap and exploitable labour. Despite the fact that migrant workers have made indispensable contributions to China's booming economy, their social and political status remains low. They work long hours, often at the dirtiest

and most dangerous jobs. Migrants face multiple barriers in their adaptation to urban life (Guo & Zhang, 2010). It is estimated that over the next three decades a further 300 million people will be on the move, most prominently from rural to urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011).

Rural-urban migration is the main factor driving China's urbanization since the 1980s. In 1958, soon after the new China was established, a household registration system (or *hukou*) was introduced to restrict rural-to-urban migration. Under the *hukou* system, everyone is assigned a *hukou* location, either rural or urban. Whereas the benefit of the former is that it ties people to agricultural land, the latter provides access to jobs, housing, and benefits. In essence, the *hukou* system defines who you are, where you belong, what your life chances are, and your access you have to resources (Fan, 2008). Because it was extremely difficult for rural migrants to survive in cities without urban *hukou*, the system once had the effect of keeping rural-urban migration to a minimum. Owing to labour shortages resulting from the economic boom, the relaxation of *hukou* since the mid-1990s has facilitated labour mobility and pushed forward China's urbanization from 19.6% in 1980 to 43% in 2005 (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2008). China's urbanization rate is expected to hit 60% by 2018 at the current rate of urbanization (Xinhua, 2013).

Despite this economic miracle, China faces unprecedented challenges, including rising unemployment, socio-economic disparity, corruption, environmental degradation, declining health and education conditions, and an inadequate social safety net (Cheng, 2008; Hart-Landsberg & Burkett, 2005). Many argue that China's market economy has produced not only an economic miracle but also glaring inequality (Davis & Wang, 2009; Lee, 2009; Postiglione, 2006). As Davis and Wang note, the practices and institutions of socialism appear to have receded into a distant past. China is converging toward a pattern of inequality in which "the returns to capital exceed those to labour" (p. 16). Han and Whyte (2009) identify a long list of people who have lost out in the reform process, including rural residents, rural migrants living in cities, those with low incomes and little schooling, the unemployed, factory workers, those still employed by financially troubled state-owned enterprises, non-Party members, residents of China's interior and Western provinces, women and those middle-aged and older, and anyone whose standard of living is threatened or has fallen. As Lee notes (2009), social injustice is ubiquitous, a view that is not restricted to the 'losers' but also ordinary Chinese of different generational, educational, and occupational backgrounds. In addition to unequal distribution of income and wealth, Lee also includes political and social structures in her discussion of social justice.

Situated in this wider social and economic context, *Spotlight on China: Changes in education under China's market economy* aims to explore the profound social and economic transformation that has resulted from China's market economy and its concomitant impact on education and society in China. This volume is organized into five sections: Section I focuses on various contradictions and tensions associated with curriculum reform under China's market economy. Section II examines the reform

of teaching as experienced by teachers concerning their workload, professional development, teaching and living conditions, and social and political status. Sections III and IV explore changes in higher education and emerging issues and challenges facing university students' transitions from education to work. The volume ends with Section V which analyzes social and educational inequality in China resulting from the market economy.

MARKET ECONOMY AND CURRICULUM REFORM

As a requirement of and response to the market economy, the Ministry of Education of China launched the New Curriculum Reform (NCR) in June 2001, an unprecedented nationwide reform encompassing the entire basic education system. The new curriculum was first piloted in selected schools and, after careful planning and experimentation, finally implemented in 2007 in all schools. The reform involved transformative changes in many aspects of basic education, including curriculum structure, curriculum standards, teaching and learning, the development of teaching materials, curriculum assessment, curriculum administration, and teacher education and development (Yin & Lee, 2012; Zhang, 2014). Emphasis is placed on cultivating the creativity and innovation skills deemed necessary in a competitive global market. Yin and Lee (2012) highlight four tensions in the implementation process: cultural tension between the new pedagogical culture advocated by the reform and the cultural traditions of China; professional tension between expectations for teacher competencies and the professional support required to develop these; institutional tension between reform requirements and the local policy environment; and, finally, resource tension between high resource expectations on schools and the actual conditions.

The five chapters in Section I examine the above-mentioned tensions and challenges facing the curriculum reform under the market economy. In Chapter 2 Charlene Tan and Vicente Reyes open the section with a case study of curriculum reform in Shanghai, China's largest city. Through a critical analysis of Shanghai's 'Second Phase Curriculum Reform', the authors examine the key characteristics and ideological assumptions of neo-liberal education policy and its impact on curriculum reform. Evident in the case of Shanghai is the adoption of neo-liberalism as a technology of governance to support the lofty goal of Shanghai becoming the most vibrant and cosmopolitan city in China. Their analysis reveals that curriculum reform in Shanghai reflects neo-liberal education policies and practices such as decentralization, school autonomy, student-centred teaching, critical and innovative thinking, and real-life application. Tan and Reyes further argue that Shanghai has promoted the practices of de-professionalization, another key characteristic of neo-liberal education, that threatens to remove collegial governance and replace traditional conceptions of professional autonomy. The authors finally point out that the Chinese neo-liberalism manifests unique, even contradictory features: China has promoted radical marketization alongside explicit central government policy control.

In Chapter 3 Wing-Wah Law focuses on changes in the citizenship education curriculum in China. One significant change highlighted is a paradigm shift toward a less ideological and political conception of citizenship in response to the revival of the market economy and related social changes. The citizenship education curriculum is shifting its orientation from equipping students for class struggle to preparing them for transition to the market economy. Through an analysis of the revisions to China's citizenship education curriculum and textbooks from the 1990s to the early 2010s, Law examines three challenges related to citizenship and citizenship education: the dilemma between protecting citizens' rights and maintaining social stability; the struggle between the rule of law and the rule of the CPC; and the tension between upholding socialism and preserving traditional Chinese culture. Law's analysis sheds new light on how social change has shaped citizenship and citizenship education since the adoption of the market economy.

The next chapter by Margaret Zeegers and Xiaohong Zhang shifts the focus to the English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum. The authors draw upon the concept of reconstructionism as a theoretical perspective to underpin their exploration and situate the discussion in the context of globalization. Zeegers and Zhang first trace the EFL curriculum reform to the late 1970s when English was seen to play an important role in China's open door policy and economic reform. Systematic and orchestrated EFL curriculum reform was initiated and implemented in 1993. According to Zeegers and Zhang, the latest EFL curriculum reform of the 21st century has moved the country towards a substantial shift in EFL teaching philosophy and practice. It has incorporated features of reconstructionism in both design and practice. It is considered the most comprehensive and extensive curriculum reform since 1978. Meanwhile, the authors point out that it is also the most controversial curriculum with the potential for linguistic imperialism in a context where English is not the mother tongue.

Jinting Wu's Chapter 5 examines the paradoxical encounters of curriculum reform and rural development in two ethnic minority villages in China's Guizhou Province. Situated in the broad context of curriculum reform, Wu examines how various cultural and political discourses pertaining to *suzhi* (a comprehensive conception of human quality) signify China's sustained attempt to move away from the world's most populated society to one of educated, cosmopolitan, and enterprising citizens. Education is touted as the greatest redeemer and cultivator of population quality in the country's pursuit of social and economic development. Raising *suzhi* education and promoting *suzhi* of the population amount to a set of intertwined goals in China's education policy making under the market economy. Generally hailed as a progressive movement to rectify China's recalcitrant exam-oriented educational system, tales of everyday classrooms illustrate the ambivalence, messiness, and unintended consequences of *suzhi* education. Juxtaposed with rural development in ethnic rural areas in Southwest China, this ethnographic study illustrates how the reform rhetoric of *suzhi* education, the global discourse of child-centered pedagogy, the market regime of tourism, and the indigenous repertoire of literacy co-create a

complex “quality” matrix to produce contested cultural practices and unintended consequences of schooling.

The last chapter of this section by Wei Zhang and Mark Bray explores private supplementary tutoring, or shadow education in China. The authors explain that it is widely called shadow education because as the curriculum changes, so too do the contours of the shadow it casts. Also a global phenomenon, shadow education has greatly expanded in China over the last three decades. Zhang and Bray paint a picture of shadow education depicting emerging patterns and trends of the past 30 years. They detect patterns of higher participation in tutoring among students in developed regions, in urban areas, amongst students of more prosperous family backgrounds, and in schools of higher quality. They also raise a number of concerns about shadow education with respect to its role in leading to unequal distribution of educational opportunities and social inequalities. Although the authors do not explicitly state this, the proliferation of private tutoring demonstrates trends of marketization and privatization of education in China and the withdrawal of the state from public education.

TEACHING UNDER THE MARKET ECONOMY

Having examined curriculum reform, Section II of the book focuses on teaching under China’s market economy. Since the time of Confucius teaching as a profession has been held in high esteem. As such teachers have enjoyed honored standing in China. As an educator and teacher, Confucius himself was venerated as a sage by generations of Chinese. In modern China, however, circumstances changed. This became particularly apparent during Mao’s time, never more so than during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) when teachers were criticized as petit bourgeois and became targets of political transformation. With Deng Xiaoping’s rise to power in 1978 and the shift from political struggle to economic reconstruction, teachers began to be treated with more respect. However, the political and social status of teachers remains low, and teaching and living conditions are still poor (Guo, 2005; Guo et al., 2013). Furthermore, the latest curriculum reform has posed significant challenges to teachers’ professional identity, emotional stability, and existing notions of professionalism (Gu, 2015; Lee & Yin, 2011). Scholars in the following four chapters present case studies demonstrating how China’s market economy has impacted teachers and teaching as a profession.

In Chapter 7 Shibao Guo leads off this section by examining the experience of migrant teachers in China, that is, that of teachers who both teach migrant students and are themselves migrants. Situated within a broad conceptual and contextual framework of globalization, market economic transition, and internal migration, the author reports on findings of research conducted in Shenzhen and Zhuhai of Guangdong Province. These two cities were chosen as research sites precisely because it was there that Deng Xiaoping initiated experiments with the market economy in the 1980s. The study reports that despite China’s economic miracle,

migrant teachers' status and teaching and living conditions have not improved. On the contrary, they have deteriorated. These teachers live in poor conditions, are paid less owing to high rates of inflation and living costs, and soaring housing prices. Furthermore, they face heavy workloads and greater responsibilities, and, consequently, more pressure and stress. To make ends meet, many have to tutor outside of school hours or work second jobs. Under China's market economy, it seems teaching has become a commodity that can be traded in the market. Guo asserts that the negative experience of migrant teachers evokes debates about issues of social injustice and inequity that demand immediate action by researchers and policymakers.

In Chapter 8 Yan Guo continues our exploration of teachers' lived experience under China's market economy by focusing on English teachers. Drawing on data generated in individual interviews with junior and senior high school teachers in Zhejiang Province, one of the most economically advanced provinces in China, her study reveals that English language learning has been adopted as a strategy to promote the nation's economic competitiveness in the global economy. The study raises important questions about linguistic instrumentalism. The findings suggest that, as a result of globalization, the delivery of English education in China has experienced unprecedented marketization and privatization, largely in the form of *minban* foreign language schooling. Under the fee-paying principle, parents expect teachers to provide the best service to their children, and as such the relations between teachers and students have become like those between businesses and clients. In these schools, teachers still live in poor conditions and express their concern over the decline of their status under the market economy.

In Chapter 9, Gulbahar Beckett and Juanjuan Zhao take us to China's northwest, one of the country's least developed regions. Their study focuses on the experience of *Han* Chinese and indigenous teachers in this region. Drawing on interviews with 22 junior and senior high school teachers in four schools, the study reveals that the market economy has created both opportunities and challenges for teachers. While the market economy has brought more opportunities to teachers, the authors argue that the curriculum reform and changes in pedagogy under the market economy have also increased the workload of teachers as well as the level of stress. Beckett and Zhao report that indigenous teachers are concerned about the negative impact of "bilingual education", *de facto* *Hanyu* medium of instruction policy on minority students' knowledge acquisition and educational development. Their findings signal a need for systematic changes to integrate the voices of teachers in remote regions who are directly impacted by the market economy in efforts to improve their conditions of teaching and living.

Ying Wang and Raymond Chan conclude this section in Chapter 10 by drawing our attention back to the issue of private tutoring first discussed in Chapter 6. Based on multiple cases studies, the authors explore private tutoring agencies that offer tutoring and boarding services to marginalized migrant populations in Henan province. The study reveals that the emergence of private tutoring cum boarding

agencies is a product of the marketization and privatization of education under controlled decentralization. These services arose in response to the deterioration of rural education, the difficulty of access to education for migrant children in new cities, the structural constraints of college entrance exams, and the increasing demand for quality education from parents and children. Private tutoring cum boarding agencies often hire regular full-time teachers, substitute teachers, retired teachers, and part-time teachers seeking extra income to make ends meet. The authors argue that the controlled decentralization policy has led to a complex relationship between local and central government under the market economy, leaving room for the private tutoring agencies to survive as illegal operations under an inadequate regulatory framework. Wang and Chan conclude that the emergence and expansion of these agencies reveal the inadequacies of the education system and the deepening inequalities in urban and rural education provision. Once again this study attests to the commodification of teaching and the withdrawal of the state from public education.

CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Section III shifts the focus of the book to the examination of changes in higher education under China's market economy. Chinese higher education suffered heavily during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) when virtually all universities and colleges closed their doors to student admission for a number of years (Hayhoe, 1996). The national college entrance examination resumed in December 1977, operating as an elite system that admitted only a small minority to highly competitive universities and colleges. After Deng Xiaoping's south China tour in 1992, the pace of higher education reform speeded up. China introduced a number of reforms that gradually moved away from an elite, social provisional mode of higher education to a market-based, mass system (Zha, 2011). Higher education expansion was driven by social and economic factors, to satisfy the public demand for higher education, and to stimulate consumption and ease employment pressures. After almost four decades of reform, Chinese higher education has experienced unprecedented massification as manifested in the number of higher education institutions as well as the size of student enrollment. It is claimed that China has become the largest higher education provider in the world.

In Chapter 11 Lei Zhang, Ruyue Dai and Kai Yu examine changes in Chinese higher education in historical perspective. They thoroughly document a series of national policies and reforms implemented since 1977 and record impressive expansion of the number of higher education institutions and student enrollment. According to the authors, the Symposium on Science and Education hosted by Deng Xiaoping in August 1977 initiated a historical shift from ideological and class struggle to economic construction through investment in education and science and set the stage for the reconstruction of Chinese higher education. This set the stage for the resumption of the national college entrance examination in December

1977, an important turning point in Chinese history. Another milestone highlighted by the authors is the 1993 document outlining policies for speeding up reform and development in higher education, particularly its privatization and decentralization policies. The most recent such document was released in 2010 and is considered the most comprehensive plan of its kind, providing the blueprint for a new round of reform in Chinese higher education.

The next chapter by Fengqiao Yan, Dan Mao and Qiang Zha focuses more closely on decentralization, expansion, and the effects of their interaction. Under the centrally planned economy, centralization was the distinguishing feature of Chinese higher education. With the introduction of economic and education reforms, decentralization has become the dominant thread of Chinese higher education. Based on findings from field work, official yearbooks, and statistics, this chapter reveals that competition between local governments under decentralization has accelerated the massification of higher education. While decentralization has narrowed opportunity gaps between regions, the authors also draw attention to financial constraints resulting from enrollment expansion. They also suggest that rapid expansion has led in public criticism particularly about its poor quality and unrealistic goals set by some provinces.

Chapter 13 by Hongxia Shan and Shibao Guo further discusses the massification and marketization of higher education under the influence of globalization and the market economy. In this as in previous chapters, it is clear that Chinese higher education has undergone massive expansion through resorting largely to decentralization, privatization, and institutional competition and stratification. What is not clear, however, is the extent to which the current higher educational massification has served the great “mass” of people, particularly those who are socially and economically disadvantaged. This chapter shows that mass higher education has expanded educational opportunities for some but not for all. Shan and Guo’s analysis shows that people from impoverished rural areas or low-income families encounter barriers to accessing higher education due mainly to rising tuition fees. They continue to be underrepresented, especially among students admitted to national key universities.

Innovation in Chinese higher education is the focus of the last chapter of this section by Heidi Ross and Yimin Wang. As one of the most important priorities of the reform era, innovation has become a buzzword in the discourse on higher education reform in China and globally. Using discourse analysis, Ross and Wang examine how innovation is employed in the national policies, academic discourses, and institutional contexts of higher education in China as a guiding focus and symbol of reform. Chinese perspectives and experiences are also compared with those of the United States in learning about what innovation means in different educational contexts and how discourse is exchanged and might influence policy across contexts. Their comparative analysis shows that innovation is used in both countries as a term for reform at the institutional level closely related to overall reform agenda and strategic plans. Meanwhile, they also raise particularly important

questions about whether innovation should be considered as a means or an end of higher education or both.

TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO WORK

The previous four chapters examine changes in Chinese higher education, consistently demonstrating that the number of higher education institutions as well as the size of student enrollment have expanded massively in the past four decades. As a result of this massification, China has produced almost seven million new university graduates every year in the past five years, all seeking employment in a time when there are serious questions about whether China's labour market has the capacity to absorb them. How has the massification of Chinese higher education impacted the transitions of university and college graduates from education to work? Such matters constitute the focus of Section IV.

Jianghua Yang, Cheng Cheng and Yanjie Bian open the section with Chapter 15, an investigation of education and career mobility under China's market economy. Drawing on data from a large-scale household survey conducted in eight large Chinese cities, they examine the effects of family backgrounds on educational attainment, career placement at job entry, and career mobility outcomes. Their analysis shows that family background, especially the father's educational status, strongly affects children's educational attainment. The higher the level of the father's education, the greater the opportunity one has to attain a higher level of education. Furthermore, father's political status (e.g., CPC members, managerial elite) also strongly affects child's educational attainment, particularly in more recent years. They also examine the effect of one's education on career placements at labour market entry and mobility outcomes into elite positions. The findings reveal that the higher one's level of education, the greater opportunity one is to be placed in an elite category. They conclude that market reforms have not reduced educational inequality by family background. On the contrary, the expansion of higher education policy may indeed have increased inequality by family background. They recommend a deliberate design and forceful implementation of effective educational policies to reducing inequalities in educational attainment.

In Chapter 16 Yixi Lu and Li Zong examine university graduates' postgraduate transition from education to work by focusing on the effects of socio-economic status (SES) on the transition process. Informed by Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital, they compare the experiences of low SES students with their more privileged counterparts in understanding the dynamics of students' university experiences and university-work transition. Their findings suggest that a university degree may be important or necessary but not sufficient condition of securing a job. The authors argue that family background indirectly influences students' achievement through the transmission of familial social and cultural capital. Their findings also suggest a persistent employment gap between female and male students.

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The authors point out that female students from poor rural families may face a double-disadvantage in which they have less educational and employment opportunities than men. Meanwhile, their disadvantaged family background prevents them from acquiring the composition and volume of social and cultural capitals required for upward mobility. Their analysis shows how social inequality is reproduced in higher education in China through university experience and transitions to work.

In Chapter 17 Limin Bai further discusses dilemmas and challenges in the transition from education to work through an examination of graduate unemployment and underemployment. She argues that the massive expansion of higher education may have released job market pressures temporarily, but it has in fact created more profound long term problems. She notes that China's socio-economic conditions and the structure of the higher education system were unprepared for such rapid growth. Indeed, rapid continuous expansion has only contributed to "the diploma disease", and the labour market has been unable to absorb such large number of university graduates. A high rate of unemployment has led many university graduates to postgraduate studies and, as a result, China is one of the world leaders in terms of number of postgraduates. This suggests that postgraduate education has become an instrument to address unemployment pressure for both the government and individuals. This has created a vicious cycle as more graduates roll off the university production line, thus adding pressure to a labour market unable to "digest" these numbers.

MARKET ECONOMY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The last section of the book focuses on broader social issues related to China's market economy. While the market economy has brought impressive economic growth to China, it has also resulted in serious social and educational inequalities, as manifested in widening regional disparities, rural-urban divide, and gendered gaps. Rising disparities in access to education opportunities and in quality of education are among the root causes of social inequality and poverty in China (Davis & Wang, 2009). Unfortunately, it is the marginalized rural poor, ethnic minority, girls, and migrants who hold a monopoly on low enrollment and high dropout rates, leaving the urban middle class with dominion over the major indicators of school success (Postiglione, 2006). While China celebrates its economic successes, it is also important to examine social and educational inequalities that inhere in a market economy. The following four chapters of Section V will do exactly that.

Hillary Parkhouse and Xue Lan Rong lead off this section in Chapter 18 with an assessment of status of inequalities in compulsory education. Using census data from 1990, 2000, and 2010, they analyze variations in educational attainment based on gender, rural and urban residence, and ethnic minority status over a period of two decades. The authors describe current educational policies and trends and trace changes in educational expenditures over the past decade. They argue that unequal economic development has increased regional differences in the educational

attainment of different groups. While progress has been made at all educational attainment levels for the population as a whole, for ethnic minorities, females, and rural residents, inequality persists.

The next chapter by Li Wang continues the examination of educational inequality with a focus on gaps between rural and urban education, an issue that continuously draws attention from both academics and practitioners. While the transition to the market economy has brought sustained economic growth to China, Wang argues that the benefits of such reforms have not flowed equally to rural and urban citizens. On the contrary, pre-existing gaps between cities and villages has only widened, a fact that also manifests itself in the form of educational equality. The author analyzes how the current system excludes rural students from quality education by hindering capability development, distributing resources unequally, and violating basic educational rights. In doing so, Wang maps out the interlocked processes that create and reinforce the rural-urban divide in education.

Lorin Yochim's Chapter 20 shifts the focus to an analysis of social and educational inequalities in an urban setting. Drawing on data from a case study of a single city in northern China, Yochim examines how precepts of the aspirational *cit * articulate with processes of urban expansion and renovation to bring about new material forms and spatial relations. He shows how "accumulation by dispossession" in the material domain enables and encourages the pursuit and unequal acquisition of dominant forms cultural capital. He also discusses how an emerging moral order orients the beliefs and activities of the city's middle-class parents as they go about rearing and getting an education for their children. Yochim argues that these processes are bringing into being an "aspirational city" that favours particular kinds of people, modes of education, and ways of relating to society as a whole.

In Chapter 21 Charlotte Goodburn investigates social and educational inequalities concerning migrant children. Drawing on interviews with migrant parents and children in Shenzhen, Goodburn examines the barriers migrants face when enrolling their children in public schools, such as inability to provide the required documents or pass entrance examinations. As an alternative, many migrant parents send their children to migrant-run private schools, the majority of which are unregistered and of dubious quality. The author also compares migrant children's educational experiences before and after migration, which allows an assessment of the impact of central and local state policies on migrant children. Goodburn suggests that urban education for migrant children is significantly worse than in their native villages. Her findings have important implications for researchers and policymakers as they attempt to develop new policies to ameliorate the difficult conditions of migrant children in the field of education.

CONCLUSION

This volume offers the most contemporary and comprehensive analyses of recent social and educational changes in China under the market economy. Collectively, the chapters detail the profound social and economic transformation that China has

undergone under the market economy. It is clear that the country has moved into an era of neoliberalization characterized by unprecedented industrialization, marketization, privatization, mass migration, and urbanization. Reforms have taken place in the context of a more broad geographical globalization and neoliberal deregulation. They coincided with a new stage of globalization in which further integration of the world economy required China's cheap labour, its abundant natural resources, and its gigantic consumer market. In this view, China certainly qualifies as a neoliberal economy, albeit "with Chinese characteristics" (Harvey, 2005, p. 144). As such, there has been increasing interconnectivity and integration of China with the rest of the world. However, it is important to note that China's transformation has gone beyond the economic sphere. Neoliberalization has also led to fundamental realignments in the organization of society (Pieke & Barabantseva, 2012). On the one hand, we witness the rise of new entrepreneurial and middle classes and changes in people's life styles. On the other, we see environmental degradation, income gaps, and social inequalities.

What concerns most authors in this volume are the impacts of the market economy on contemporary Chinese education. Many authors show that under China's market economy, education is undergoing a process of marketization and privatization with respect to the rise of private or non-government schools, funding from non-state sectors, increasing numbers of self-paying students, and market-driven curricula (Chan & Mok, 2001). These features are evident in the case of education for migrant children, who are denied access to public education and are forced to enroll in privately-run, under-funded and inadequately staffed migrant schools. The curriculum reform also illustrates the market-driven orientation which privileges neoliberal learners with creative and practical knowledge for the preparation of graduates for the labour market. Unfortunately the market economy has not only reduced but also further increased educational inequalities. This volume clearly shows that Chinese education and society are at a crossroads which deserve the special attention of researchers and policymakers. Hopefully this volume is a step forward toward that goal.

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CHANGES IN EDUCATION UNDER CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

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SECTION I
MARKET ECONOMY AND CURRICULUM REFORM

CHARLENE TAN AND VICENTE REYES

2. NEO-LIBERAL EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA

Issues and Challenges in Curriculum Reform

INTRODUCTION

A quick glance at the historical developments of China since the early 1980s, and particularly focusing on the introduction of market reforms and the Open Door policy (Guan, 2000) reflects the nation's deliberate move away from a centrally-planned regime to one where markets perform a greater role. Such a move is reminiscent of administrative states that previously took primary responsibility for human welfare and economy to one that "gives power to global corporations and installs apparatuses and knowledges" where individual members of the population are "reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 249) and given responsibility to take care of their own lives. This shift is clear evidence of the influence of neo-liberalism in the development trajectory of China.

Educational changes in China take place against a backdrop of global competition and economic globalisation. The shift from a centrally planned economy to one of a market economy has ushered in major curriculum reforms in China for the past few decades. Underpinned by the administrative structure of decentralised centralism, these reforms reflect neo-liberal education policies and practices such as decentralisation, school autonomy, student-centred teaching, critical and innovative thinking and real-life application. This chapter critically discusses the key characteristics and ideological assumptions of neo-liberal education policy, and its impact on curriculum reform in China. To illustrate the adoption and consequences of neo-liberal education policy in China, this chapter focuses on recent educational changes in Shanghai through its 'Second phase curriculum reform'. Before we explore the issues and challenges of curriculum reform in China, it is instructive to understand the concepts of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal education policy.

INTRODUCTION TO NEO-LIBERAL EDUCATION POLICY

Neo-Liberal Education Policy

Neo-liberalism refers to "the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life

in order to maximise their personal profit” (McChesney, 1999, p. 7). Education represented by public service and schools were “early targets” of the spread of neo-liberal ideas. Reforms in the name of neo-liberal education “included increased exposure to competition, increased accountability measures and the implementation of performance goals” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254) as clear examples of the new forms of management technologies that emerged. The retreat of the traditional state and the entry of the markets saw a sharp increase in the funding of educational institutions. The neo-liberal rationale for this was based on the assumption of the immense contribution that wisdom attained through schooling can make to society for purposes of preparing the population for gainful economic participation and in the process, aid in the nation-building effort. What differentiated this neo-liberal agenda from liberalism was the subtle conversion of the value of social good: “Economic productivity is seen to come not from government investment in education, but from transforming education into a product” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254). In a neo-liberal context, education is commodified to become an instrument, a technology or even a skill-set that serves as useful currency in a society governed by the rules of demand and supply.

The neo-liberal model effectively reduces the value of education into a production function determined by the rules of economics. A direct implication of neo-liberal education policies is the transformation of government educational institutions traditionally run under the mantle of public administration. With the advent of the neo-liberal movement, educational institutions moved towards novel modes of “new public management,” associated with “flexibility; clearly defined objectives and a results orientation” as its distinctive features (Olssen & Peters, 2005, 324). Schools designed to be places of learning and formation for young people to become part of civilisation have become neo-liberal locations where individuals receive various inputs – under efficient, effective and efficacious conditions – in order to become gainful economic agents in an increasingly market-driven society.

In general, teacher educators possess “only vague ideas (or no idea) of what neo-liberalism is” (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1955) blissfully unaware of the implications that it has on their profession and on their practice. Notwithstanding, there are others – teachers, academics, policy-makers and even students – who have recognised that within a context of neo-liberalism, education becomes a “site of struggle and compromise” (Apple, 2000, p. 58) where contradictory forces of the ubiquitous market and the individual school actors collide. These collisions are manifested in the constant tension that school stakeholders experience as they attempt to make sense of the traditional tasks of education typified by pastoral care and the learning of basic aptitudes with the incessant reforms driven by market forces clamouring for innovations and a seemingly continuous flow of new economy competencies.

Key Characteristics of Neo-Liberal Education Policy

Within the neo-liberal era of deregulation and the triumph of the market, many students and their families no longer believe that higher education is about higher learning, but about gaining a better foothold in the job market. (Giroux, 2002, p. 435)

The phrase “new economy competencies” has become the quintessential catchphrase that represents the greatest impact of neo-liberalism to education. This is consistent with the notion that knowledge is the new capital in the 21st century (Olssen & Peters, 2005). New economy competencies can be described as the end product of what Giroux refers to as the triumph of the market. Industry players have continually lobbied for education systems to reform the way schools are run and to cater more towards what these lobby groups describe as what the market actually needs. As a consequence, most of the schools in the 21st century have fully embraced the emerging neo-liberal identity.

With the pre-eminence of the role of the market and the reconfigured state that complements it, efficiency has emerged as a dictum illustrative of neo-liberal education. Consequently, decentralisation and school autonomy have emerged as two of the overriding characteristics of 21st century education. The neo-liberal education mode has been predominated by notions of dispersed “hierarchical models dictated by management concerns” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 325) which have engendered a pronounced shift towards greater decentralisation. Deliberate attempts at decentralisation motivated by the need to restructure organisations of education to “respond to market and state demands” has in most instances resulted to “increasing *specifications* by management over workloads and course content” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 325, emphasis on the original) allowing the advent of new forms of market-driven autonomy. Consistent with the need to be competitive in a market-driven 21st century, neo-liberal discourse has also placed great premium on the notion of “survival being an individual responsibility” (Davies, 2005, p. 9) giving rise to an education agenda that prioritises student-centricity, innovation and real-life applications. The traditional notion of education as “learning for its own sake” has been displaced by a mind-set that prepares the 21st century learner to have an increased sense of agency, a willingness to try new things and an aptitude to ground education to pragmatic applications. This type of neo-liberal learner becomes better suited to gain what Giroux argued as a better foothold in the job market. In this market dominated context, the identities of learners of the 21st century have shifted from one that viewed education as a meaning-making and humanistic experience borne out of rich social relationships towards one that emphasises one’s individual utility.

The neo-liberal self is largely defined in terms of income and the capacity to purchase goods. The desire for goods can be satisfied to the extent that the worker produces whatever the economy demands. This emphasis on consumerism makes the worker compliant to whatever must be done to earn money, since to lose one’s job, to be without income, is to lose one’s identity. (Davies, 2005, p. 9)

Scholars and practitioners have cautioned about the need to balance the overpowering drive of the market and state to push the neoliberal agenda and transform learners into *homo economicus* or the economic being moulded into one exclusively motivated by self-interest against the countervailing push to ensure that learners do not abandon *homo reciprocans* or the person driven to cooperate with mankind recognising that one's own self-interest may not always be the best for the greater good. One of the strongest criticisms against neo-liberalism in education is the perceived de-professionalisation of school personnel manifested in two ways: (1) De-professionalisation that occurs within novel decentralised hierarchies dictated by the market effectively removing "collegial and democratic governance" and (2) Within new versions of autonomy circumscribed by the needs of the market replacing "traditional conceptions of *professional* autonomy" (Olsen & Peters, 2005, p. 325) that have been traditionally shaped by professional communities of educators. The de-professionalisation brought about by neo-liberalism does not only impinge on teachers and educators; students also find that what constitutes progress has been appropriated by the neo-liberal state:

Neo-liberalism strongly reinforced the undermining of the teachers' authority that had been established with progressivism, shifting authority away from both students and teachers to state curriculum and surveillance authorities. In establishing the conditions in which neo-liberal subjects might develop, it added competitiveness and individual responsabilisation to student 'freedom', thus both appropriating and undermining the progressive movement. (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 256)

Ideological Assumptions of Neo-Liberal Education

A fundamental assumption of neo-liberalism is the inherent weakness of what is known as "public," and its converse: the superiority of what is known as private. This ideological conjecture from neo-liberals has a profound impact on education: a move away from the general acceptance of a set of values embraced by a wider community towards a more restricted set of interests:

Neo-liberals are the most powerful element within the conservative restoration. They are guided by a vision of the weak state. Thus, what is private is necessarily good and what is public is necessarily bad. Public institutions such as schools are 'black holes' into which money is poured – and then seemingly disappears – but which do not provide anywhere near adequate results. (Apple, 2000, p. 59)

From the central premise of the weak public emerges the neo-liberal ethos as translated into education: the celebration of the virtues of the private and market-driven schools. In such a scenario, two very specific traits of the neo-liberal type of education are championed: a heightened state of individualism and market-driven values based on hyper-asocial behaviour.

Neo-liberalism as it has evolved and as practised in education has crystallised to represent “a move from social conscience and responsibility towards an individualism in which the individual is cut loose from the social” (Davies, 2005, p. 12) engendering an emerging set of values that rewards accomplishments that are centred on the self over and above others. The unmistakeable trait of maximising gains and profit, a hallmark of neo-liberalism, becomes the goal of the individual in today’s context. This emphasis on the self also becomes fertile ground in establishing another key ideological assumption of neo-liberal education where “surveillance becomes a key element” devaluing social good and where “trust is no longer realistic or relevant” resulting to a context where “each becomes one of the multiple eyes spying on each other” (Davies, 2005, p. 10). The predominance of a heightened state of individualism complemented by the dominance of a culture of surveillance and buttressed by the diminishing value of trust in others creates hyper-asocial behaviour.

The uniquely Chinese form of neo-liberal education policy is accompanied by some key issues and challenges in China. The subsequent sections of this chapter provide a critical discussion of curriculum reform in China, with a focus on Shanghai.

CURRICULUM REFORM IN SHANGHAI

Curriculum Reform in China

The educational vision for recent curriculum reform is expressed by the slogan of ‘quality-oriented education’ (*suzhi jiaoyu*). Often contrasted with ‘exam-oriented education’ (*yingshi jiaoyu*), quality-oriented education signals China’s focus on reforming its educational system against the backdrop of economic globalisation. The concept of ‘quality-oriented education’ was formally mentioned in a government document in 1994 (Tan, 2013). This document, titled ‘Several opinions of the CPC Central Committee on further strengthening and improving moral education in schools’, states:

There is an urgent need for quality-oriented education to increase the adaptation to current development, social progress, and establish the socialist market economic system. There is a need to nurture the students’ spirit in forging ahead, self-reliance and pioneering ... strive to improve the students’ artistic accomplishment and appreciation; for them to be active in adolescent health education, ... to help students improve the psychological quality of a healthy personality, enhance their ability to withstand setbacks and adapt to the environment. (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin xuexiao deyu gongzuo de ruogan yijian*, 1994, italics added)

The imperative to promote a quality-oriented education is due to both internal and external factors. Internally, the Chinese authorities are aware of the social problems engendered by an exam-oriented education. The nature of high-stakes exams has led to negative effects in China. By 1980s, there were public calls for educational

reform to change an exam-oriented education to one that focuses on the students' comprehensive development. Externally, the Chinese authorities are aware of the need to adopt global and 'modern' education policies and practices that prepares their graduates for the challenges of a knowledge-based economy.

The current curriculum reform is the eighth of its kind in China since 1949. Briefly, the first decade after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 witnessed the introduction of locally-produced teaching materials based on the Soviet model. As a result, education in China has been characterised by knowledge reproduction and transmission, standardisation in teaching, learning and assessment, and didacticism. The impact of cultural factors on the educational policies and practices borrowed from the previous USSR on China is the ideologies of upholding socialism, social and political stability, and centralised state control. In 1958, the government launched an "education revolution" to signal its determination to promote socialist and agrarian education. That lasted until the Cultural Revolution, which occurred from 1966 to 1976 and where all universities were closed and most intellectuals were imprisoned or sent to farming camps. The educational system was rebuilt after 1976 and a national high school exam was introduced in 1977. Modern education reforms began in 1985 when then Chinese leader Deng Xiao Ping stressed the need to develop human talent through education reforms. To achieve the vision of 'quality-oriented education', the Chinese government has introduced drastic changes to the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in China with variations across provinces and municipalities.

Curriculum Reform in Shanghai

On the 3rd of August 2013, the last structural beam of China's tallest skyscraper – Shanghai Tower – was installed. Upon full completion in a few months, Shanghai Tower – all 632 meters of it – would become the tallest building in Asia and the second tallest building in the world (O'Ceallaigh, 2013). This remarkable architectural achievement follows closely the unprecedented hosting of the World Expo 2010, earning for Shanghai the distinction of being the "very first city from the modern developing world" (Chen, 2009, p. 29) to host this mega event. There seems to be no doubt that Shanghai has "become arguably the most vibrant and cosmopolitan place in China during the country's modernisation phase" (BOP Consulting, 2012, p. 84) earning for itself accolades of being a modern global city. This lofty ambition that fuels Shanghai's upward march to progress is driven by the powerful tenets of *neo-liberalism* – a phenomenon that is evident in its recent curriculum reform.

Shanghai is one of the largest cities in China with a population of over 20 million. Arguably the city with the most developed basic education system in China, Shanghai was the first city to implement the nine-year compulsory education. Since 1978, China has implemented compulsory schooling where all children are required to complete at least nine years of schooling. This means completing five years of primary education and four years of junior secondary education. Almost all students

proceed to the senior secondary (high school) level for another three years of study where they will sit for the national college entrance examination to qualify them for tertiary education. Shanghai enjoys high enrolment rate across the levels: 98% of the age cohort attended preschool programmes, 98% of the age cohort attended primary school, 97% of the age cohort attended senior secondary school (general and vocational), and over 80% of the city's higher education age cohort are admitted into higher education (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2010a).

In Shanghai, the current reform is known as the 'Second Phase Curriculum Reform' [*erji kegai*]. The "First Curriculum Reform" (1988-1997) marked a series of major educational reforms aimed at helping schools to meet the needs of rapid economic developments in China. A vice-principal explained that the first curriculum reform aimed for students to have good qualities in thought and conduct, culture and science, body and emotions, labour and skills, and a healthy development of character. A major change was the introduction of three types of subjects: compulsory subjects, electives, and activity-based subjects. The curriculum also underscored the development of students' basic attitudes, knowledge, and ability. The reforms were piloted in 1991, and incrementally rolled out for different levels.

The "Second Curriculum Reform" (1998-present) started in 1998 with the publication of a number of policy papers to inform educators of the reforms. The focus was on how to further implement quality education to meet the requirements of modern times. A vice-principal pointed out that the current emphasis is not just on enhancing scientific knowledge but developing a scientific spirit, attitude and method, as well as shaping one's worldview, value system and whole-brain ability. This reform aims for three 'breakthroughs': reduce excessive schoolwork and increase education quality, strengthen the basics and nurture ability, and raise quality and develop character.

It is evident from official documents that Shanghai keeps an eye on international developments in education (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, n.d.). The task to nurture human talent is particularly essential for Shanghai as it aims to be a modern international economic, financial, trade and shipping centre, and lead China to change from an 'exam-oriented education' to quality education'. Under the current education reform, the new curriculum covers eight domains of learning: language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, arts, skills (including ICT), sports and fitness, and integrated practical learning. The last domain comprises community service and other activities that allow the students to engage with the community. The curriculum is divided into three broad course categories: Foundational Course, Expanded Course, and Inquiry/Research Course (see [Table 1](#)).

Foundational Courses are standardised subjects and compulsory for all students. They represent the basic requirements from the Shanghai municipal government to nurture "quality citizens" for the country. The Expanded Courses, on the other hand, are intended to cater to the students' different interests and learning abilities as well as society's needs. There are two types of Expanded Courses: Compulsory

Table 1. The curriculum for Shanghai schools

<i>Domain of learning</i>	<i>Course category</i>		
Language and Literature			
• includes Chinese and foreign language (English)			
Mathematics			
Natural Sciences			
• includes primary-level Nature, secondary-level science, physics, chemistry, life sciences.			
Social Sciences			
• includes primary-level Conduct and Society, geography, history, political thought, secondary-level Society etc.	Foundational Course	Expanded Course: Compulsory and Elective	Inquiry/ Research Course: Type I and Type II
Arts			
• includes music (song and dance), art			
Technology			
• includes Information Technology and Labour and Technical Skills			
Sports and Fitness			
Integrated Practice			
• includes social practice, community service			

Source: Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (n.d.)

Expanded Courses focus on real-life application in society, while Elective Expanded Courses centre on the various domains of learning such as language, sports and fitness, and arts.

Inquiry/Research Courses serve to help students learn how to acquire knowledge, inspire them to learn and conduct research independently, and apply what they have learnt in real life. It is known as the Inquiry Course to students in the primary to lower secondary levels, and Research Subject at the senior secondary level. Inquiry/Research Courses comprise two types: Type I research focuses on a specific topic or question based on the student's interest and is carried out by the student independently under the guidance of the teacher. Unlike Type I research where the focus tends to be multi-disciplinary, Type II research is more directly linked to the foundational subjects where the student conducts research on specific disciplinary knowledge. By providing three categories of courses, it is hoped that students from the primary to senior secondary levels will have more course options to choose from, depending

on their interests and aptitude, while remaining grounded in a firm foundation of content knowledge. Inquiry/Research Courses aim to help students exercise their cognitive and affective faculties, construct knowledge, and solve problems.

Accompanying the curriculum reform is the introduction of new pedagogy. The authority states that there is a need to review the traditional didactic form of teaching where students are largely passive recipients of learning. Such a mode neglects the students' subjectivity, initiative and cooperation, and therefore should be replaced by a new form of learning that 'advocates active receiving, initiating experience, exploration and discovery of interconnected learning so that realistic, interesting and exploratory learning activities will result in independent autonomy and cooperative exchange' (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission n.d.). Changes are also introduced for the assessment modes. Rather than just assessing students' end results through summative assessment, teachers should track their students' learning process and developmental progress through alternative assessment tools such as the 'Growth Record Booklet' for each student. In line with the desired outcome to nurture students holistically, schools are also encouraged to identify and develop their niches in various areas such as ICT, English, arts and sports. Consequently, there are now schools that specialise in performing arts, chess, technology and citizenship education.

It is noteworthy that the curriculum reform in Shanghai promotes the practices of decentralisation and school autonomy – key characteristics of neo-liberal education policy. By moving away from centralisation, it is hoped that more room will be given to the schools to adapt the curriculum to suit local contexts and meet local needs. School leaders are free to design about one-third of their curricula for the implementation of Expanded Subjects and Inquiry/Research Courses. This means students are free to choose what they wish to study, for about 35% of their curriculum time.

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

A Shift from a "One-size-fits-all" Educational Model to One That Focuses on Individual Interests and Needs

As noted earlier, education is commodified in a neo-liberal context to become an instrument, a technology or even a skill-set that serves as useful currency in a society governed by the rules of demand and supply. We see this phenomenon of the commodification of education clearly in the case of China in general and Shanghai in particular. As discussed, the municipal government in Shanghai has rolled out education reforms aimed at preparing its students for a knowledge economy so that the city can stay competitive internationally. It is instructive that the official document on the curriculum reform in Shanghai makes reference to worldwide trends in education, in countries such as Japan, Singapore and the United States, which strive for equal opportunity in the classroom, lifelong education, emphasise

application, integration, flexibility, and students' character development (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2010b). In light of these developments, the document added that Shanghai should therefore strive to "achieve modern education, establish a learning society, to inspire everyone to develop his potential, be world-class in educational development and human capital utilisation" by the year 2020. These neo-liberal policies and practices originate from and are more prevalent in Anglophone societies such as the United States and European countries.

The curriculum reforms in Shanghai – more choices to students, greater school autonomy, moving away from exam-oriented, rote-learning, memorisation and passive learning towards learning-oriented, higher-order thinking and active learning – manifest the cardinal characteristics and assumptions of neo-liberalism. In its attempt to meet the demands of the market, the Shanghai municipal government has assembled a machinery of ideas, tactics and practices to further its enduring logic of survival and pragmatism. A high student performance in international assessments such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coupled with the adoption of curriculum reforms common in developed and usually Western countries, is regarded by the authorities as evidence of Shanghai's modernisation and success in a global world.

Underpinning these changes is a shift from a "one-size-fits-all" educational model to one that focuses on individual interests and needs. In other words, the reforms in Shanghai reflect the neo-liberal move from social conscience and responsibility towards individualism (Davies, 2005). It is evident that neo-liberal reforms have been widely implemented in the Shanghai schools. The ideology for quality-oriented education has been crystallised in various slogans that point to a student-centred approach. The document entitled the 'Synopsis of Shanghai's middle and long term education reform and development plan (2010-2020)' states that the aim of such reform is 'for the sake of every child's lifelong learning' (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2010). It is increasingly common for schools to offer a variety of Expanded Subjects such as archery and robotics, and Inquiry/Research Subjects through partnership with universities such as Fudan University. Some schools also run pilot projects that aim to promote innovation, reduce the number of exam preparation classes, and give students more flexible study time. More teachers are adopting alternative pedagogies to complement their usual didactic teaching style. For example, some schools in Shanghai asked students to carry out personal observations at home in order to appreciate a comprehension passage. Asking questions, engaging in dialogues and debates, and participating in group projects and presentations are also increasingly common (Tan, 2013).

Challenges due to the Implementation of Neo-Liberal Policy in China

However, the neo-liberal education policy in China faces two main challenges. First, although the educational changes attempt to promote more student-centred curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, key educational stakeholders in China still

value traditional forms of teaching and learning that lead to academic success in high-stakes examinations (Tan, 2011, 2012). Despite giving students an array of subjects to choose from (Foundational Subjects, Expanded Subjects and Inquiry/Research Subjects), the authority and universities primarily consider the students' exam results for core Foundational Subjects in the national college entrance exam, such as Chinese, Mathematics and English. The expected consequence is that many students and parents view these core Foundational Subjects as more important than the Expanded and Inquiry/Research Subjects since the former determine their chance of being admitted into a university of their choice. Correspondingly, many schools devote more time and energy to the teaching of Foundational Subjects so that their students can ace the exams while marginalising the Expanded and Inquiry/Research Subjects especially for the graduating cohort. It is not uncommon for teachers to give extra classes to their students after school hours and even on Sundays during the exam period. On top of that, many parents also sign their children up for weekend tuition that focusses on the Foundational Subjects. Unsurprisingly, many students, with the support of their principals, teachers and parents, stop taking the Expanded and Inquiry/Research Subjects in their final year of high school in order to concentrate on their high school exam.

Another implication of the cultural value of academic success is the preference among many students and teachers for exam-oriented strategies, especially textual transmission approach, didactic teaching and repeated practice. These approaches are perceived to be the tried-and-tested ways for them to perform well in high stakes exams. Xu (2007) notes that Chinese students tend to accept what is taught totally and take pride in possessing a high volume of knowledge without articulating their views in class. Correspondingly, most teachers tend to rely on a didactic approach to transmit the "correct" answers to students who are content with being reticent in class. These approaches, which are meant for summative and written assessment in the high-stakes exams, are contrasted with the formative and alternative assessment modes and approaches advocated in the curriculum reform (Shen, 2006; Tan, 2012). That an exam-centric worldview dominates the teaching and learning environment in China has been noted by the Chinese government. A report by the Ministry of Education in 2006, while noting that some teachers have changed their teaching practices to be more student-centred, acknowledges that "quality education is loudly spoken but test-oriented education gets the real attention" (as cited in Zhao, 2007, p. 73).

The second challenge is the de-professionalisation of school personnel where centralised control by the state through the school appraisal system and standardised exams threatens to undermine the professionalism and autonomy of the educators (Tan, 2013). By shifting authority away from both students and teachers to state curriculum and surveillance authorities, neo-liberalism may result in de-professionalisation that undermines the educators' authority (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The acceptance of neo-liberal education policy such as decentralisation, diversification of courses and student-centred learning does not imply the Shanghai government's embracement of neo-liberal values and logics. Likewise, the focus

on the individual does not imply that “the individual is cut loose from the social” (Davies, 2005, p. 12) or that China is embracing an emerging set of values that rewards accomplishments that are centred on the self over and above others. On the contrary, a highly centralised model is maintained by the Chinese government so that the curriculum reforms are “opportunistically combined with the socialist state’s aspirations” so as to produce “self-reliant but state-dominated professionals” (Ong, 2007, p. 6). An indication of the re-centralisation that ensures central control for the municipal government in Shanghai is through the ‘School developmental and supervisory appraisal’ [*Xuexiao fazhanxing dudao pingjia*] (Tan, 2013). First launched in 1999 in some pilot schools, it was implemented to promote quality-oriented education. Under the appraisal system, every school is required to formulate its three-year development plan that comes with a yearly implementation plan. Each school needs to rally the whole school staff to draft the plan based on the demands of the current curriculum reforms that focus on quality education. The school needs to analyse the school’s situation, describe developmental vision, targets, strategies and measures. The Shanghai Municipal People’s Government Educational Supervisory Office will conduct on-site inspection, and the supervisory experts will cast votes on whether the plan passes inspection. Any school plan that does not pass inspection will need to be modified. After the inspection, the school will carry out the plan based on the plan, and regularly carries out self-appraisal work.

We can see from the appraisal system that it is used as a tool to ensure quality assurance and policy alignment. In line with the goal of quality education, the criterion of ‘curriculum content’ looks at whether the school’s curriculum content nurture the students’ innovative spirit, practical ability, and character development. ‘Curriculum management’ looks at whether the school “contains teaching management system and student learning guiding system that are aligned with second phase curriculum reform requirements” (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2005, p. 6). Further references to the curriculum reform goal of quality education are mentioned for the criteria for teaching. Teachers are expected to form a democratic, equal and harmonious, interactive teacher-student relationship and teaching environment, and guide students to explore autonomously, think independently, collaborate, engage in practical activities and utilise modern technology. What it means is that the school appraisal system has made it more demanding now for educators: they have to continue to ensure good academic results while working hard to meet *additional* criteria stated in the school appraisal standard. This means that compared to the past, there appears to be greater, not less, accountability and centralised control for the Shanghai schools.

Another tool for centralised control is the exam system. The decentralisation of tasks and administrative responsibility to the local level is accompanied by the introduction of national standards and to develop national assessments. In other words, there is evidence of the simultaneous practice of decentralisation being countered by a good deal of regulatory re-centralisation. The re-centralisation of national standards is seen in the introduction of standardised terminal exams and

other forms of tests for various grades. These tests and exams are assessments that are standardised at the district or municipal levels. Not only do the students and schools feel the pressure to perform well in exams. The districts are also under pressure as the municipal authority compares the exam scores across districts, thereby creating a competitive atmosphere. All the above function as quality assurance measures as well as means of centralised control even as the schools are given the autonomy in school management and school-based curriculum. All these may contribute towards a de-professionalisation that threatens to remove collegial governance and replace traditional conceptions of professional autonomy (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 325).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the key characteristics and ideological assumptions of neo-liberal education policy, and its impact on curriculum reform in China. Focusing on recent educational changes in Shanghai, this chapter has highlighted the key issues and challenges facing China. The shift in China from a centrally-planned regime to one where markets perform a greater role reflects the phenomenon of neo-liberalism as a “technology of governing for optimal outcome at the level of individuals and populations” (Ong, 2008, p. 121) rather than as an example of a modernist doctrine. To put it simply, neo-liberalism can be argued as the retreat of the traditional state and the turning over of the reins of governing to the market. However, it must be pointed out that Chinese neo-liberalism manifests unique, even contradictory features: “China has promoted radical marketisation” (Wang & Karl, 2004, p. 7) alongside explicit central government policy control. This hybrid of neo-liberalism and state control in the Chinese context is the nation’s attempt to combine the notoriously unpredictable forces of the market with the need to preserve social stability achievable through the continued existence of a powerful and centralised state machinery. This contradictory form of Chinese neo-liberalism, where central government dominance exists alongside increased market presence, is seen quite evidently in the domain of education policy and practice.

In view of the educational challenges confronting China, there is a need for policymakers and educators in China to cast a critical eye on the desirability of neo-liberal policies and practices. For example, some writers have also rightly questioned the key presuppositions of neo-liberal policies such as decentralisation: that more autonomy will spontaneously produce improvement, make educational service delivery more innovative and efficient, and make education more accountable to parents (e.g., see Bjork, 2006; Carnoy, 1999; Hannaway & Carnoy, 1993). In addition, there is a need for policymakers and educators to consult indigenous knowledge that include not just traditional knowledge but ways in which non-indigenous knowledge has been adapted and domesticated to serve national purposes (Gopinathan, 2006). Specifically, Chinese educators could explore Asian traditions and philosophies that provide fresh perspectives and recommendations for modern education. For example, Tan (2013) has revisited Confucius’ teachings and argued for the application of a

Confucian framework for 21st century education. Rather than merely focusing on 21st century skills and competencies at the expense of the moral values and emotional well-being of students and teachers, she advocates holistic development based on Confucius' ideal of spiritual-ethical-aesthetic harmony. Combining indigenous and foreign knowledge has the potential to help policymakers and educators in China adopt neo-liberal educational policy judiciously without the accompanying effects of exam-centric bias and the de-professionalisation of teachers.

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3. SOCIAL CHANGE, CITIZENSHIP, AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CHINA SINCE THE LATE 1970S

INTRODUCTION

Since 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been ruled by the Communist Party of China (CPC). In 1978, in response to changing domestic and global contexts, the CPC-led state (under Deng Xiaoping) began to focus on economic development rather than class struggle, and promulgated a reform policy intended to open China to the world. This chapter investigates how the social changes resulting from this policy shift have shaped citizenship and citizenship education in China since the late 1970s.

Citizenship is a contested concept (Reid, Gill, & Sears, 2010). According to Banks (2008), citizenship refers to recognized membership in a given community, while Somers (2008) depicts it as the right to have rights – political, social, civic, economic, and/or cultural – in a political community at the local, national and/or global levels. Such membership, as Cogan (2000) argues, is associated with one's sense of identity, entitlement to rights, fulfillment of obligations, interest and participation in public affairs, and acceptance of basic societal values (e.g., constitutional documents). Osler (2010) interprets citizenship as one's membership status, sense of belonging, and citizenship practice or engagement. In general terms, citizenship education (CE) is the contribution made by education to the development of these attributes (Cogan, 2000); it can be seen as a project intended to equip citizens with the political and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to participate and function in their community.

The case of China illustrates how citizenship and CE are not static concepts, but can be varied to reflect social changes from within and outside of the political community. China is a country that has embraced socialism and based its core system on socialist values. Its development path can be divided into two broad stages of nation building: the Mao Zedong period (1949-1976), during which China became a socialist country, and the post-Mao period (1976 on) which saw many of Mao's policies reversed under the 1978 policy of economic reform and opening to the world in response to new domestic and global contexts. This reversal, this chapter argues, has informed drastic changes in China's socialist citizenship framework, including the introduction of a socialist market economy, the revitalization of the role of law in state governance, the rise of civil society, and the reinstatement of traditional Chinese culture and virtues for moral cultivation. These changes are reflected in

China's post-Mao CE curriculum; its various revisions reflect the CPC-led state's efforts to maintain its political bottom line while allowing sufficient political flexibility to foster a modern Chinese citizenry and prepare Chinese students to be active and responsible local and national citizens and competitive global citizens in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. These revised frameworks for citizenship and CE, however, are confronted with issues arising from the complicated relations among the CPC, society, and the Chinese people.

The chapter first examines the paradigm shift in socialist citizenship in China in response to the revival of the market economy and related social changes. Next, it explains the terms used to refer to CE in China and rehearses the revisions to its CE curriculum from the 1990s to the early 2010s. In particular, it examines China's framework for multileveled (global, national, local, and personal-society) CE. Third, the chapter discusses some contentious issues confronting China's citizenship and CE, and concludes with a discussion of some possible challenges to citizenship and CE in China for the 21st century.

REFRAMING CHINESE SOCIALIST CITIZENSHIP: NEW MARKET-STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

Since 1949, the CPC-led state has been the principal definer of the role of citizenship in the making of a modern citizenry. Despite leadership changes, the CPC has consistently sought to maintain its political dominance, by rejecting the separation of powers and public competition for power and upholding socialism as state orthodoxy (Law, 2011). The late-1970s change in CPC leadership from Mao to Deng provided a critical opportunity for redefining Chinese socialist citizenship. The CPC-led state gave up class struggle as the party line and relied on the use of market to revive socialist economy. This has created new market-state-society relations and helped reframe Chinese socialist citizenship from an ideologically exclusive orientation to a more accommodative one (Law, 2011): allowing the market to diversify people's lives; allowing the emergence of civil society to interface between the market economy, the state and people; using the rule of law to regulate new relationships among state, market and society; and reinstating Chinese virtues and values, rather than socialism, to guide people's behaviors and address social issues arising from the market economy.

The Market as a Lever for Diversification in People's Lives

The first major change to Chinese socialist citizenship saw the increase of people's power in controlling their lives as a result of the state's attitude change from rejecting the role of the market in China's modernization to one of increasing reliance. After assuming power, Mao's CPC nationalized China's economy and effectively eradicated the market, transferring ownership and control of land and the means of production to the state and promoting a national planned economy (Yabuki, 1995).

Beginning in the late 1970s, to revive its declining socialist economy, the CPC-led state began to refocus on economic development, affording people more control over production in rural and urban areas, and allowing some areas and people to get rich in the 1980s. Later, it eventually revised China's constitution to allow the coexistence of public and private ownership, recognize the role of the market, and protect private property (National People's Congress, 2004), creating a new economic model it called the socialist market economy. These changes have led to significant economic advances and raised Chinese people's living standards.

The incorporation of market into Chinese socialist citizenship has helped break the state's monopoly over the allocation of economic power and resources in the market economy. Nowadays, Chinese people can control means of production that were formerly exclusive to the state, may choose to work in the state or private sector, and may even own their own business. Moreover, the market has become an important lever for diversification and pluralization in Chinese society. As former US President George Bush (2002) succinctly remarked during his 2002 state visit to China, while their 1978 counterparts "wore the same clothes", Chinese people now have freedom to "pick their own clothes". They may own property and buy stocks and securities. Despite these achievements, however, serious development issues – including environmental pollution, high inflation rate, economic disparity, and intensification of social conflicts and unrests – persist, and have become hot topics in the emerging civil society, particularly in cyberspace.

Emergence of Civil Society for Public Discussion and Participation

During the economic reform in the 1980s, civil society began to emerge as a new space between the market economy and state for Chinese people to participate in public discussion and affairs. This is the second change in China's socialist citizenship owing to the state's shift from suppression to toleration of civil society during the transition to the market economy. From a political and social theory perspective, civil society is the "third realm" of society, "a sphere of social interaction between economy and state" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. ix, 18). It exists separately from the political and economic spheres, including non-government organizations, voluntary organizations and interest groups. These play important roles in protecting citizens' rights and engagement, shifting the balance of power from the state to society, demanding accountability of government officials and politicians (White, 2004), criticizing public authorities (Habermas, 1989), and even opposing the state through civil disobedience (Cohen & Arato, 1992).

In China, the CPC-led state monopolized political power by eliminating most civil organizations that existed before 1949, keeping only a few extant organizations to make its political system appear democratic and adding some of its own to reflect China's political, economic, cultural, and social needs (Yu, 2002). In the late 1970s, social organizations began to flourish, primarily due to government downsizing resulting from a shift from micro- to macro-governance, the widening and diversification

of social interests and needs as China's economy improved, and demands for new services the government could not provide (Law, 2011). By the end of 2012, some 271,000 social groups, 225,000 private, non-enterprise organizations and about 3,000 fund organizations (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2013), addressing issues from community services to environmental protection, were registered in China; members reported that their participation enhanced their social awareness, developed their social networks, and thus facilitated the development of civil society (Su, 2011). Moreover, while not legal, numerous unregistered, self-initiated and -organized social organizations and rights groups solicit popular support on an *ad hoc* basis (Jia, 2005). Despite this, people are still not allowed to form their own political parties.

Public space for Chinese people to participate in emerging civil society has expanded with the growth of print and electronic mass media and the spread of Internet access and mobile phones across China. Compared to conventional mass media, Chinese people, particularly young people, make use of the Internet as a broader and more convenient platform for communicating, socializing, getting information on social events, commenting on social issues and current affairs at the national or local level, critiquing government policies and performance, and even coordinating direct social action – popularly-organized rallies and civil rights demonstrations are increasingly common in China (Law & Xu, 2013).

Reestablishing the Rule of Law

Since its beginning, the socialist market economy has generated irregularities and social conflicts over resources. As the third change of Chinese socialist citizenship, the CPC-led state reestablished the rule of law as an external force to handle these new issues, regulate new market-society relationships, guide people's behaviors, and protect their emerging economic and civil rights. Formerly, law was an instrument designed to serve the purposes of the CPC-led state. After assuming power in 1949, the Mao-led state used law for ideo-political purposes, such as confiscating land from landlords, controlling unions, and punishing anti-revolutionaries. Despite its promulgation in 1954, the Constitution failed to protect people's constitutional rights and freedoms during mass political movements. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), millions of people deemed anti-revolutionaries were tried by the masses based on politics, rather than law. This period was later condemned by the CPC Central Committee (1986) as a state of "lawlessness" (*wufa wutian*) and uttermost destruction of the dignity of the Constitution and law.

After the Cultural Revolution, the CPC Central Committee (1978) pledged to move from personal rule to macro-governance under the law, in order to counter chaotic political movements such as the Cultural Revolution, establish a macro-control mechanism to regulate market forces and new social relationships, and create a predictable, stable environment for domestic and foreign investments in China. To that end, in 1999, the NPC amended China's Constitution to enshrine the rule of law (*yifa zhiguo*). As a result, by August 2011, China developed 240 national laws

and 706 administrative regulations, and over 8,600 local laws and regulations (State Council, 2011) ranging from civil and commercial laws to social laws. In particular, China passed or revised laws to regulate the new civil relationships among the state, the market economy, and people generated by the transition to a socialist market economy and the emerging civil society in such areas as consumer protection (1993), contracts (1999), securities (1998), property (2007), and civil liabilities and compensation (2009). Of these, the most controversial was the Property Rights Law, which governs the creation, ownership, and transfer of property, and protects private, in addition to public and collective property in the market economy.

Using Traditional Chinese Culture to Shape People's Behaviors

In addition to using law as an external force, the CPC-led state resorted to the use of traditional Chinese culture and virtues as an internal force to guide and shape Chinese people's thoughts and behaviors and address moral and social issues in the market economy. This is the fourth change in Chinese socialist citizenship. After China's 19th century military defeat by foreign powers, Chinese Confucian culture was criticized as an obstacle to China's modernization and revival in the world (Law, 2013b). Under Mao's leadership, the CPC-led state criticized Chinese culture's feudal nature, conducted a nationwide anti-Confucius political campaign, and replaced Confucianism with socialism as the state orthodoxy and the essence of Chinese national identity. Socialism adapted to the Chinese context, however, could not revive China's economy or address challenges arising from market economy and related social changes, such as social conflicts over competing interests or the spread of extreme individualism, money worship, extravagance, and hedonism among people and, ironically, within the CPC itself.

As such, China's post-Mao leadership turned to Chinese culture, rather than socialism, to address social issues by revitalizing select traditional Chinese values as an internal, motivational force to guide and shape people's thoughts and behaviors, enhance social conformity, and complement the rule of law. First, drawing on the Confucian concept of using "the rule of virtue" (*weizheng yide*) to guide state governance, then-President Jiang Zemin (2001) advocated governing China based on such traditional virtues (*yide zhiguo*) as patriotism, respect for law, courtesy, integrity, solidarity, diligence and frugality, which the CPC Central Committee combined into a national ethics-building code. Second, to address increasing social and ethnic conflicts particularly over distribution of resources, Hu (2003), pointing to the Confucian value of harmony, made making Chinese society "more harmonious" a goal of the CPC's leadership and identified social harmony as "an important guarantee of the country's prosperity, the nation's rejuvenation and the people's happiness" and the maintenance of social stability and ethnic solidarity. Third, the CPC Central Committee (2011) further raised the status of traditional Chinese culture by using it to cultivate Chinese people's spiritual life and prepare them to live in a prosperous society (to be achieved by 2020).

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All this suggests that, since the late 1970s, China has made substantial changes to its socialist citizenship paradigm and Chinese citizens' relationships to the state, market economy, civil society, law and Chinese culture. These changes, as shown below, are refracted into and reflected by socialist CE in China.

RESHAPING CHINESE SOCIALIST CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (CE)

Like socialist citizenship, socialist CE in China has not been static. Although it has been CPC-oriented, its emphases and contents have varied with the responses of different CPC leaderships to changing domestic and international contexts over time. Following the CPC's shift from class struggle to economic development in 1978, Chinese CE began to be less ideological, more linked to the state's national development plans and new market-state-society relationships, and increasingly multidimensional, emphasizing not only national elements, but also students' personal development, local communities and the world.

Reorienting the Socialist CE Curriculum

One important impact of China's market reform and opening to the world on socialist CE was the change of its orientation from equipping students for class struggle to preparing them for transition to the market economy and moderately prosperous society. As the principal definer of Chinese CE, the CPC has given its contents a degree of flexibility to reflect CPC leaders' changing visions and concepts of national governance and developments at different stages in China's nation building. Before the 1970s, Mao charged education with the political task of creating "new socialist persons" with strong political consciousness who would allow communist ideology to command their daily life (T. H.-E. Chen, 1969). In the early 1960s, political textbooks for secondary students included Mao's writings about the Chinese revolution and the CPC, moral education, social development, and dialectic materialism, and emphasized class struggle, a dualist worldview (capitalism versus communism, friends versus enemies), and striving for a utopian communist world (Law, 2011).

In the 1980s, CE content began to be revised along the theme of reform and opening to the world with a view to preparing students to cope with changes and challenges arising from the transition to the socialist market economy. Secondary students were required to study Deng's views on China at the primary stage of socialism and the state's national development strategies, including the 1978 policy of reform and opening, adopting a market economy, and reinstating the rule of law. Moreover, the global dimension of CE was expanded. Primary students were taught the importance of learning from foreign countries, communicating with people from other cultures and treating foreigners with courtesy and hospitality, while senior secondary students learned about major world religions and key international organizations, such as the United Nations.

Between the 2000s and the early 2010s, the CPC-led state revised few times the CE curriculum to prepare students to be responsible, functioning citizens in the moderately prosperous society brought forth by market economy and achieved by 2020, according to the CPC. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2003) ordered that CE textbooks be revised to incorporate Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" theory (which conceptualized the CPC as representing the best interests of advanced economic forces, Chinese culture, and the Chinese people) and his blueprint for developing China into a moderately prosperous society, including the strategy of governance through virtue.

Some years later, the MoE (2007) asked that CE textbooks incorporate Hu Jintao's perspective on scientific development, strategies for sustainable development, the continued relevance of Marxism and socialism, and the important role played by and achievements of the post-Mao CPC in modernizing and reviving China – in short, the importance of the CPC's continuing leadership during the primary stage of socialism. In the early 2010s, the MoE (2013) amended junior and senior secondary CE to reiterate the CPC's primary task of restoring China's importance, emphasize the importance of a sound ecosystem to China's sustainable development, and highlight the use of soft power through Chinese culture in international competitions.

Adopting a More Accommodative and Multileveled Framework for CE

Another important impact of the market reform and opening to the world on socialist CE was the creation of a domestic environment conducive to the development of a multileveled (global, national, local, and personal-social) framework which is less ideological but more accommodative. In addition to preparing Chinese students to live under CPC leadership, the MoE, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, significantly reformed the entire primary and junior secondary school curriculum to prepare students for domestic challenges of market economy and external challenges of globalization and increased international competition. Although the concept had previously been implied in the CE curriculum (Law, 2011), the MoE (2002), for the first time, explicitly delineated a multileveled framework for CE in primary schools. To a large extent, the framework was similar to that advocated by Kubow, Grossman, and Ninomiya (2000), and addressed five levels of student life: self, immediate sphere (family and school), local community, nation (China), and world. Each level contained three important elements: the contexts (spatial, temporal, human, and nature) in which individuals live; social activities (daily life, cultural, economic, and political); and social relations (personal relations, social norms, regulations, law, and systems). Different emphasis is placed on selected levels of students' life sphere at different grade levels – *i.e.*, family, school and local community in Grade 3-4, and nation and world in Grade 5-6. Despite the political amendments made in 2013 (mentioned above), the most recent revised (2011) CE curricula for primary and junior secondary students are used to illustrate this multileveled framework.

The national domain has been an important component of China's CE. In the 2011 Moral Character and Life curriculum, Grade 1-2 students are taught to respect China's national flag and emblems, to sing the national anthem, and to feel pride in being Chinese (Ministry of Education, 2011b). They also learn how to love revolutionary leaders and know the glorious needs of people's heroes and models.

The new Moral Character and Society curriculum for Grade 3-6 requires students to have greater knowledge about China's geography, economy, culture and history, and about the CPC as the ruling party (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Specifically, they are expected to learn about China's geographical location, territorial size and administrative divisions, and well-known mountains, lakes and rivers, develop affection for China's national territories, and understand how China has suffered from and united to fight natural disasters. They are also asked to understand the disparities in natural environment between regions and how these affect people's means of production and life; understand the relationship between people's life and agricultural and industrial production, and know and respect the contributions made by workers and peasants. They are also taught the history of Chinese civilization and its contribution to the world and to treasure China's cultural heritage; at the same time, they are expected to learn how China was invaded in the 19th and 20th centuries by foreign powers and how the Chinese people resisted them, and to respect popular heroes and revolutionary elders and to develop patriotism. They learn about the founding of the CPC and the PRC, as well as the latter's achievements since China's opening to the world in the 1980s, in order to build their love for China and the CPC. They are expected to know that they are citizens of the PRC and to have a basic understanding of the rights and responsibilities that entails. They are further taught the "one China" principle, which includes Taiwan as an inalienable and inviolable part of China.

The new Political Thought and Moral Character curriculum for Grade 7-9 requires students to learn more about the state's nation building strategies and plans (Ministry of Education, 2011c). They study China's policies on population, resources and environment, national strategies for development, and the goal of developing China into a moderately prosperous society by 2020 through rural/urban and inter-regional coordination (advocated in then-President Hu's scientific perspective on development). The curriculum teaches students about the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics, China's current economic system (including its planned and market components) and CPC-led political system, and the core leadership role played by the CPC in China's developments and achievements.

Moreover, Grade 7-9 students are required to know and understand citizens' rights and duties as contained in China's Constitution. Specifically, they are expected to understand the principle of equality before the law and how to exercise their economic and consumer rights, as well as their rights to know about, participate in, express views on, and oversee the actions of the government. The curriculum does not, however, mention their constitutional right to elect or select the national leadership; rather, it emphasizes their legal responsibility to keep social order,

participation in society within the bounds of the law, maintain national unity and ethnic solidarity, and defend the nation's security, reputation and interests.

Despite its heavy focus on the national domain, primary and junior secondary CE curricula have been expanded to include other CE domains. In the 1990s, the state began to pay more attention to students' personal growth and development, and added a personal domain to the 2011 Moral Character and Life curriculum to improve Grade 1-2 students' health habits and awareness of weather changes and safety issues (Ministry of Education, 2011b). In Moral Character and Society, Grade 3-6 students are encouraged to learn more about their personal strengths and limitations, develop self-respect, give thanks, have a sense of both honor and shame (as then-President Hu advocated in the early 2000s), and treasure life (Ministry of Education, 2011a); they are also taught the dangers of addictions to the Internet and computer games, and to stay away from illicit drugs. In Political Thought and Moral Character, Grade 7-9 students are asked to appreciate and understand their physical and psychological growth and the changes that occur during puberty, and how to cope with stress and adversity (Ministry of Education, 2011c).

The 2011 CE curriculum also encourages students to be good members of their immediate life spheres (family and school). In addition to being encouraged to experience, love and share nature, Grade 1-2 Moral Character and Life students are encouraged to love their parents and other elders and to share in the housework at home (Ministry of Education, 2011b). In the My Family Life theme in Moral Character and Society, Grade 3-6 students are encouraged to understand how their growth parents nurture them, their family's income and living expenses, to consume reasonably and to save money (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Grade 5-6 students are reminded to communicate with their parents to solve family conflicts, whereas Grade 7-9 students are encouraged, in Political Thought and Moral Character, to learn to communicate with their parents as equals, while maintaining filial respect and obedience (Ministry of Education, 2011c). Unlike their primary school counterparts, the immediate sphere of Grade 7-9 students is extended to include a wider collectivity and the cultivation of such key values as solidarity, honesty, collaboration and competition, and non-discrimination.

The 2011 CE curriculum attempts to help students integrate with their local community. In Moral Character and Life curriculum, Grade 1-2 students learn the scenic spots and major products of their hometown and how its development changes (Ministry of Education, 2011b). In the Moral Character and Society curriculum, Grade 3-6 students are taught their local map and traffic conditions, how their local environment and economy affects people, the convenience of local facilities and how to protect them and local culture and lifestyles, and participate in local social, cultural and environmental protection activities (Ministry of Education, 2011a). In Political Thought and Moral Character, Grade 7-9 students learn to be responsible local citizens by understanding the needs of others, performing voluntary community service, protecting public facilities, and observing public order (Ministry

of Education, 2011c). They are also encouraged to make reasonable and critical use of the Internet and other social media to participate in the public social sphere.

While Mao-era China was characterized by an ideologically dualistic worldview, post-Mao China has begun to prepare students to live in an increasingly globalized world. In the global domain of the 2011 Moral Character and Life curriculum, Grade 1-2 students are taught about environmental protection and saving resources (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Under the My Common World theme of Moral Character and Society, Grade 3-6 students are expected to master basic facts about world geography; compare the peoples, festivals, cultures, and customs of different countries; understand the influences of science and technology on production and living, and common global problems (including environmental degradation and resource scarcity); and explore the concept that “humans have only one world” (Ministry of Education, 2011a). While learning about Chinese cultural traditions, Grade 7-9 students learn, in Political Thought and Moral Character, to enhance their awareness of exchanges and dialogues with other global cultures, to understand cultural diversity and cultivate respect for other cultures and traditions, to appreciate current trends in global development, to recognize the importance of developing a global outlook, and to enhance their contributions to world peace and development (Ministry of Education, 2011c).

Learning about the world entails learning about China in the world. In the 2011 CE curriculum, Grade 3-6 students learn about China’s interdependence with other countries and how this affects people’s lives; the key international organizations and covenants China has joined; and China’s rising importance in international affairs (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Similarly, Grade 7-9 students are encouraged to know about China’s global status, role, functions, opportunities and challenges and to enhance their sense of crisis (Ministry of Education, 2011c).

CHALLENGES OF THE MARKET ECONOMY FOR SOCIALIST CITIZENSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Citizenship and CE in China are closely related, to the extent that the issues confronting the former also largely confront the latter. To illustrate this, three challenges relating to the market economy are selected: the dilemma between protecting rights and maintaining social stability in an emerging civil society; the struggle between the rule of law and the rule of the CPC; and the tension between upholding socialism and preserving traditional Chinese culture.

Protecting Citizens’ Rights versus Maintaining Social Stability

The first contentious issue concerns the struggle between protecting citizens’ rights and maintaining social stability in the socialist market economy with a regulated civil society. On the one hand, since the 1980s, China has afforded its polity greater opportunity to exercise their freedoms of speech, publication and association. It has

tolerated the dramatic growth of civil society, allowed the vast expansion of domestic print and electronic mass media, accepted the growing popularity of the Internet, including Internet-connected phones and the expansion of the public space into cyberspace, and has even opened its domestic cultural and publication markets to foreign countries, including capitalist countries. On the other hand, the CPC-led has also upheld the overriding importance of social stability for the market economy and the CPC's supremacy as China's ruling party. To this end, it has made huge efforts to regulate society and cyberspace by promoting policies and values that favor the CPC, while suppressing dissident voices. This dilemma can be found in CE curricula and textbooks. Upper primary level students, as shown earlier, are expected to learn about citizens' rights and the importance of social stability and development to nation building; they are also expected to understand the importance of the Internet to modern life, the dangers of Internet addiction, and to use the Internet critically.

The preeminence of social stability and CPC leadership over citizens' freedoms and rights is further reflected by the level of censorship and self-censorship evident in China's mass media, cyberspace, and even academic publications in topics deemed politically sensitive by the state, including those which might threaten the CPC's monopoly on political power or social stability, or threaten China's sovereignty and territorial integrity (like Tibetan, Xinjiang or Taiwanese independence).

As an extension of this censorship in education, CE curricula and texts uphold the CPC's political positions and policies and criticize opposing views; for example, they teach students the importance of solidarity among China's various national ethnicities but does not touch on why some radicals advocate for independence in Xinjiang or Tibet or why many Taiwanese do not want to re-unite with China. Moreover, the CE curriculum emphasizes the importance of the CPC's leadership and achievements in market reform and opening to the world, but does not touch on the problems inherent in its monopoly over political power. Although many Chinese (including students) know about restricted access to such web sites as Facebook and Google, the CE curriculum does not mention the state's policy on Internet censorship for politically sensitive topics. It is important that China, as Google's chairman Eric Schmidt asserted, allow its people to think and speak freely and that it lift restrictions on Internet access in China, if it wishes to enjoy further domestic and international development (G. Chen, 2013).

Rule of Law versus Party Rule

The second contentious issue concerns the complicated relationship between the rule of law and the rule of the CPC within the citizenship framework for new market-state-society relationships. As presented earlier, the CE curriculum requires students to learn how the law protects citizens and the nation, and to understand the concept of equality before the law. However, there is a discrepancy between what they learn in school and what they experience through mass media or the Internet.

Despite its repeated emphasis on governing the nation through law and its efforts to reestablishing the Chinese legal system, China has yet to decide whether the law overrides the CPC and its Party secretaries. The State Council (2008) admitted that China's legal system suffers from weak enforcement of laws, the bending of laws by some government functionaries, and the abuse of authority by officials whose edicts usurp the law's authority. At the 18th CPC National Congress in November, 2012, outgoing CPC's General Secretary (and President) Hu Jintao reiterated that no one should be above the law, while incoming General Secretary (and President) Xi Jinping stressed Constitutional supremacy and asserted that no organization or individual has the right to ignore the Constitution or overstep the bounds of the law, and that any such action must be investigated.

These national leaders' determination to uphold the *de jure* supremacy of law, however, is limited by *de facto* structural constraints that insulate the CPC from it. First, the NPC and its Standing Committee are dominated by CPC members, and the NPC chairman and China's president are politburo members. Second, the law is frequently used to consolidate and sustain the CPC's political control, to the extent that socialism is legally recognized as state orthodoxy and the CPC's political leadership is a constitutionally enshrined prerogative that "will exist and develop for a long time to come" (National People's Congress, 2004). Third, only the CPC can decide whether and when to revise the Constitution; in the 1980s–2000s, significant changes to the CPC's party line were inevitably reflected in constitutional amendments. Fourth, as shown in the case of Bo Xilai in 2013, procuratorial and judicial organs cannot prosecute CPC officials suspected of committing crimes until the CPC's extralegal organs (including central or local discipline and inspection commissions) finish their interrogation (*shuanggui*) and the suspects are expelled from the CPC and public office (*shuangkai*) (Communist Party of China Central Committee, 1994). In other words, law is subordinate to the CPC and cannot bind it unless it is willing to be bound.

Tension between Upholding Socialism and Preserving Chinese Culture

The third contentious issue confronting socialist citizenship and CE relates to the balance between promoting socialism and preserving traditional Chinese culture as an integral part of Chinese people's national identity. Despite the global decline of socialism and its growing market economy since the late 1980s, China continues to promote socialism as its state orthodoxy and to depict China as a socialist country. Recognizing socialism's inability to address China's problems and issues in various areas, CPC leaders produced various versions of Chinese socialism, which they rationalized as adaptations to the Chinese context, or "socialism with Chinese characteristics". They also justified the reintroduction of a market economy to revive the socialist economy as a feature of the "primary stage of socialism", a transitional stage towards a utopian communist world. However, socialism is increasingly

remote and even irrelevant to the daily life of Chinese people, including CPC members, and Marxism has been marginalized in China (Wang, 2013). However, the CPC cannot abandon Marxism or socialism because they are the cornerstones of its political leadership in China; rather, it has chosen to “Sinicize, contemporize, and popularize” them to maintain their paramount status (*zhongguohua, shidaihua, and dazhonghua*) (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2012). This suggests that the CPC-led state has, at least indirectly, conceded the irrelevance of Marxism and socialism to contemporary developments in post-Mao China.

Whether the CPC can save Chinese Marxism or socialism remains to be seen. The CPC-led state has increasingly drawn on traditional Chinese culture, rather than Marxism or socialism, to address social issues and problems. In presenting China, both domestically and to other countries on international occasions (*e.g.*, the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Shanghai World Exposition), the CPC-led state has often emphasized traditional Chinese culture, rather than the superiority of socialism over capitalism (Law, 2013a). The CPC Central Committee’s (2011) decision, discussed earlier, to officially reinstate the status of Chinese culture as an essential element of the Chinese national identity and its growing prosperity are important signposts for China’s development and revival in the 21st century.

In CE, CPC rhetoric continues to emphasize the importance of creating “qualified socialist citizens” and infusing socialist values into the school curriculum (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2010); however, some old ideological themes (such as the superiority of socialism over capitalism) have begun to gradually disappear from citizenship textbooks. On the other hand, the CPC-led state has realized the increasing importance, in a globalized world, of cultivating students’ national identity, which is rooted in Chinese culture and marked by China-specific elements. In the late 1980s, citizenship textbooks began to incorporate traditional Chinese stories and figures (as well as those from Western countries such as the United States), and to foster traditional values (such as filial obedience and hard work) among its students (Law, 2009). The national domain of the 2011 CE curriculum for primary and junior secondary students focused less on socialism and more on students’ knowledge and understanding of China, including its history and cultural features and its contemporary developments and achievements.

However, the CPC-led state judged the use of CE alone to reinforce students’ Chinese identity insufficient, and mandated that other subjects in the newly-revised school curriculum reinforce students’ affiliation with and pride in ancient and contemporary China by practising Chinese calligraphy in Chinese language lessons, learning Chinese traditional folk, ethnic and local music (like Beijing opera) in their music lessons, and learning about China’s achievements in space technology and industry and its successes in hosting premier international events (like the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games) in general science and history lessons, respectively (Law, 2013b).

CONCLUSION

In China as in other countries (Dimitrov & Boyadjieva, 2009), the meaning and content of socialist citizenship and CE need to be understood and interpreted in terms of their historical and contemporary contexts. In response to domestic social changes and global challenges, China gradually began, from the 1980s, to reframe its socialist citizenship and CE, making it less ideologically exclusive and more accommodative by moving from the rejection of capitalist countries to establishing ties with them; from eliminating China's market economy to increasing relying on it, from suppression to toleration of civil society; from rule by fiat to the rule of law; and from downplaying Chinese culture to emphasizing it. CE has become an important instrument for preparing students to become responsible and active citizens in China's new contexts, by helping them learn the new relationships among the CPC, market economy, law, society, culture and the world, and to understand their rights and responsibilities in these spheres of life. Because of this, CE has been given space to change within the limits prescribed by the CPC. The revised CE curriculum for primary and junior secondary students is less ideological and political, and its multileveled framework makes its contents more relevant to students' daily life, and links them more closely to their family, school, local community, nation and the world.

Despite these significant shifts, socialist citizenship and socialist CE face challenges concerning the balance between stability and rights, between the rule of law and rule of the CPC, and between socialism and traditional Chinese culture. These issues are most likely to be intensified, rather than alleviated, by the decision made at the Third Plenum of 18th CPC National Congress to comprehensively deepen current reforms, in accordance with the governance and national development blueprint advanced by new President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang for their 2013–2018 terms of office (CPC Central Committee, 2013). On the one hand, the CPC Central Committee decided to raise the status the market economy from a "basic role" to a "decisive role" in China's economy, to reform the judiciary to ensure judicial fairness every court case, to uphold the premier status of Marxism and practice socialist core values while promoting Chinese culture to other countries, and to speed up the separation between the government and social organizations. On the other hand, it reiterated that social stability and state security superseded national development goals; to this end, it established the National Security Agency to monitor public discussion in the mass media and Internet usage.

The challenges confronting socialist citizenship and CE are interrelated and cannot be easily addressed. One way or another, they can be attributed, at least in part, to the CPC's fear of losing power and its ensuing determination to maintain its monopoly over political leadership in China. Were the CPC to open up China's political system to allow public competition for power, this would significantly affect the frameworks and contents of citizenship and CE in China, much as did

the introduction of the 1978 policy of reform and opening to the world. Were this to happen, the ruling party and state orthodoxy might change, and the scope and degree of Chinese people's freedoms, rights, and responsibilities – particularly in the political, civil and social spheres – might be broadened and enhanced. It is heartening to hear that Xi Jinping's "Chinese dream" is to make China prosperous, revive the Chinese nation, and bring about people's happiness. The more open China becomes to the world and the more the CPC cares about the happiness, freedoms and rights of its people, the greater the need for more ideologically and politically open and accommodating socialist citizenship and CE.

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4. ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM REFORM IN CHINA

A Study in Reconstructionism

INTRODUCTION

China has experienced a number of reforms in EFL teaching and learning since 1949, when The People's Republic of China was established after years of struggle between the losing Chiang Kai Shek Nationalists and the winning Mao Zedong Communist forces. Given the association of the English language with the western imperialism that China had just fought so hard against, competence in English was regarded as unpatriotic. A number of English-speaking countries, notably the United States of America (USA) insisting on a strong support of the Nationalist Party which had fled to Taiwan in 1949, did not recognise China. Indeed, the new Chinese government had its own concerns with illiteracy in mother tongues, at the time around 80% (Dietrich, 1986; Ministry of Education, 2002; Yang, 2010). English was hardly a priority for government then, although it had been in schools since the 19th century, the result of China's encounters with the west at that time (Wang & Gao, 2008).

Having eschewed all things western in 1949, the authorities took up Soviet models to inform their activities, receiving economic aid from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Yang, 2010). After the enormous upheavals of the revolution itself, China was in a period of reconstruction. The strong political influence of the relationship with the USSR on China's foreign language education meant that Russian became the dominant foreign language taught throughout the country, with English removed from the secondary curriculum (Hu, 2002). Turning its attention to education, China found itself faced with problems that could be addressed through reconstructionism.

RECONSTRUCTIONISM

Reconstructionism dominates developing countries' approaches to education. Even before Independence from Australia's colonial control in 1975, the then Chief Minister and imminent Prime Minister of the new Papua New Guinea (PNG) nation, Michael Somare, put it quite simply: "We cannot afford education for education's sake. We must be sure its benefits flow back into our real society." He went on to enumerate the "right attitudes: initiative, responsibility and effort" to be fostered by

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the education system (1974, cited in Zeegers, 2010, p. 841). It is a reconstructionist position, a manifestation of "...A philosophical movement that conceptualises education as an institution for social engineering" (White, 2001, p. 5). China in 1949 was a developing world state. It was also in a post revolution stage.

Given low literacy rates, the sorts of change envisioned by the new order would be so much harder to achieve if it failed to address problems arising from the reproduction of existing or traditional societies characteristic of so many education systems (Apple, 1981; Kentli, 2009). Integral to a reconstructionist position, quite different from reproduction, is education to achieve change. Udvari-Solner and Thousand (1996) argue that "Reconstructionism promotes the belief that by transforming curriculum and instructional approaches, schools can affect a more democratic, just, and compassionate world..." (p. 1). Reconstructionism looks to education systems as tools to be used in the building of new political, economic and social orders, in particular ones that are perceived to be better than existing or older ones. Such new social orders would be based on social concerns and having the economic structures necessary to maintain democratic systems, rather than elitist ones with their systematic enfeeblement of non-elites. But schools are not the only social tools available to teach young people. There is a whole world outside of the classroom that may be harnessed in the building of a more just society, and in the great revolution that produced the People's Republic of China, one such tool was children's and young adult literature, harnessed and driven by Lu Xun, and unabashedly didactic in reconstructionist terms (Zeegers & Zhang, 2006).

LU XUN AND RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN LITERATURE

Lu Xun is a distinguished figure in China's literature history, born in 1881 and dying in 1936. He did not live to see the success of Mao's movement, but he was a writer of fiction, and an editor, translator, critic, essayist and poet with communist sympathies, writing in vernaculars as well as classical Chinese. Embraced by the new communist regime, his work is an example of the sorts of literacy campaigns that have traditionally contributed to successful political revolution. Pre-revolutionary children's and young adult literature in China had done its work in maintaining its order of an empowered elite and an enfeebled peasantry. The new literature of the sort produced and promoted by Lu Xun was to enfeeble elites and empower the peasantry. It was to effect a reconstructionist change born out of Lu Xun's bold criticism of Confucianism, an official idea that had ruled China for thousands of years, as a dangerous influence that had controlled and damaged Chinese people's spirit.

Through Lu Xun, new heroes with whom they could identify emerged for children. These had a modern consciousness, progressive ideas and demands for reform that sat outside of Confucianism. They were heroes acting on their own ideals to engage in what could only be seen as a superb social struggle (Zeegers & Zhang, 2006). The heroes are boys and girls, men and women, operating in a world that is Chinese and

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speaking and acting as Chinese heroes. There is simply no room for English in this new world. China closed itself to the rest of the world that not only did not support, but actively reviled, its efforts. Education was to socialise Chinese children; they were to become literate, certainly, but in that development of literacy they were to become productive, and reconstructed, citizens of the new China (Zhang & Zeegers, 2010).

Educational socialisation has its part to play, as White (2001) puts it, as “...the process of developing learners’ social intelligence and social competence” (p. 6). Lu Xun did not turn to models suggested by foreign books for children (although he was not averse to stories from India), and his work was engaged alongside the various curricula followed in schools. His work was consistent with the prevailing focus on the development of a strong Chinese nationalism at all levels of Chinese life. The opening of the Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge in 1968, the great bridge over the Yangtze River, is significant as an entirely Chinese enterprise without any foreigners involved. China shunned anything western, and by extension, anything English.

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Literature is an art of language which reflects human culture, knowledge and wisdom, recognised as playing a worthwhile role in language teaching and learning, particularly in the EFL curriculum in China (Zhen, 2012). China’s implementation of EFL reform alongside its open door policies has entailed a breadth and depth of communication and cooperation between different countries and regions of various cultural backgrounds, challenging EFL teaching and learning to incorporate a good command of cultural knowledge and awareness (Zhen, 2012). According to Bandura (2008), “...foreign literature gives unique access to the target culture representatives’ ways of living and thinking” (p. 20). Engaging foreign cultural content that is inherent in literature leads readers to reflect on their own culture and identity, and this serves as an opportunity for a genuine intercultural dialogue between different cultures (Bandura, 2008; Fenner, 2001). It is personal engagement and reflection, though, and studies in comparative literature in China is particularly a weak area (Zhen, 2012). This is hardly surprising given the emphasis on national rather than personal benefits in EFL; it is an area that is still to be developed as the reform in curriculum proceeds apace.

MAINTAINING THE REVOLUTION

The problem that any successful revolution faces is in its maintenance of a revolutionary position, for once the revolutionary forces are established, they are in effect the Establishment. There is always a tension between maintaining revolutionary momentum while stabilising and building on revolutionary achievements. The early days of the People’s Republic of China saw large-scale reconstruction in political, economic, and education domains, but as Hu (2002) states, such EFL that was

engaged was based on curricula, teaching materials and methods used before 1949, uncritically adopted and absorbed, with a general official consensus that it “serve[s] the new republic” (p. 17), but no real change forthcoming at that time.

In the early 1950s, friendly relations developed rapidly between China and the Soviet Union as the west attempted to isolate China, allowing for a rising Soviet influence on China’s politics, economy, and education in general, and EFL in particular (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Hu, 2002). Russian programs started to appear in universities, colleges and secondary schools, and EFL programs declined dramatically from education institutions (Hu, 2002). It was to be a relatively short-lived development, and China found itself facing an extra complication in its developing education systems with the ideological split with the Soviet Union. That split started in 1956 and was not completed until 1963.

At the same time, the first Five Year Plan of 1953 to 1957 was only a short period allocated to great change that was to develop the economy, but China had little capacity to manage or absorb any more political, economic or social upheaval given what it had already endured. The Great Leap Forward of 1958-59 was designed to drive China from the socialism that it had established in 1949 directly into communism, where it was envisaged that people would have the right to control the factories and lands as well as the produce of both (Zhang, 2013). China implemented a number of fundamental economic strategies that addressed issues of consumption and production, as well as the needs of urban and rural areas, as competing rather than complementary ones.

Radical and unsustainable strategies of this Great Leap Forward resulted in massive scales of economic instability and unrest, born of immature and underdeveloped policy making that characterised the movement (Dietrich, 1986). 2.5 million social, economic and political leaders around the country were assigned menial jobs or sent to the countryside, 90 million people learned steel making, and 20 million peasants migrated to the cities (Dietrich, 1986). Indeed, every component of the Leap expanded at the expense of others within the economic, political and social sphere until the whole system was unable to bear it, resulting in the collapse of the economy. English was the least of anyone’s concerns, but the pressure for education as a revolutionary reconstructionist tool never abated. Even so, teacher training was a priority even in 1949 (Yang, 2010), and this provides an initial clue in relation to the role of reconstructionism in China’s education policies and programs.

REVOLUTIONARY MOMENTUM

The Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976 was a further attempt to maintain revolutionary momentum (Dietrich, 1986) but at this time when even the growing of a lawn might lead to denouncement as a bourgeois counter-revolutionary, people were not likely to press for English being taught in schools, or anywhere else for that matter. The Cultural Revolution was a far reaching and chaotic political movement that disrupted economic and cultural development in the country, including the

education system, and so also including English language education (Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Education institutions were disrupted and closed down for years and English teachers, together with other intellectuals, were persecuted or sent to the countryside so that they might experience hard physical work (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). English study was taken as pursuing foreign thinking, and for years most schools were not allowed to teach it.

Nonetheless, China's increasing economic success with successive Five Year Plans meant that since the late 1970s it had been able to seek a greater role on the global stage. While people still had some qualms about being seen as accepting western culture, English was seen as having an important role in economic reform and modernisation of the nation (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 meant that political tensions within the country eased, as did relations with the west, and China adopted an open door policy. In 1990, the illiteracy rate had dropped to 22.2%, dropping even further to 7.22% in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2002). At the same time, English emerged as having its role to play as the language of international commerce and navigation. Increasingly, Chinese students were taking up studies in western countries' universities where the language of instruction is English. Even when English began reappearing in the curriculum in China itself, reconstructionism was evident in the politically-oriented texts and contents in almost all of the textbooks, and teacher-centred, grammar-translation methods dominated in teaching and learning, as they had during The Great Leap Forward in the 1950s (Hu, 2002).

The EFL curriculum at the time focused on English skills and reading passages on the cultures of foreign countries, based on audio-linguistic and grammar-translation method. By the 1980s, new EFL curricula were introduced and the communicative aspects of language learning emphasised, while learning English became a popular activity (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Systematic and orchestrated curriculum reform was initiated and implemented in 1993. Chinese students were not only exempt from punishment for studying abroad, they were encouraged to do so. They came to the institutions in foreign countries having previously been grouped in classes of up to 60 students, classes which may be seen to be greatly under-resourced when Western standards are applied. In these classrooms, examinations were, and indeed still are, the predominant form of assessment, and teaching and learning approaches stressed memorisation.

A westerner might have some apprehension regarding surface rather than deep learning as far as these students are concerned (Zeegers & Zhang, 2005), but it is an apprehension that is not well founded. Watkins and Biggs (2001) give us the 1996 figures for Chinese student performance ranked against those of the USA, concluding that "Chinese students perform very well indeed" (p. 13). In fact, Chinese students all over the world outperform western students (Watkins & Biggs, 2001, p. 3). To assume that language plays a negligible role in this is to start out on a false premise, given the dictum that all learning success is language success, just as all learning failure is language failure. The Chinese students studying overseas had learned their

English but found it more difficult to accustom themselves to the norms of overseas classrooms, especially in relation to interactions between staff and students in the English language in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (the four macro skills of any basic EFL course) (Hu, 2005a). English proficiency skills had not been as well developed in China as they could have been, but this was still the time of more personal motivation rather than national policy for studying EFL.

This situation was identified as a shortcoming by Chinese political and education authorities in the 1993 EFL curriculum reform (Hu, 2005b; Wang, 2007). While the reform of 1993 had an appropriate focus on English language communication as part of independent student learning to deliver what was seen as quality education (Hu, 2005a; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002), the programs that it put in place did not achieve expected goals. The reform lacked effective policies, sufficient resources and corresponding training in appropriate teaching and learning approaches (Hu, 2005a), so that it had little chance of achieving what it had set out to do. It was evident by the turn of the 20th century that EFL curriculum reform needed to be developed further than had been done in 1993 in order to enhance students' competences in using the English language in the 21st century (Hu, 2005b; Wang, 2007; Wang, 2012). Another revolution was at hand, and with it, reconstruction issues to be addressed through a reconstructionist approach to reforming the EFL curriculum.

With this reform English has come to be considered as an essential language in the global context, a priority and compulsory course in Chinese secondary schools (Wang & Gao, 2008; Yu & Wang, 2009). This has occurred as English ceased to be positioned as a course of liberal arts, and more as an important tool for cultural exchange and international communication (Yu & Wang, 2009). Ways in which policy and curriculum can be modified to enhance Chinese learners' learning of English has become a major focus in research (Wang & Gao, 2008). The series of EFL curriculum reforms has been implemented in elementary and secondary schools at the beginning of the 21st century has moved the country towards a substantial shift in EFL teaching philosophy and practice (Yu & Wang, 2009). With this development, a tension has emerged between ways in which China may selectively appropriate English for its own sociopolitical goals and ways in which teaching and learning in English may be considered as a threat to traditional Chinese society (Wang & Gao, 2008). Niu and Wolff (2005) have taken up such issues, warning against linguistic imperialism in relation to enthusiastic Chinese take up of English as integral to educational pursuits. The current curriculum reforms have attracted the attention of a number of scholars (see for example Guo et al., 2013; Liu, 2011; Wang & Gao, 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2014).

The new curriculum reform has been represented in the literature as an essential and far-reaching reform in relation to content and pedagogy; it encompasses reforms of teaching and learning strategies, textbooks, teacher professional development, and technological impacts on all of these. It distinguishes itself from previous curriculum reforms in that it incorporates features of reconstructionism in both design and practice (Jin & Li, 2011). It is considered as "the most comprehensive,

most extensive, most attention-attracting, and most controversial curriculum reform since 1978” (Wang, 2012, p. 63).

Curriculum reform on such a scale generates a tension that is constantly to be negotiated, not just for China, but for any country where English is not the mother tongue, and where forces and processes of globalisation present as irresistible. China’s successful 2001 negotiations for entry to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was a revolutionary event. Economic revolutions do not have the same sort of overtly physical effects of military ones, but their effects may be every bit as striking. The country’s move to an emerging economic power since 1949 is just such a revolution. Its economy is second only to that of the USA, its economic positioning affecting the economies of other countries around the world. The doors have firmly and widely opened: the world has been welcomed in; China has entered the outside world to open and welcoming arms. The import of such moves cannot be underestimated. They signify a revolutionary shift from an early and immature communist society yet to find its feet in 1949 to political stability and harmonious economic and social environments as well as feasible and managed policies and strategies at the turn of the 20th century.

Literacy rates since 2000 have consistently been around 99.3-99.4% for 15-24 year olds (United Nations Statistics Division, 2009), and as any language teacher knows, literacy in one’s native tongue is a prerequisite for learning any other tongue or tongues. With such literacy rates, China had the basis for effective EFL teaching and learning in its schools. What is more, it had the basis for such reform that would be designed to develop students’ comprehensive language competence, rather than just knowledge and skills in EFL. It could focus on improving the quality of labour forces and 21st century citizens as it engaged globalisation with real enthusiasm.

21ST CENTURY EFL CURRICULUM REFORM

The EFL curriculum reform of the 2000s in secondary schools was initiated as China, as a result of its changed position *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, was required to measure up to the challenges of English not only as a global language but a language to be mastered in the context of globalisation (Hu, 2003). Zhang (2013) presents a detailed review of early 21st century EFL curriculum reform intent and features in her examination of a number of government policy and curriculum documents. Features of the reformed EFL curriculum include resetting the role of English, an emphasis on students’ all-round development in EFL teaching and learning, continuity and flexibility of the new EFL curriculum, an emphasis on task-based learning and improving curriculum materials, establishing an effective assessment system, [and] an emphasis on teachers’ professional development (Zhang, 2013, p. 119). Such features indicate detailed, expanded, and progressive aspects of the reformed EFL curriculum, compared with the previous 1993 one with its more limited focus on the development of basic Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening skills.

A revised 2011 version of the reformed EFL curriculum in the form of the English Curriculum Standards (ECS) published in 2012 indicates further progress since the ECS of 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2012). It particularly stresses a focus on education, and this includes EFL, for the masses rather than for an elite. It refocuses the nature of the EFL curriculum, incorporating teaching and learning in the humanities as well as implementing tools for EFL teaching and learning. Such progress indicates a good deal of improvement in ECS on the basis of research generated in trialling of the new EFL curriculum. The expanded focus is consistent with a reconstructionist position on education.

This has also highlighted the changed role of English in 21st century China. Not since 1949 has English occupied such an impressive role as it does now. It has become increasingly relevant to the life of the Chinese people, especially with the added factor of Beijing hosting the Olympic Games in 2008. According to Jin and Cortazzi (2002), taxi companies in Shanghai in 2001 began to offer their drivers English classes and provided them with learning materials and facilities so they could practise English when picking up their international customers for this major event. National newspapers in China, such as *The People's Daily*, were published in English, and delivered throughout the country, in small towns and fishing villages, as part of preparations for the Games in Beijing (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002).

What is more, English has come to be seen as a personal asset. It is a compulsory subject from Grade 3 onwards in school; it is a main subject for national college entrance examinations; it is essential for students in obtaining their first degrees at universities, and diplomas in colleges; and it is considered a necessary skill for personal well-being (Hu, 2002, 2005b; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Liu, 2011). This has driven demand for further reform of EFL curriculum, reform; which has been planned and implemented on local, regional, and national levels, always with an eye to international implications, such as the demands of marketization, privatization and commodification (Guo et al., 2013). The latest EFL curriculum reform in China has its reconstructionist role to play, then, as English is seen as supporting the country's political and economic interests when considered in market economies in a globalised and globalising context. The EFL curriculum has gone through extensive top-down reforms at various levels, indicating a deliberate shift from the emphasis of a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach in teaching and learning, and also a shift from knowledge transmission to knowledge building (Zhang & Liu, 2014). Such shifts mark the current EFL curriculum reform as one that is to cope with innovation, designed to develop students' communicative competence, to cultivate student autonomy, and to focus on interactive classroom participation. These skills are pertinent to student development as potential knowledge workers in a market-driven economy, indicative of an increasing commodification of EFL as education undergoes its continuing reforms in China (Guo et al., 2013). Reconstructionism assumes that a given society has problems, and identifies those problems as social injustice, problems and inequities. Reconstructionism at work in the design of the new EFL curriculum is in itself a phenomenon to be negotiated in Chinese schools

at a time when the country itself is undertaking major accommodation of and integration with globalisation and associated protocols. This goes well beyond an acknowledgement of the importance of education for the good of the nation, such as announced by British Prime Minister Blair (2001) for Britain: “Our top priority was, is and always will be education, education, education”, estimable as such sentiments are. It is an entire education system geared towards teaching and learning the skills and knowledge required to identify and ameliorate problems of society, where the teacher is an agent of change and reform, and the student learns to reform and reconstruct society (Ornstein, Behar-Horenstein, & Pajak, 2003, p. 9. Emphases added). The EFL curriculum reform in China is positioned within a context of reconstructionist principles, national events of international import, curriculum demands, and school implementation. Teachers are to engage the implications of these as part of their professional activities as EFL teachers.

GLOBALISATION

China’s repositioning itself on the world stage is more than one rather important country’s decision about its political future. It is an acknowledgement of and a response to a complex phenomenon which has been linked to a number of profound social, political, cultural and economic transformations. Enderwick’s (2006) view of globalisation is of a trend moving the world’s countries towards a single, integrated and interdependent unit, picking up on the common perception that globalisation is a phenomenon that allows interrelation and association across national boundaries resulting in local transformation through cooperation or communication. Labour becoming commodified is major issue as far as globalisation is concerned (Enderwick, 2006). The latest EFL curriculum reform focuses on students as future labour forces that enhance the country’s economic growth. Such a construct suggests new knowledge and skills to be taught and learned in helping globalising economies to succeed. Education is appropriated to the cause of labour, being seen as “a direct input into production” (Hanushek & Kimko, 2000, p. 1187), and with this, as far as China is concerned, a new dimension to EFL curriculum reform.

EFL AND CITIZENSHIP

21st century Chinese students, if they are to be good citizens, will develop comprehensive English language competence as an extra dimension of their quality as labour. At the same time this adds yet another dimension of citizenship. China’s remarkable economic development has called for different sorts of highly skilled labour forces which would serve the purposes of new commercial structures, such as state- and collectively-owned enterprises and multinational corporations (Song-Turner, Courvisanos, & Zeegers, 2012). The sorts of multinational corporations now operating in China require relevant, practical and applicable skills appropriate to the needs of a high level of international communication, and one of these relates

to English language competence. Students are expected to use their comprehensive English language competence to help China to be able to function in international communication systems as part of a globalising movement. Wang (2012) sees the implementation of the new EFL curriculum being particularly effective, even inspirational, as it has directly engaged problems, conflicts and tensions that have emerged from the rather limited successes of previous attempts at curriculum reform. China has, after all, attempted to implement eight curriculum reforms in basic education since 1949.

The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing put the global spotlight on China in relation to its ability to provide services, “the next great wave of globalisation” (Dossani & Kenney, 2007, p. 4) in relation to infrastructure, health, education, and transportation. These are described as requiring high standards in rapid economic development, emphasising a concern with service quality (Rondinelli, 2007). Services developed to such levels require an education and training infrastructure that will produce well-educated labour forces in service delivery as they engage increasingly high standards that are part of economic development in the context of globalisation. The shifts in the role of services in China indicate the country’s perception of this as linked to the global world, engaging international standards of market economies. Such a change has applied pressures to education in China, and so on EFL teaching and learning, as part of demonstrating China’s capacity to deliver the quality of services, particularly in relation to service provision to international types and standards. More intellectual foci by labour forces are required for this aspect of economic development, particularly for workers’ comprehensive competence in what is now a global language. Labour forces with such English language competence played no small part in ensuring the international success of the Games in 2008. In a globalised and globalising world, this sort of international success includes English competence at high levels. In a reconstructionist world, it means using the curriculum to affect this.

Diversity and pluralism, as unique features of postmodernism, have particular appeal for reconstructionists (Wang, 2012; Zhang, 2013). The policy that aims to manage the relationship between China’s mainland and Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau, called “two systems in one country”, is an innovative strategy in Chinese socioeconomic and political life (Lin & Li, 2011). The new EFL curriculum reform, as it stresses multicultural education, stresses respect for different cultures development of international understanding, and recognition of individual differences as such a policy indicates (Wang, 2012). Such concerns are impacted by current China’s political positioning with its attempts to maintain itself as a socialist country and its own characteristics through innovation, reform, ideological liberation and cooperation (Jin & Li, 2011). The eight curriculum reforms since 1949 have reflected shifts from modernism to postmodernism: they have served goals of political, economic, scientific and technological development as well as those of modernization; they have been a substantial part of political ideals of innovation, openness, harmony; they have underpinned ideals of ecology, stability, sustainability; and they have been

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integral to cultural ideals of integration, pluralism, and renaissance (Jin & Li, 2011). They are the same ideals espoused by reconstructionism.

IT, EFL, AND GLOBALISATION

Information technology plays an increasingly significant role in globalisation, the remarkable development in this field intruding on everyday lives, including those of teachers and students. Without the electronic technological capacities of the Internet to accommodate commercial enterprise needs for fast and efficient capital flows across national borders, the fast capitalism that is the hallmark of globalisation, current configurations of corporate enterprise could not exist (Zhang, 2013). The possibilities of these same technologies intrude on education activities, as this is integral to the education of the next generation of labour which is expected to be skilled in technology as this applies to commercial activities. Education programs incorporate the development of such skills in students, generally with television, computers and various forms of Internet facilities, singly or in combination, playing their part in the development of technology literacy as well as English language skills.

Schools, for example, are urged to employ a multimedia approach in classroom teaching and learning, using computers with disc drives, videodiscs and video players and recorders, iPods, blackberries, and so on, on the understanding that such multimedia facilitate meaningful collaboration and cooperation in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing at the same time as they provide vivid and dynamic visual and audial engagement with language in virtual as well as face-to-face contexts (Ministry of Education, 2008). Successful trials in the use of handheld devices, such as mobile telephones, iPods, MP3 players and other such items to assist in EFL indicate that using such devices can support EFL teaching and learning in positive ways, and education authorities have taken up their suggestive possibilities. What is not considered, though, is ways in which such features of the new curriculum reform as described in the curriculum documents and policy statements cannot be applied. Local variations work to the detriment of the capacities of remote and rural regions of China that lack the necessary infrastructure, and even the funds, to carry out this feature of the new EFL curriculum.

EFL CURRICULUM REFORM UNDER THE MARKET ECONOMY

Competence in international communication as one of the protocols of globalisation cannot be underestimated. It is an indication of the commercial dimensions of EFL study suggested by globalisation, where English language is no longer a practical skill to be developed or not, but a commodity upon which competent English language users may trade in a globalising world. At the same time, attempt to avoid one-size-fits-all curriculum development are engaged through a policy of curriculum decentralization with its three-level system of national, local and school

input. Innovative measures have been introduced in lower levels of school curricula, offering local schools and classrooms more space for their curriculum innovation (Jin & Li, 2011; Wang, 2012). According to Rui (2012), the new policy for China's EFL textbook adoption is a key strategy of curriculum decentralisation, enabling teachers, schools, and education authorities at the local level to gain some authority over and ownership of their own textbooks.

The national benefits for the country with a commodified student cohort in EFL, then, take on even greater significance in a globalising world. They appear in big picture proposals of national policy statements, and are in themselves inspiring, but tensions have emerged as organisations, departments, and schools have been unable to deal with the complexities of local requirements and attention to details of implementation that this implies in China. The notion of glocalisation then emerges not as a corollary of globalisation, but as antithesis to it. Glocalisation comes into play when one considers that China actively promotes processes of globalisation as it ascribes a significant role of the English language as a cultural symbol in its own response to what it sees as a salient feature of a developing new globally-based and informed culture. Zhang's (2013) work on how this has played out in local applications in China has made visible gaps between the rhetoric of the EFL curriculum reform and the realities of its implementation by teachers in under-resourced regions of China. This is not to say that such a problem may not be addressed as the reform proceeds, and more research is conducted on the effects and effectiveness of the reforms, as is currently being done. Given China's history of reconstructing itself, and turning to reconstructionism in educating itself, there is no reason not to suppose that it will succeed this time too.

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5. AMBIVALENT “QUALITY” AND THE EDUCATIONAL SUBLIME

Curriculum Reform Meets Ethnic Rural Development in Southwest China

In the global limelight, contemporary Chinese society is both troubled by and obsessed with “quality.” The ambivalent space of “quality” not only captures the quotidian life—seen in sensational media reports of worrisome water, air, and food safety—but also marks China’s international standing, with the “Made in China” label both invincible and frequently tainted by images of lackluster products.¹ In early 2013, the newly elect President Xi Jinping highlighted his inaugural speech with an enthusiastic urge for high quality development, signaling China’s conscious transition from a country of sheer volume (in terms of population size and GDP growth rate) to a country of quality (with regards to citizen civility, environmental protection, and sustainable growth). He described such a development model as a catalyst for realizing the great renaissance of the Chinese nation and the blueprint of a “beautiful China”—a slogan he introduced in the 18th National Congress in late 2012 to further the discourse of “harmonious China” promoted by his predecessors.²

Within this state-sanctioned developmental race towards quality, the idea of *suzhi* (素质) crops up frequently in the media and policy domains. Despite the semantic ambiguity of the term, a general consensus is that “such a thing as *suzhi* exists, that its level is too low in the Chinese population, that the collective *suzhi* of individuals produces the *suzhi* of the nation as a whole, and that raising the *suzhi* of children is a particularly important step” (Woronov, 2009, p. 568). Through invoking lack, *suzhi* defines a shared condition of incompleteness of the Chinese society in moral, cultural, and educational terms, and echoes its developmental turn towards quality in social and educational policymaking. While “quality” is an inadequate Anglophone translation of *suzhi*, both words indicate the attributes or characteristics of certain things or people, as well as the degree of excellence measured by particular standards or criteria. In other words, *suzhi* is both a generic term describing features and properties and a divisive mechanism to distinguish the have’s and have-not’s.

As a marker of standard or excellence, *suzhi* functions as a ubiquitous rhetoric that demarcates those possessing it and those who do not, and appears both in the discourse of backwardness and in the discourse of social distinction (Anagnost, 2004; Kipsnis, 2006; Sigley, 2009; Sun, 2009; Woronov, 2009; Yan, 2003). For instance, peasants-turned-migrant-workers are deemed to be of low *suzhi* because of their lack

of education, sheer numbers, agrarian mindset and crude mannerism, in contrast to the urban elites who consume educational training, nutritional supplements, sports, and fine clothes in pursuit of *suzhi*'s plenitude. On the one hand, rural poverty is often attributed to the "low *suzhi*" of its residents, who are seen as a hindrance to China's swift modernization, thus deserving less income, power, and social status. On the other hand, as part of a greater anxiety over educational competition, the *suzhi* craze has intensified the practice of childrearing as a mad race towards elitism. Affluent urban parents vie to enroll their children in extracurricular private lessons and settle for nothing less than overseas education in developed countries to prepare their children's well-rounded, transnational *suzhi* portfolio.

Population quality, or *renkou suzhi*, functions as a lack and an inferiority complex in China's imagination of modernity, and signifies its resolute turn from the world's most populated society to one of educated, cosmopolitan, and enterprising citizens. The watchword "*suzhi*" retains an aspirational tenor in China's various social programming, such as *suzhi jiaoyu* (*suzhi* education), *suzhi fupin* (*suzhi* poverty reduction), and *suzhi jingji* (*suzhi* economy). *Suzhi* is seen as an abstract yet transferrable value that, if acquired, through education primarily, could bring economic profits and social prestige. Education, thus, is touted as the greatest redeemer and cultivator of *suzhi*, intertwined with the country's "quality" turn—quality citizens, quality economy, quality environment, etc.—in pursuit of a legitimate spotlight in the global stage.

Such "quality complex" is closely intertwined with China's market reforms, which continue to be legitimated as the scientific and rational means to improve national economic prosperity, population quality, and social stability. Shifting away from the centralized, collective, and state-run economy of the Maoist era, China has undergone drastic social restructuring and economic liberalization since the late 1970s, with the rise of marketization overshadowing political ideology as the central tenet of development. Through enabling profit-seeking and rags-to-riches success stories, market becomes the promise of progress, the desirable *habitus* of the new corporeality in post-reform China, and a salvational agent (together with compulsory education) to uplift the so-called "holdout" population, namely the rural, ethnic others, from being the national burden to becoming the national assets. At the same time, continual marketization also exacerbates the rural-urban divide, the disparity in educational access and outcomes between the eastern coast and the western inland regions, and the marginalization of ethnic minorities and migrant groups (Guo et al., 2013).

Against such background, this chapter examines the paradoxical encounters of curriculum reform and rural development programs in two ethnic minority villages in Qiandongnan, Guizhou Province. It illustrates how the reform rhetoric of *suzhi* education, the market regime of tourism, and the indigenous repertoire of literacy co-create a complex "quality" matrix to produce contested cultural practices and unintended consequences of schooling. I situate rural schooling in the broader stroke of China's marketization, rural revitalization, and the quality/*suzhi* mantra,

as these are translocal processes that drive school actors into different spaces and maneuvers in order to grasp their changing lives. Specifically, this chapter is part of a larger study that examines educational dilemmas and disenchantment facing rural minority communities in southwest China. It is based on 16 months of multi-sited ethnography, oral history, discourse analysis, and archival research conducted in a Miao and a Dong village-town in Qiandongnan Prefecture of Guizhou Province in Southwest China.

Qiandongnan, the Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture situated in Southeast Guizhou Province, is primarily populated by two groups of non-Han ethnic minorities who identify themselves, culturally and linguistically, as the Miao (苗) and Dong (侗). Among China’s fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minorities, the Miao and the Dong are generally perceived in pacifist³—though economically and socially backward—terms rather than as confrontational threats to the Chinese authority as the Tibetan or Uyghur people still do. Part of Southwest China’s non-Han frontier, Guizhou and Qiandongnan are depicted in social science reports and popular narratives through languages of poverty, remoteness, harsh topography and climate. A well-known proverb paints Guizhou as a region “without three days of fine weather, three acres of flat lands, or three cents to rub together,” invoking the classic portrait of an “out-of-the-way” place (Tsing, 1993).

Yet the static image of an ethnic rural enclave frozen in time and space is no longer (if ever) an accurate depiction of the dynamic movements, transformations, and uncertainties that penetrate the day-to-day activities in Qiandongnan. The sense of lateness and the poignant anxiety to catch up with China’s fast-moving modernization has spurred a series of pro-growth development strategies in this region. During my sixteen months of sojourn in a Miao and a Dong village, which I call Majiang and Longxing⁴ respectively, from the beginning of 2009 to mid-year 2010, Qiandongnan underwent drastic social, economic, and educational transformations. Touted as the most visited places in Qiandongnan, both Majiang and Longxing were carefully chosen as the field sites for a number of reasons, including their commensurate popularity as ethnic tourism destinations (as evidenced in media coverage and guidebooks, volume of incoming tourists), similar tourism planning strategies (cooperation of county, prefectural, and provincial governments with private companies), comparable size (both marketed as the largest enclave of their respective ethnicity in the country), compatibilities of folk customs, equivalent proportion of village labor out-migrants,⁵ and most importantly, homologous educational policies.

Surrounded by vast expanses of highland terraces and virgin forests that are packed densely and sloping gently into curved plains, Majiang is marketed as the world’s largest Miao village and the “living fossil” of Miao history and culture. Similarly, Longxing is touted as one of China’s most attractive ancient towns for its idyllic scenery, distinct Dong lifeways, as well as the resounding melodies of Dong polyphonal singing. Majiang extends its charm through row after row of mountain-side houses on stilts closely knitted like fish scales; whereas Longxing, nestled in

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a maze of luxuriant rice fields stacked zigzag like mossy pancakes, exhibits the famed Drum Towers, Flower-Roofed Bridges, and Dong Opera Stages. To many urban travelers who set foot on Majiang and Longxing, they may well appear to be backwater places catching up with the fast moving train of China's economic ambition. Yet, due to the recent tourism boom and their administrative status as the village-township, both Majiang and Longxing have become the socioeconomic hubs and the magnets for the surrounding region. They boast more income opportunities and outshine neighboring village-hamlets where lands are less fertile and life's hardship more abundant. Tourism has expanded the horizon of the good life for the local people, and attracted residents from nearby villages to come and work in the lively market towns as shopkeepers, vegetable/fruit vendors, and hotel staff. Indeed, marketization has become a *modus operandi* in how villagers fashion their life and relate to each other.

I carried out the main part of my participant observation as a volunteer teacher at Majiang and Longxing middle schools, both plagued by lack of resources, underqualified teachers, subpar student performance, and above all, alarming dropout rates. In their daily operation, village schools are consumed by myriads evaluative regimes of testing, monitoring, and audits that incessantly challenge their legitimacy. On the other hand, they are also engulfed by the development mantra of tourism and its spatial regime, which further stifles their ability to meet the evaluation demands, and renders the school walls ever more porous with bureaucratic commands, market agendas, and state-business coalition.

To revitalize the countryside and modernize the rural minorities, the state has implemented a number of education campaigns as well as development programs in Qiandongnan. Such strategies include enforcing compulsory basic education (grade 1-9), promoting rural tourism, road construction, granting preferential rural policies (such as the abolition of agricultural taxes, the provision of agricultural subsidies, and the establishment of rural cooperative medicare system), and large volume of labor out-migration. Education, above all, is heralded as the most significant "soft" landmark of a forward-looking Qiandongnan. Traveling in this mountain region, one often sees bulletin boards displaying messages such as "Today's education is tomorrow's economy"; "Today's dropout is tomorrow's poverty;" "Poor and unschooled, one can never remove the roots of impoverishment; well-off and unschooled, one's prosperity will not last long." Hypervisible slogans such as these register a collective anxiety of the Chinese society towards its rural ethnic population, its belief in the pursuit of schooling as a secular benevolence and salvation for them—what I would call "the educational sublime"—and its mobilization of schooling as a compulsory technology and a critical solution to underdevelopment. Put in a panoramic view, compulsory schooling meeting rural development provides a fruitful lens to examine the unintended consequences of the educational sublime, as it encounters the quality mantra in various awkward moments.

QUALITY EDUCATION REFORM: CHILD-CENTEREDNESS
AS DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH

In the rural ethnic hinterlands, the state-sponsored faith-in-school is particularly pronounced. To enforce 9-year free compulsory education becomes an overwhelming imperative, not only seen in the ubiquitous slogan displays, but also in the numerous school audits, tests, and evaluations that are effected throughout the year to monitor the goal, especially in “stubborn” regions plagued by disturbing dropout rates, such as Qiandongnan. Yet, the government’s mandate of “basic education for all” has not translated into sanguine empowerment, as many rural minority students find themselves schooled and channeled into assembly lines of China’s southern factories. The dominant story I encountered during my research is that a child would finish at least primary school—and when possible, secondary school—and then goes on to find employment to contribute to the family economy. Dropout at the middle-school level is common, often with tacit parental consent. Rural residents in Qiandongnan are keenly aware that even college graduates are not guaranteed jobs in China’s expanding higher education market, that their own chances of making it through schooling are slim, that most rural children would sooner or later end up in factory workshops. People’s practical reasoning about whether or not to continue education is framed in terms of immediate livelihood rather than abstract patriotism or national prosperity.

For decades, Qiandongnan’s subpar performance in basic education (grade 1-9) has been characterized as a state of emergency, with rampant student attrition and dropout rupturing China’s image of educational success. While middle school and high school enrollment rates in Guizhou were among the lowest in China (see Zou, 2009, p. 25), in both Majiang and Longxing, middle school dropout rate was reported off the records by my teacher-informants to be as high as 30%.⁶ Whereas universalizing junior secondary education is the primary goal to incorporate the Miao and the Dong people into China’s educational modernity, in recent years, this goal is further bolstered by a qualitative concern for raising *suzhi* of the rural ethnic population through promoting *suzhi jiaoyu*. In this section, I offer an analysis of *suzhi jiaoyu* as one aspect of the “quality” complex to understand how it is appropriated, resisted, and re-narrated in contradictory terms in the front- and back-stage of everyday pedagogical lives.

To understand *suzhi jiaoyu*, we need to situate it within China’s New Curriculum Reform launched around the turn of the century. In 2001, the Ministry of Education spearheaded a nationwide agenda of the “New Curriculum Plan” (*xin kegai* 新课改), with the primary goal to transform Chinese educational system from the centuries-old exam-orientedness to progressive pedagogy centered on individual student development. The heightened emphasis on individual learners is located within a secular-modern paradigm that celebrates the Deweyan notions of experiential learning and pragmatism, reflecting China’s desire for legitimacy in the global community. Promoting *suzhi* education and raising *suzhi* of the population is a set of

intertwined goals in China's education policy making, to transform the rural ethnic population into new kinds of citizen-subjects for the nation's future. The contour of the curriculum reform cannot be disarticulated from its involvement in, and indebtedness to, the project of nation building. It also cannot be disarticulated from a particular style of reasoning about ideal citizenry (*suzhi*) that becomes recognizable as modern subjectivity since the early 1980s. The assertion of such reasoning is strongly palpable in compelling curriculum practices across the nation for the making of China's 21st century learners, citizens, and workers.

At this stage, it is important to ask: What is *suzhi jiaoyu*? As much as *suzhi* is a floating signifier with changing social and historical meanings (see Kipnis, 2006; Wu, 2012b), the term *suzhi jiaoyu* is also ambiguously translated as "quality education," "education for quality," "quality-oriented education," "competence education," and "character education" (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, p. 242). In particular, *suzhi jiaoyu* has taken up added significance in China's frontier regions populated by non-Han ethnic minorities, such as Qiandongnan. It responds to the needs to ameliorate *suzhi* among the ethnic rural population through implementing *suzhi*/quality pedagogy, in order to "uplift" them from the national burden to the national asset. It is an integral part of *suzhi fupin* (*suzhi* poverty relief) where the raising of *suzhi* of the ethnic peasantry—primarily through education—is considered a path to unleash human potentials, stimulate market growth, and ultimately eradicate poverty.

Generally hailed as a progressive movement to rectify China's recalcitrant exam-oriented educational system, *suzhi jiaoyu* receives extensive public support as an innovative theme of schooling. To remedy the present *yingshi jiaoyu* (exam-oriented model) that has been criticized for mounting academic pressure and stifling creativity among Chinese students, the New Curriculum Reform invokes a broad array of measures including homework reduction, removal of test-score-based ranking and tracking, elimination of supplementary after-school lessons, flexible provision of extracurricular activities, and implementation of child-centered pedagogy. The *suzhi jiaoyu* reform therefore has two overarching goals: to change from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy and to shift from subject-bounded to integrative, transdisciplinary curriculum (Carney, 2008; MoE, 2001). Even though *suzhi jiaoyu* has never been unequivocally defined or agreed upon, child-centeredness is perhaps a most distinct yet controversial aspect of the new curriculum reform. A number of policy documents have been published to endorse a more humanitarian and holistic curriculum model geared towards well-rounded, individual-oriented development.

Within the liberatory framework of *suzhi jiaoyu*, teacher-centered pedagogy and corporeal punishment is criticized as begetting conformity and repressing individual creativity, fundamentally at odds with the progressive notion of learner autonomy and empowerment. A slew of new vocabularies came into use to carve a new pedagogical landscape, including "teacher facilitation," "student-based instruction," "participatory teaching," "learner autonomy," etc., through which the proper ways of teaching and learning are reconfigured and re-normalized. *Suzhi jiaoyu*, when interpreted in such a vein, however, is often dismissed by teachers in Qiandongnan as

a developmental stage marked by advanced teaching facilities and superior academic performances, feasible only in resource-rich urban schools, yet out of sync with the rural reality. The vice headmaster of Longxing Middle School once lamented to me:

We are still struggling with *yingshi jiaoyu* and how to make students score better, how can we have time to deal with *suzhi jiaoyu*. Let the rich urban schools worry about it. Plus, unlike the urban children, our mountain kids are wild little monsters and have no self-motivation in learning. If we practice child-centered teaching and don't use discipline, we are doing our students a disservice.

Judging from the above comments, the quality mandate produces a self-conscious status anxiety among rural teachers who often speak about *suzhi jiaoyu* in paradoxical terms. On the one hand, *suzhi* curriculum is regarded as an unreachable goal given the status quo of their school plagued by lack of resources, underqualified teachers, subpar student performance, and above all, alarming dropout rates. On the other hand, child-centered *suzhi* pedagogy is not considered an unquestionably desired educational outcome. For many teachers, children growing up in the rural mountain region are “wild” (野) and too engaged with hands and feet, hence corporeal punishment and teacher discipline are necessary—to beat the devil out of the children for their own sake, so to speak. They interpreted *suzhi jiaoyu* resentfully as loss of their authority and respect, and as a disservice to the students who, in their view, need to be goaded with necessary discipline and punishment in order to perform to the testing standard. In fact, the omnipresent pressure of exams has neither relented nor given way to *suzhi jiaoyu*, such that village teachers jokingly describe education for *suzhi* as still education for scores—with “*suzhi*” rhyming with “score” (*shuzi* 数字) in Mandarin Chinese—no more than filling the new bottle with old wine.

On the back stage, behind the closed doors of the classroom, teachers often wield total control—ordering students to sit upright, listen without making noises, and copy their words verbatim into the notebooks—which is nothing but counter narrative to the *suzhi jiaoyu* mandate of child-centeredness, self-discovery, and pedagogical equalitarianism. Students are still rank-tracked, even physically separated into different sitting areas in the classroom based on their academic aptitudes and scores. Those who wandered off the “good student” track would be furiously chastised, slapped on, or sent home for as long as a week. In my observation of Majiang and Longxing middle schools, most of the class time was spent on teacher dictation, explication, and administering of tests, in an instructionally authoritarian and cognitively mimetic pedagogical mode. Besides fulfilling the rigid requirements of the curriculum with indifference to the student-centered rhetoric, the teachers also took their desk as a pulpit from which to insert their own commentaries, to “sermonize” so to speak. Many peppered their lectures with spontaneous moralist exhortations, with topics ranging from juvenile dating to popular culture, from alcohol consumption to social etiquettes, which they considered imperative for

setting on track the potentially wayward youth. In fact, many teachers resorted to these classroom moments to vent their personal discontent and voice their usually muffled opinions about rural education and the society at large.

Such were the effective ambiguities of *suzhi jiaoyu*, in which student self-discovery was expected but not practiced, and in which teachers not only dictated in the language of educational jargons, but also availed themselves of the classroom “pulpit” to impress upon the students their worldviews and attitudes. Such is the backstage maneuvering that ruptured the child-centered, humanitarian front of the *suzhi* curriculum reform. Yet it was not simply a negation of the reform, since it was necessary, as the teachers would maintain, for village schools to prepare students for the exam-dictated race for their own good, another tacit front of the *suzhi* reform. Indeed, a school performing poorly in exams will never measure up to the *suzhi jiaoyu* yardstick, as exam scores still work as a crucial mechanism to evaluate students, teachers, and schools.

On the other hand, to many teachers, the call for student-centric pedagogy as “quality education” had infinitely complicated their daily practices, especially when *suzhi jiaoyu* is bundled with compulsory basic education.

To be honest, *suzhi jiaoyu* and compulsory education have made a huge mess of our life. With the compulsory education law, we cannot let one single student quit school or make them repeat grades, regardless of their performance. And with *suzhi jiaoyu*, we are supposed to put students at the center and not use discipline. Now you walk in a classroom and see half the class sleeping, and the other half minding their own business, talking and fighting with each other as if the teachers were nonexistent. You are disheartened.

Students can be very uncooperative because they know the teachers are powerless now. If we try to discipline them, they would threaten to drop out and talk back to us like this: “Don’t make me want to drop out; otherwise you will have to show up at my home to persuade me to come back. Why don’t you save the trouble and let me be?” They know we teachers must beg them to stay in school now, according to the law. Now we are like shepherds looking after a group of unruly monsters. Teaching is like playing music to deaf ears. Teaching becomes a chore that we trudge through every day.

Mr. Long, a senior teacher who had taught Chinese for twenty-five years in Majiang Middle School, lamented over the doubly punitive impact of *suzhi jiaoyu*: if they resorted to discipline, their practices would be at odds with the *suzhi* policy scripts, exacerbate student discontent and dropout, and compromise the goal of universal basic education; if they relinquish discipline and punishment, students would not perform to the testing standards and the school would be considered failing for not delivering academic competence, still the most crucial yardstick of *any* kind of educational reform in China. Either way, village teachers were to blame. Yet, it is simplistic to take *suizhi jiaoyu* and its child-centered rhetoric as the forfeiture

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of discipline *tout court*. Corporeal punishment previously deemed legitimate for the purpose of edification is now pathologized, yet the very act of this negation enables a new disciplinary front in the Foucaultian sense, which is invisible yet no less pervasive. The disciplinary front hinges upon the school’s salvatory mission to “emancipate” the child, recasts the body in the spotlight of nurturing, democratic pedagogies, and defines the proper pedagogical relations by legitimizing particular ways of teaching as *suzhi* while delegitimizing others. The casting of discipline (both verbal and physical) in negative light evokes a different kind of disciplining, in a capillary realm as Foucault (1977) suggests, that constructs the child citizen in particular ways and also governs the inner subjectivities of the teacher.

As this section shows, *suzhi* education is not a cure-all of the exam-oriented fever, nor is it embraced indisputably as the creativity-generating panacea. Its normative rhetoric is fragmented by front- and back-stage maneuvers into fuzzy terrains of cosmetic compliance and contestations in rural schools. The slippage between the reform lexicon and the everyday tales of the rural classroom destabilizes the progressive undertone of *suzhi jiaoyu* and illustrates its ambivalence, messiness, and unintended consequences. It is no coincidence that teachers voiced their grievances about how their schools continued being trapped at the lower bottom of the educational hierarchy in spite of *suzhi* reform, and that with losing authority, they were in an even more helpless position to prevent dropout and help students learn. To say the least, *suzhi jiaoyu* does not equalize the uneven playing field by providing better education to underserved linguistic and cultural minorities. It does, however, popularize the notion of *suzhi* and augment the sense of self-peripherization among rural ethnic residents, who are now urged to depend on themselves (靠自己) and on the market (靠市场) in order to improve upon *suzhi* and achieve a better life, a point to which I will now turn.

THE ENTERPRISING SELF AS QUALITY: ETHNIC TOURISM AS NEW RURAL PEDAGOGY

Due to their picturesque sceneries, distinct ethnic lifeways, and rustic tranquility, both Majiang and Longxing have been promoted as exemplary tourism destinations in Qiandongnan. Compared to adjacent village-hamlets that had little going besides agrarian labor, Majiang and Longxing enjoy relatively high social prestige as the regional hubs thanks to their “success” in tourism, now the economic backbone of Qiandongnan. With state investment, public roads were built to link Majiang and Longxing to the county seats and regional centers, village dirt roads were paved with cobblestone or cement, and infrastructures such as hospitals, hotels, and performance squares were installed. Since the 1990s when massive labor out-migration became a dominant theme in Qiandongnan, agricultural production has been on the wane, and many villages severely dismembered. In recent years, however, Majiang and Longxing have seen waves of homecoming migrants who returned to settle down and take advantage of the tourism opportunities at home, whether through running

mobile vending carts, miscellaneous goods shops, fruit stands, or providing ethnic costume rental services. Similarly, students and dropouts follow their adult kin, apprentice themselves with indigenous crafts such as silversmithing and carpentry, and become itinerant ethnic artisans to eke out a living.

If *suzhi jiaoyu* is an educational technology that governs the *suzhi* amelioration of rural minority students through particular pedagogical discourse-praxis, it is entangled with social change and marketization of rural economy that further cast the rural ethnic bodies as being in need of “remedy” and “uplift.” Instead of being tied to the monotony of seasonal farm labor, villagers in Qiandongnan are now urged to become flexible, adaptable, and enterprising in the burgeoning market economy. Instead of seeking livelihood (求生存) from the soil, one is now pushed to seek development (求发展) from tourism as a different kind of telos. Has tourism expanded the horizon of social mobility and *suzhi* amelioration where formal schooling fails? In this section, I will show that as much as *suzhi jiaoyu*, tourism invokes yet another aspect of the quality complex through which the market logic—juxtaposed with agrarian lifeways—sets in motion social and educational changes in the village landscape.

A 19-year-old local Longxinger, Xiaoshi had been running a tourist souvenir shop since she left school at 8th grade. While attending the store, she passed time by embroidering on pillows and sole-pads, pushing needles in and out of elaborately patterned fabrics. “Most of us Dong girls learned to embroider at a young age by watching our mothers or grandmas.” She shrugged with nonchalance in response to my amazement of her dexterity. Her husband, also a school dropout, drove a mini-tourist-van for a vehicle rental company. Their livelihood depended on the rising market value of ethnic artifacts and tourism leisure travels. Xiaoshi’s shop was centrally located near the village market, where I passed almost daily on my way to and from the primary and middle school. I would often stop by to chat or pick up a decorative ornament from time to time, when she also supplied me with the latest local gossips. “I was a *chasheng* (差生 underachiever, or literally “poor student”) back then and knew I wouldn’t make it to high school or college. Even college students don’t find jobs or make much money these days. Plus I wasn’t really interested in study.” Xiaoshi reminisced about her “student” days without much remorse. Instead, she was forward-looking with enterprising business plans. With tourism profits fluctuating from season to season, Xiaoshi and her husband contemplated on diversifying their income sources. They were saving up to open a Farmer’s Happiness (农家乐), the vernacular name for a farmer-owned restaurant-cum-inn that caters for urban tourists and their escapist nostalgia of the country life.

One Saturday morning, we ran into each other on the village market while Xiaoshi was on her way to attend a workshop; she hailed me to go along. Organized by the County Bureau of Tourism, the workshop took place in a classroom of the primary school on Saturdays, to provide training of business skills and etiquettes to local villagers, most of whom were owners of restaurants, family inns, bars, or shops. A female official from the county seat commenced the training session:

We must remember that every tourist comes here with not only curiosity towards our culture, but with the ability to consume. If we are to profit from their visits, we must have clear ideas of their needs and more importantly, we must improve our own *suzhi*. You must learn to master the basic service etiquettes, learn to speak Mandarin properly, learn to think ahead and be far-sighted about market needs. These are all important *suzhi* that your previous life experiences haven't taught you and you need to improve upon.

The commentator emphasized learning the game rules of the market as an important *suzhi*, while hinting at the sense of inadequacy associated with the “complacent” working-class agrarian culture. To invoke *suzhi* is to motivate change and self-improvement in the market logic among the rural peasantry. As she further remarked, “Tilling the lands and running business are entirely different things. Now that you are doing tourism, you must get rid of the old habit of thinking.” And that “old habit of thinking” bounded to a sunrise-to-sunset agricultural mode and the collective ethics is considered at odds with the forward-looking, status-seeking market rationality that seeks to optimize consumer demands and individual fulfillment. In the social imaginary hinted by the commentator's remark, *suzhi* is endowed as a desirable good that validates peasants' self-worth through profit-oriented economic activities, and casts their “old” subjectivity as a moral and developmental shortcoming. Through the merit-based selection of the market, tourism functions as a new form of pedagogy that subsumes villagers into a different telos and rationality.

Indeed, ethnic tourism is never just about economics, but part of an ongoing effort to improve the Chinese population quality, the so-called *suzhi*, through the governing of rural development that prizes the self-enterprising market savvy, rather than the seasonal cycle of farm labor, as the new space of social mobility. As such, tourism as a new form of business opportunity also imposes a new system of values and expectations. Yet tourism is far from an omnipotent balm; the invisible hand of the market and the profit orientation engenders social ruptures and discontent, especially when rural schools are involved in the idiosyncratic tourism planning model in Qiandongnan.

Tourism development in both Majiang and Longxing took on strikingly similar trajectories that were state planned and commercially operated. The building of political-commercial patronage is a distinct feature of Chinese marketization, which links development interests of the state with commercial interests of business establishments. While the former seeks external stimuli to intervene in rural development in ways that the government is ill positioned to do (especially when situations are prone to civil outcries, such as housing demolition and land expropriation), the latter seeks political protection and auspices to optimize profit margins. While the state has increasingly decentralized regulations to “govern at a distance” so to speak, its omnipresent power has never entirely relented to the invisible hand of the market, but dressed up in a particular way through business-state coalition. In fact, an important agenda of the training workshop mentioned above was to do “thought work” (思想工作) among the peasants, to propagate

government-business cosponsored tourism programs while preventing potential discontent and outcries. Through such “thought work,” peasants were urged to improve their *suzhi* by not only acquiring business acumen but also exhibiting civil obedience to the governing of the state and the market.

The state-authorized for-profit development model, however, often sidelined local demands through sporadic demolition in the name of rural renewal. Due to their strategic locations in the villages, public services such as schools were often sites of battles wrought between the local residents and the external developers who sought to push such services out of the village core to make room for commercial establishments. In both Majiang and Longxing, the sites of the schools had been coveted by business corporates intent on converting the properties into profitable business ventures. For instance, due to its premier location atop a hillside with a panoramic view of the village center, the Longxing Middle School compound was to be torn down and replaced with a luxury holiday resort, according to a government-corporate joint development scheme. While the location of the new middle school was still an unsolved riddle, situations at the current school site remained temporary and makeshift. There was little going on in terms of improving its dilapidated infrastructure and housing conditions. Villagers expressed their outrage and threatened to withdraw their children should the current school sites be usurped for commercial purposes. Students played truancy and reasoned that they could at least eat and sleep better at home. Teachers were also disenchanted for the skyrocketed living expense and the increasingly cornered position of their schools.

In response to a market-penetrated educational space, students and parents increasingly lose faith in school, and look elsewhere for alternative pathways towards social mobility. In Xiaoshi’s case, the pathway was doing tourism at home, which provided an opportunity to remake oneself from a failing student to an enterprising businessperson. Teachers, the educated elites in the villages, were also quick to take up the entrepreneurial gesture and employ means of tourism to supplement their primary mode of livelihood. As much as the peasants are exhorted to transform themselves through a *suzhi* uplift, the teachers themselves are also intricately tied to a quality matrix that equates individual self-worth with market-mediated success and entrepreneurial capacity. As novelist Yu Hua remarks, whereas in the Mao era there was no stage for the individual, in post-reform era, there is a stage for everyone.⁷ Aware of their own economic constraint and the conspicuous prosperity of the corporate developers, village teachers seek sideline tourism business to craft a personal stage and a “better” livelihood. They justified such moonlighting with an account of their embittered professional life:

As teachers, we hold on to a job that is tasteless like chicken bone but we couldn’t afford to discard because after all it is our source of livelihood. Year in and year out, we are like machines, going to classes, proctoring tests, grading papers, banqueting with inspectors, negotiating with tourism developers; our aspirations have long withered away.

The contested and fragmented character of village teacherhood and the sense of self-negation drive teachers to seek alternative route of security. Hardly committed to their profession, many started to moonlight in petty tourism businesses, such as running restaurants, Peasant Happiness Inns, karaoke bars, souvenir stores, or providing tour guide and vehicle rental service, to compensate for their scanty salaries and tourism-escalated living expense. For many of them, teaching is a profession that brings little economic and social reward yet offers a modicum of employment stability, that they hesitate to discard but do not whole-heartedly enjoy. Moonlighting in tourism business at home thus becomes a widely sought-after side-profession among the teachers of Majiang and Longxing. It provides extra cash and the adventure of doing business without leaving one’s primary vocation.

Compared to the historical image of teachers as the burning candles and gardeners of seedlings who enlighten and nurture others to their own diminution, village teachers in the changing Qiandongnan develop a different sense of self-worth based on the market logic of self-dependence and self-enterprising, rather than self-sacrifice. Parents complain about moonlighting as morally questionable, as the corrupting force of the market that undermined teachers’ commitment to their profession. “Look, the teachers are of low *suzhi* themselves. They are greedy and money-centered. They skip class to do business when they should be educating our kids.” Villagers were quick to point out teachers’ material pursuits and voice their dismay of the tourism-penetrated educational spaces.

While community members often cast scornful look at teacher moonlighting, their critique invoked market entrepreneurialism, the very *suzhi* promoted by tourism, as the corrupting force of growing consumerism and the decline of village mores and individual conscience. While the self-enterprising motive is held up as a desirable quality for the future prosperity of Qiandongnan, such “quality” operates as a multifaceted governing apparatus that both enables and constrains, both as a tool for empowerment and a source of disenchantment. It reshapes the pedagogical landscape (with the physical sites of the schools penetrated by market demands), exerts influence on how students come to understand education and social mobility (the case of the enterprising dropout Xiaoshi), and reconfigures the way teachers teach, live, and relate to their profession (the case of moonlighting).

Tourism, however, also revives the indigenous repertoire of literacy, as singing, dancing, and embroidery that used to be considered relics of the past are now increasingly recuperated with market values. In fact, Xiaoshi’s new business plan was to hire local dropout youth to perform ethnic songs and dances for her Peasants’ Happiness Inn once the business opened. While the opportunity structure of the market and the high tides of cultural tourism endorse such “quality” and “competency” in singing, dancing, and embroidery—what I call the indigenous repertoire of literacy, in the pedagogical structure of the school, it is still the mainstream *suzhi* validated by exam scores that delivers one towards an urban-centered, outward-bound telos of social mobility. The ambivalent space of quality is once again accentuated in the awkward encounters of the educational mandate

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and the market rationality, further contesting the narratives of what counts as quality/*suzhi* personhood, literacy, and learning.

INDIGENOUS REPERTOIRE OF QUALITY

In the Miao and Dong village societies, expertise in such skills as embroidery, singing, dancing, and *lusheng* (a reed pipe instrument) has historically constituted the desirable personhood and the local ideal of the “educated person” (Levinson & Holland, 1996). In my oral history interviews with village elders in Majiang and Longxing, I learned that when formal schooling was unavailable in the past, most Dong and Miao children acquired such skills in singing, dancing, and *luseng* as their most important assets in coming of age, and as the cultural capital through which they could gain communal respect, social status, and admiration of the other sex during courtships and marriages.

For instance, since neither the Miao nor the Dong people have written systems of their languages, songs became the primary means to record and pass down ancestral legends, history, traditions, and moral lessons. Before mass schooling was in place, almost all Dong children formed clan-based singing groups from the age of ten and spent many evenings together learning a repertoire of songs from a song expert (Ingram, 2007). Ability to sing is a revered character, or “literacy”/“*suzhi*” to use the modern educational parlance, that gained one social respect and cultural authority. Participation in singing provided social occasions to forge mutual respect and communal bond and served an important pedagogical function in making the desirable or “quality” person in the rural ethnic societies. In the Dong language, to sing songs is literally “dong” songs (*dor kgal*), as singing is one of the normal activities that one “does” on a daily basis, described in the well-known Dong proverb “Foods nurture the body; songs nurture the heart.”

The function of orality in songs and the lack of writing systems in the Miao and Dong languages are often attributed to the persistence of non-literacy among the ethnic populace, which continue to frustrate the state’s pedagogical regime. Yet contrary to the negative monikers associated with non-literacy, oral traditions and songs are positive mediums of the Miao and Dong cultural lives and seen as the most noble symbols of one’s culturedness. Admittedly, in many Miao and Dong villages, ethnic singing was interrupted during the national famines in the 1950s, the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s-1970s, and has seen decline since the 1990s as a result of social encounters with the larger Chinese society. However, to this day, musical virtuosity remains a very important part of everyday life in the Miao and Dong communities, as songs are still sung when welcoming guests, celebrating births and burials, asking for blessings from local deities, and entertaining visitors and tourists.

Deeply educative and illuminating, the folkways of knowing such as singing, dancing and embroidery remain marginalized in the school-centered pedagogical

domain. While folk activities are revived by the demands of tourism for their promotional and monetary value, they elicit an imaginative link to the earthbound (乡土) rustic culture, rather than an elitist social positioning. In other words, the ability to sing and dance well, to acquire the ethnic repertoire of literacy or “*suzhi*/quality” so to speak, is not considered important for improving the overall quality of life and economic standing of the students in a social hierarchy determined by the mainstream *suzhi*. As a teacher of Majiang Primary School once commented during an interview:

If we put too much emphasis on these extracurricular skills, we are doing our students a disservice. After all, these skills won’t count in high school or college entrance exams. And of what use are they to our students once they move away from this mountain region? While we certainly appreciate the rhetoric of integrating ethnic culture into classrooms, we must not forget our priority and what students really need.

In his pragmatic reasoning, the alternative repertoire of literacy does not easily translate into desirable educational opportunities or occupational outcomes, nor does it result in social advantage and mobility of the students; at most, it belongs to an extra-curricular domain that students may take up in their spare time. The supplementary, tangential status of ethnic artistic repertoire is further overshadowed by countless standardized testing and entrance exams that still reign large in students’ lives, and that, in the words of the teacher, is the “priority” of the school and “what students really need.” Despite the government campaign to revitalize the countryside, rural schools continue to deliver an urban-centered, urban-bound, cookie-cutter curriculum. Teachers continue to teach to the tests, and testing remains the most important way of winnowing out students and evaluating teachers.

Such “qualities” as singing, embroideries, and virtuosity in indigenous instruments are marginalized in the modern classroom curricula and seen as remains of a traditional world that are, at best, attached with a price tag in tourism. Indeed, the rising value of ethnic artistic repertoire in tourism and the increasing likelihood of school dropouts to engage in tourism entertainment symbolize the divide of leisure-seeking urban fantasy and the self-exoticizing ethnic labor. With urban-bound labor migration, compulsory schooling, and the rise of tourism and TV viewing, fewer and fewer young people can still claim proficiency in ethnic repertoire such as singing and dancing today. Instead, there is an acute sense of self marginalization and an intense craving for acquiring Mandarin literacy and the mainstream form of *suzhi* to function in the larger society.⁸ Urbanites’ desire to escape from the topsy-turvy city life through tourism and the rural residents’ desire to escape from the earth-bound livelihood through tourism labor further intensify an unequal playing field.

What counts as quality/*suzhi* personhood and what it means to gain proper skills are battles waged on uneven field where certain conceptions of knowledge, literacy,

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and quality are favored over others. The Miao and Dong indigenous repertoire of literacy is little valued when compared to the mainstream *suzhi* that accentuates cosmopolitan, enterprising, and innovative citizenship. Even when revived in tourism, ethnic repertoire of “quality” signifies a self-exoticizing and peripherizing through which the market demand and the educational criteria translate into differential values to govern the ways rural ethnic residents experience and understand development, community, and schooling.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explores the various “quality” mandates at work in the educational marketplace of two rural ethnic communities in Southwest China, in the broad context of curriculum reform, market-driven rural revitalization, and the nation-wide developmental turn towards quality. As China’s idiosyncratic pathway towards modernity, an ambiguous “quality” matrix becomes a site of instrumentalized economic, social, and educational struggles, signifying China’s conscious transition from a quantity-centered to a quality-oriented development model, as well as the country’s anxiety with its “holdout” population, namely the rural ethnic minorities.

As a fragmenting and divisive governing technique of contemporary China, quality/*suzhi* is experienced in multiple, ambivalent ways that cannot be reduced to a homogenizing or equalizing force. Instead, as this chapter shows, it is concretized in social programming and educational intervention to “uplift” its “holdout” population in uneven and contradictory ways and through differential mechanisms and rationalities. The various aspects of the quality complex discussed in this chapter—child-centered curriculum reform, self-enterprising tourism labor, and the indigenous conception of the quality person—manifest themselves with sticky contradictions and ambiguities in Qiandongnan’s educational, communal, and developmental spaces. They do not necessarily point to a congruent teleology of educational empowerment and rural modernization, but reflect the various ways rural ethnic populations are imagined, problematized, and acted upon through educational programming under China’s market economy.

As much as the sanguine narrative of *suzhi jiaoyu* does not remedy the exam-oriented fever or equalize the unequal playing field for the marginalized rural minority students, the market regime of tourism development produces particular account of the quality personhood in odd juxtaposition with the agrarian livelihood, the test-dictated educational sublime, and the local conception of literacy and quality personhood. The messy encounters of schooling and development produce an uncertain terrain of competing expectations, drive rural teachers and students into different spaces of maneuvers and negotiations, and create ever-changing lines of advantages and disadvantages, inclusion and exclusion, opportunities and marginalization.

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NOTES

- ¹ See Harris, D. (2012). China product quality: Only you can prevent quality fade. *China Law Blog: China Law for Business*, August 22nd. Retrieved on May 8th, 2013 from <http://www.chinalawblog.com/2012/08/china-product-quality-only-you-can-prevent-quality-fade.html>
Also see Midler, P. (2010). Why “Made in China” is a mark of shame. *The Telegraph*, January 10th. Retrieved on May 8th, 2013 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/comment/6962703/Why-Made-in-China-is-a-mark-of-shame.html>
- ² Beautiful “China Dream” requires hard work. *People’s Daily* online, December 04, 2012, retrieved 04/11/2013 <http://english.people.com.cn/90785/8043961.html>
- ³ With the exception of the historical legends of Miao uprisings against dynastic feudal oppressions, such as those led by Zhang Xiumei and Yang Daliu, which are still commemorated by the Miao people in Qiandongnan today.
- ⁴ Pseudonyms.
- ⁵ In both villages, per the residents’ own rough calculation, nearly 90 percent of the households have had labor migration experience at one time or another. Although the recent spike of tourism has attracted a sizable number of returnees, an average household still has at least one family member working outside the village.
- ⁶ I do not have space here to tease apart the rich complexities behind the phenomenon of dropout and disenchantment. Interested readers may refer to my 2012(a) article for a detailed analysis of the issue.
- ⁷ See David Barboza. A Portrait of China Running Amok. *New York Times*, September 4, 2006, B1,7.
- ⁸ On numerous occasions, villagers invoke a familiar refrain: “Our place is too poor and backward. We are like frogs living at the bottom of the well and only see a small patch of the sky. Unlike us, the city people are able to travel, even abroad, and have seen a much larger world.” Indeed, in people’s own assessment, the “rural” confers a categorical realism that enchains them in the mandatory space “at the bottom of the well,” and the “urban” is the great social classroom that could liberate one from the bondage of the soil.

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6. SHADOW EDUCATION

The Rise and Implications of Private Supplementary Tutoring

INTRODUCTION

Private supplementary tutoring beyond the hours of formal schooling is widely known as shadow education (e.g., Bray, 1999, 2009; Buchmann et al., 2010; Stevenson & Baker, 1992). It only exists because of the existence of mainstream education. Much of the curriculum in the shadow mimics the curriculum in the schools, and the shadow sector grows as the school sector grows.

Shadow education has become increasingly prominent in many parts of the world. East Asian societies, such as South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, have particularly high proportions of students receiving shadow education (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2010; Liu, 2012). The phenomenon significantly expanded in former Soviet countries and Eastern Europe after the political transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Silova et al., 2006; Silova, 2010); and many African countries have also seen a notable increase in shadow education (Antonowicz et al., 2010; Buchmann, 2002; Napporn & Baba-Moussa, 2013). Participation in tutoring is also high in parts of Southern Europe (Bray, 2011; Lamprianou & Afantiti Lamprianou, 2013), and is becoming significant in North and South America (Davies & Aurini, 2006; Diskin, 2010; Sunderman, 2007; Ventura & Gomes, 2013). Thus in effect shadow education has become a global phenomenon.

The development of shadow education is shaped by macro-level factors such as economic growth, cultural traditions and government policies, and micro-level factors including family structures, socio-economic disparities and school-level policies (Kwok, 2010; Pallegedara, 2012; Safarzyńska, 2013; Silova, 2009; Tan, 2009). Tutoring has important implications for both the immediate stakeholders and the wider society. It may compensate for shortcomings in mainstream education, increase learning for human capital accumulation, and provide employment and incomes for tutors. At the same time, tutoring may distort mainstream curricula, and exacerbate social inequalities. Where tutoring is provided by mainstream teachers to pupils for whom they already have responsibilities in regular schools, dangers arise of teachers' malpractice and corruption (Brehm et al., 2012; Dawson, 2009; Heyneman, 2011; Vu et al., 2011).

As in other parts of the world, shadow education has become a major phenomenon in China. Xue and Ding (2008, p. 3), drawing on a household education and

employment survey, indicated that in 2004 55% of urban households were investing in supplementary lessons for academic and non-academic subjects. Another study that focused only on academic subjects found that 75% of sampled Grade 10 pupils in Gansu, Hunan and Jiangsu Provinces had received tutoring in Grade 9 (Shen, 2008, p. 3). A third study of Grade 12 students in Jinan, Shandong Province, found that 29.3% were receiving shadow education in English, 28.8% were doing so in mathematics, and 11.6% were doing so in Chinese (Zhang, 2011, p. 124). Shadow education is delivered in a variety of forms ranging from one-to-one tutoring to large-scale lectures. The providers of tutoring are a matrix of commercial tutoring enterprises, college students, professional tutors, and school teachers.

A final introductory remark concerns definitions. This chapter is primarily concerned with tutoring in academic subjects beyond school hours that is received in exchange for a fee. This definition is widely used, but some researchers have used definitions that encompass non-academic activities including sports and art, and some have included fee-free forms of tutoring. These matters will be noted where relevant when referring to specific studies.

THE CONTEXT FOR EXPANSION OF SHADOW EDUCATION

Chinese cultural traditions emphasize diligence and respect for education; and the dramatic economic growth of the past few decades has given Chinese families disposable incomes to invest in various forms of education, including shadow education (Lei & Chung, 2003; Shen & Du, 2009). In addition, the one-child policy has allowed increased household incomes to be concentrated on a reduced number of children. Educational reforms in the past three decades have stimulated the development of private tutoring companies and intensified competition between families.

These changes have been linked to the socialist market economy, for which the framework was set in 1978 (Shi & Zhang, 2008). The financing and administration of education has moved away from a highly centralized system with a narrow revenue base to a hierarchical system with diversified revenue (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2004a, 2004b; Tsang, 1996). Market forces in the education sector have increased disparities, particularly between rural and urban areas, and have changed the roles of teachers (Guo et al., 2013). The proliferation of private tutoring institutions and the increased acceptability of the notion that teachers may receive extra incomes for extra tutoring services have been part of this wider shift.

Also relevant has been the expansion of higher education, which has greatly improved the opportunities for high school graduates to go to university. In 1990, only 27.3% of high school graduates could enter higher education, but in 2011 the promotion rate from upper secondary schooling to higher education reached 86.5% (MoE, 2013a). When the previously narrow gate became wider, more families considered themselves within the range of access, which in turn intensified competition between families for college admission. The National University

Entrance Examination, *Gaokao*, has become an increasingly competitive battleground among high school students for admission to high-status universities, and pressures in the senior grades of secondary education have in turn intensified at lower levels. Lower secondary students compete for admission to key upper secondary schools through the Senior High School Entrance Examination, *Zhongkao*. In turn, primary students compete for admission to high-status lower secondary schools, and kindergarten children compete for high-status primary schools.

The government has a tradition of building and maintaining elite public schools to facilitate the training of talented students for China's modernization, and to act as exemplary schools for wider improvement of education (Lin, 1999, p. 44). Although the formal identification of institutions as key schools has been removed, informal labels persist (Yu & Ding, 2011). These schools select high-achieving students through city-wide and region-wide examinations, recruit the best teachers, receive favorable government funding, and construct enviable school facilities. To strive for entry to prestigious schools and universities, many parents resort to shadow education in the hope that it will secure their children's success in the *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao* examinations (Jiang, 2011; Shi & Zhang, 2008; Yu & Ding, 2011).

The *Gaokao* in particular has been criticized for nourishing the examination-orientation that has reduced schooling to "a soulless competition" (Ross & Wang, 2011, p. 211). Curriculum reforms aiming to promote students' whole-person development have shortened school hours and reduced homework and classroom examinations (China, 2010, p. 21). However, instead of lessening the study burden, the measures seem to have increased the anxieties of parents, students, teachers and school leaders. Some stakeholders view tutoring as a strategy to make up the missing school hours (Zhang, 2013).

With regard to financial dimensions, the state has encouraged the running of schools by individual citizens (MoE, 2002), and many tutoring companies have also emerged. A new salary system was launched at the level of compulsory education in 2009 for the purpose of regulating teachers' incomes and promoting effectiveness (Zhuang, 2010). Merit pay was added to the salary system to supplement basic wages and various allowances. The reform has mainly benefited senior teachers and school leaders, and has generated less benefit for junior teachers (Zhou, 2011). Since the major responsibilities for funding the merit pay are borne by local governments, low-income districts and counties have been handicapped in implementing the policy. Disparities in the distribution of teachers' incomes have increased competition among teachers and driven some of them to generate extra incomes through shadow education. Further, insofar as merit pay is partly based on students' examination performance, teachers have a double reason for engaging in shadow education: first to earn direct revenue, and second to raise their students' scores and thus secure merit payments (Xu, 2009; Zhang, 2013).

SCALE AND FEATURES OF SHADOW EDUCATION

Although empirical data on shadow education are missing in most regions in China, the existing literature provides some evidence on the scale of tutoring (Table 1). Various studies show that in many locations at least half the students receive private tutoring, and in some places it reaches three quarters.

Some studies also provide further information. Concerning the costs of tutoring, for example, Lei (2005) analyzed data from 10,513 Grade 12 students in 90 high schools in Beijing, Jiangsu, Hubei, and Shanxi, and found that 11% of the education expenditure was devoted to tutoring. Xue and Ding (2008) indicated that primary students spent an average of RMB 693 per month on both academic tutoring and non-academic training, and that lower secondary students spent RMB 710. Tang (2009) stated that in Shenzhen participants in academic tutoring paid RMB 2,670 for tutoring per semester, accounting for 3.4% of the annual household income. The respective figures for Wuhan were RMB 1,340 and 3.7%. In Chongqing, one third of the tutoring participants in Zhang's (2013) sample reported that tutoring consumed over 10% of their monthly household incomes. Another third spent an estimated 6-10% on tutoring.

Table 1. Indicators of the extent of shadow education in China

<i>Region(s)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Origin/nature of data</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Participation rate</i>	<i>Source</i>
Urban China	2004	2004 Urban Household Education and Employment Survey; data including both academic tutoring and non-academic training	4,772 urban households with a child receiving education from pre-primary to higher education	Primary: 73.8% Lower secondary: 65.6% Upper secondary: 53.5%	Xue & Ding, 2008
China	2007	Survey of Household Expenditure on Compulsory Education; data include both academic and non-academic tutoring	18,645 households in 18 areas	Overall: 47.4% Primary: 52.3% Lower secondary: 39.6%	Chu, 2009

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

<i>Region(s)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Origin/nature of data</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Participation rate</i>	<i>Source</i>
Shenzhen and Wuhan	2008	Empirical study of tutoring in Shenzhen and Wuhan (Hubei Province)	718 primary Grade 5-6 and lower secondary Grade 7-9 students	Primary: 71.1% Lower Secondary: 71.6%	Tang, 2009
China	2008	Empirical study of tutoring received by lower secondary students Gansu, Hunan and Jiangsu	789 Grade 10 students on their participation in private tutoring in Grade 9	Overall: 74% Urban schools: 82.8% Poor counties: 66.1%	Shen, 2008; Tsang et al., 2010
Gansu Province	2010	Empirical study in six lower secondary schools in Lanzhou, Wuwei and Linxia	1,101 students in Grades 7-9	Overall: 58.8% In Mathematics: 36.7% In English: 48.5% In Physics: 20.5%	Ma, 2011
Jinan, Shandong Province	2010	Tutoring received by students in public high schools	6,043 Grade 12 students	Overall: 48.6% In Mathematics: 23.1% In English: 18.2% In Chinese: 6.6%	Zhang, 2011
Taiyuan, Shanxi Province	2011	Survey in six lower secondary schools	479 Grades 7-9 (lower secondary) students	Overall: 76.2% In Mathematics: 54.4% In English: 48.9% In Chinese: 45.6%	Fan, 2012
Chongqing	2011	Tutoring received by Grade 9 students within the six months before September and October, 2011	860 Grade 9 students	Overall: 43.6% In Mathematics: 33.2% In English: 32.0% In Physics: 25.1%	Zhang, 2013

Providers of Tutoring

Major providers of tutoring include commercial enterprises, individuals such as college students who operate on an informal basis, and school teachers who provide tutoring in addition to their regular duties. Commercial enterprises may train their own professional tutors and/or hire college students at a relatively low cost, and may recruit school teachers who can attract tutees through their reputations and/or relations (Li, 2010; Zeng, 2012; Zhang, 2013). Li (2010) conducted a qualitative study of tutoring enterprises in Liaoning Province. The for-profit enterprises were mainly located in developed urban areas, proliferating in busy streets in the city center or near schools. They were usually staffed by teachers, college students/graduates, and unemployed people with teaching experience. A few enterprises also employed foreigners. Most tutoring centers had marketing teams in addition to teaching teams. Major enterprises also had teams for curriculum development and management.

Some studies have addressed the problematic dimensions of the tutoring enterprises in an under-regulated market. Some of the tutoring centers investigated by Li (2010) indicated that all the tutors were senior teachers from schools, but in reality many tutors were college graduates or postgraduate students. Similar misrepresentation was found by Zhang (2013) in Chongqing, and included false advertising. In addition, some tutoring centers paid school leaders to help advertise the centers' services and to recruit students and teachers.

Prestigious teachers (*mingshi*) have strong market appeal built on their reputations from the examination success of former students. In Chongqing, some students reported that teachers provided better tutoring than other types of tutors, and that their own school teachers were more capable of meeting their individual needs (Zhang, 2013). Shen (2008) compared the effectiveness of tutoring provided by different types of tutors and found that tutoring provided by mainstream teachers, especially *mingshi*, had the most positive impact on the tutees' academic performance. The availability of *mingshi* in the market permits students from lower ranking schools to enjoy some of the educational resources from key schools.

Yet despite the perceived effectiveness of tutoring by serving teachers, many dimensions of this form of tutoring are problematic, especially when teachers tutor students for whom they already have responsibilities at school. Mass media have reported cases in which teachers force their own students to attend their tutoring classes, or extract their students' consumer surplus by "saving" parts of the curriculum during official class hours for the private lessons (Ban, 2010; Huang, 2007). In an alternative arrangement, teachers refer their students to colleagues on a reciprocal basis rather than tutoring the students themselves. Zhang (2013) observed that in Chongqing some teachers treated students who attended their tutoring classes with more attention in regular teaching, special training for *Zhongkao* preparation, and extra teaching materials with questions from past papers.

The prevalence of tutoring by serving teachers can be explained by many factors, including teachers' incomes, respect and trust from parents and students, the

evaluation system that stresses examination results, disparities in school quality, and competition among students (Ban, 2010; Huang, 2007; Ma, 2011). As noted above, teachers may find ways to force tutoring on their students. Sometimes, teachers are also “forced” to provide tutoring by demands from students and parents. Peer pressure pushes some students to receive tutoring, and some teachers get involved in shadow education under the influence by their colleagues. The market economy has gradually changed people’s thinking, with growing acceptability of teachers generating extra incomes through shadow education.

At the national level, the authorities mainly seek to guide teachers’ behavior through promotion of ethics. The Rules of Professional Ethics of Teachers state that teachers “should reject paid tutoring with consciousness, and should not gain personal profit from their positions as teachers” (MoE, 2008, item 5). In 2013, as the problematic dimensions tutoring attracted growing attention, further regulations were issued to enhance the construction and development of teachers’ professional ethics. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2013b) not only stressed the importance of education, advocacy and supervision, but also proposed establishment of a punishment system.

Provincial governments, district governments and schools may have additional regulations. For example, the Chongqing authorities only restrict teachers from providing tutoring on weekdays, and slightly over 90% of the tutoring participants in Zhang’s (2013) study reported having been tutored by school teachers. By contrast, regulations in Guangdong, Xinjiang, Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Shandong prohibit teachers from providing tutoring at any time (Bray & Kwo, 2014; Kwok, 2010; Xu, 2009). Yet while these policies are well-intentioned, they may not be effective. For instance, the regulations of the Shandong Provincial Education Department (2009) stipulate that teachers should not provide tutoring, should not mobilize students to receive tutoring, and should not organize tutoring activities. However, Zhang’s (2011) study in Jinan suggested that about half of the rural students receiving tutoring were tutored by school teachers. In Guangzhou, regulations state that teachers in public schools will be severely penalized for providing private tutoring to their own students. If they are found to provide such tutoring, the regulations declare, their teaching professional titles will be downgraded; they will be disqualified from promotion and upgrading; in some regions their schools will be demoted from city level to county level; and principals will be demoted to frontline teachers or even dismissed from their posts. Yet according to Kwok (2010, p. 55), despite the severe declared penalties 60% of public school teachers in major cities still provide tutoring to their daytime students.

Patterns of Demand and Impact

The indicators presented in [Table 1](#) reflect dimensions of demand. Generally, English and mathematics are among the most popular subjects for private tutoring. Some studies have suggested that students in primary schools receive more shadow

education than counterparts in upper secondary schools. This pattern may reflect the longer hours of schooling at higher levels, which leave students with less time for tutoring. Moreover, studies that include non-academic training are likely to expose greater quantities of tutoring at lower ages. Zhang's (2013) research in Chongqing study with a sole focus on the academic dimension found that more students in Grade 9 participated in tutoring than in Grade 12 when students were occupied by the busy school schedule and received more intensive training for *Gaokao* provided by formal schools.

A number of studies suggest that students residing in urban areas and those from higher socio-economic status are more likely to receive shadow education (Lei, 2005; Peng, 2008; Shen, 2008; Tsang et al., 2010; Xue & Ding, 2008). Rather than a remedial strategy for low achievers, the demand for tutoring comes more from high-achieving students. Shen (2008) and Zhang (2013) found that compared to students enrolled in ordinary schools, those in elite schools were more likely to use private tutoring. The finding matched Peng's (2008) study in Wuhan, which indicated that students' participation rates in tutoring were positively correlated with the quality of the schools in which they were enrolled. Such pattern is associated with the peer pressure and high level of competitiveness in key schools. The tutoring industry has benefited from student and parental uncertainties and unease caused by mainstream education. Schools with strong reputations for academic achievement have strongly competitive environments and high student academic aspirations, which in turn contribute to demand for tutoring.

Table 2 builds on the previous literature and shows the patterns of demand on a range of variables. It shows a general picture, which may not hold in all parts of the country and for all communities, but nevertheless reflects the principal findings of research. Students were more likely to receive tutoring in urban than rural areas, in elite schools, and during the periods of compulsory education.

Although examinations are frequently cited as one of the most important determinants of demand for tutoring, the extent to which different types of tutoring actually help to raise examination scores remains an open question. Few empirical studies have been conducted on the impact of shadow education, which in any case is difficult to measure because multiple variables enter the equation. Xue and Ding (2008) found negative correlations between expenditures on tutoring and tutees' academic achievement, but the reasons for this pattern need further analysis. In any case, Lei's (2005) analysis of data collected from 10,513 Grade 12 students suggested a positive correlation. Zhang's (2011) study based on data collected in Jinan from 6,043 upper secondary students indicated that tutoring may have positive impact on the *Gaokao* results of urban students with lower achievement or in schools with lower quality. However, the study found a negative correlation between tutoring and the *Gaokao* scores of rural students (p. 21). The study also found variations among subjects: tutoring had a small but statistically significant effect on mathematics test scores, but no statistically significant effect on Chinese test scores. One explanation might be that the time students spent on tutoring was limited and that Chinese

Table 2. Distribution of participation in tutoring and relevant factors

<i>Factors</i>		<i>Distribution of participation in tutoring</i>
Regions		Urban area > rural area; East China > Central China > Western China; Metropolitan area > county/town > village;
Level of education		Compulsory education levels > post-compulsory levels
Grades		Grades at transitional points > other grades
School	Type	Public school > private school; Ordinary school > vocational school
	Quality	Elite school > key school > ordinary school
Household/ individual factors	Socio-economic status	Higher income families > lower income families; Parents with higher levels of education > parents with lower levels of education
	Number of siblings	The only child > with siblings
	Academic performance	Top students > above average > average > below average Attention to extremes: gifted and inferior (focus of investigation including tutoring for national contests)

Sources: Chu, 2009; Lei, 2005; Liu, 2012; Ma, 2011; Peng, 2008; Shen, 2008; Tang, 2009; Tsang et al., 2010; Xue & Ding, 2008; W. Zhang, 2013; Y. Zhang, 2011.

language requires longer period of learning (tutoring) for the effect to be significant. The contradictory nature of these findings underlines the need for further research to identify what types and durations of tutoring are desirable for what types of students at different stages of their careers and in different subjects.

A further component of this research agenda would be the question whether and for whom shadow education is viewed primarily as an enrichment strategy for students who are already successful or a remedial strategy for slow learners and disadvantaged students. These matters are again difficult to disentangle, because elite students whose performance drops from the top to the middle of the class might view shadow education as a remedial strategy even though their performance is considerably ahead of the overall body of students in ordinary schools.

These themes also raise questions about distribution of educational opportunities. The government espouses fee-free education on the grounds of equality of opportunity, but even when public education is free up to Grade 9, shadow education consumes considerable proportions of household income. If families find themselves pressured to invest in shadow education when they would prefer not to do so, issues of ideology behind the façade of free education are invoked (Bray & Kwo, 2013).

In addition to the financial burden on families, tutoring exerts some negative impact on education. It adds to the study load on pupils, and occupies time that could have been spent on other activities for overall development. Instead of facilitating real learning, much tutoring aims at training in examination skills. Some students and parents treat shadow education as a temporary remedy to their psychological unease solely due to peer pressure and the stress of high-stakes examinations. These run counter to the goal of formal education and intentions of curriculum reforms. Serving teachers' involvement in the business seemed to strengthen the backwash of shadow education on formal schooling. According to Ban (2010), Huang (2007) and Zhang (2013), some students and parents viewed teachers' recommendations as effective ways to find a good tutor, and considered tutoring by teachers more effective than other modes of tutoring. In comparison, some students reported the low quality of tutoring given by college students without teaching qualifications. However, in many cases teachers and school leaders tried to make students attend their tutoring classes by treating the tutees with special privileges, or received referral commission by introducing students to tutoring centers. Such malpractice corrupts the school system. Self-employed teachers and other individuals providing tutoring on an informal basis generate incomes without paying taxes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FURTHER STUDIES

The chapter has noted patterns of demand for shadow education leading to social inequalities, the backwash on regular schooling, and elements of corruption. The phenomenon arguably needs regulation for the protection of both consumers and the wider society. Individuals who provide tutoring informally cannot easily be regulated because they are difficult to track. For these tutors, as well as for other categories of tutoring providers, attention could be given to informing and guiding the consumers. Companies and teachers who provide tutoring can be regulated more easily.

The starting point for regulating tutoring companies may be requirements on registration in terms of finance, staff, fees, advertising, safety and management. Some provincial and local governments have attempted to get tutoring enterprises to register through joint management of local education bureaus and other departments. For instance, the Chongqing municipal government issued regulations allocating responsibilities to local education authorities, departments of commerce, departments of commodity prices, and public security departments, and fire departments. Requirements for registration of tutorial centers focus on financial frameworks, buildings and facilities, management, advertising and prices (Zhang, 2013). Education bureaus are responsible for evaluation and approval of the tutoring centers, but little attention has been given to the curriculum, teaching materials or modes of tutoring. Moreover, the distribution of responsibilities across several departments lacking effective mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement has increased difficulties in implementing the regulations.

Concerning teachers who provide tutoring, Bray and Kwo's (2014) cross-national analysis identified four types of regulations. Some governments prohibit such tutoring; others discourage through codes of ethics; yet others permit such tutoring if approved within the administrative hierarchy; and others have *laissez faire* approaches which allow the marketplace to operate without intervention. In the Chinese context, *laissez faire* is certainly not a wise approach given the negative consequences of teachers' involvement in tutoring and possible corrupting practices. The other three categories may be adopted at different levels of governance according to the circumstances. Since current patterns in which teachers provide extra private tutoring stem from parents' and students' trust and the teachers' professional expertise, and are partly the result of market forces, elimination of this mode may not be fully desirable or possible. Regulations are arguably desirable to prohibit teachers from tutoring their own students, in order to avoid conflict of interest, but for tutoring of other students a desirable approach might focus on professional ethics for self-regulation. Controls on the extent to which teachers can provide supplementary private tutoring might also be built into the regulations for tutoring enterprises and schools. School leaders may hold a firm stance in discouraging tutoring and penalizing teachers who violate school regulations. Policy at the school level could also adopt the third approach noted above – permission – though this may require extra administrative work for evaluation and monitoring.

The tutoring industry has benefited from the growing demand by the consumers, i.e. parents and students, which may be rational or may be fuelled by anxieties that are not well grounded. Parents and students may be educated to make reasonable decisions, for instance on when tutoring is and is not needed, and may be alerted to the hazards as well as the benefits that accompany various choices. The purposes for tutoring may include remedial work to make up for missed classes, enrichment to stretch further, and tailoring lessons to individual needs. Yet tutoring can add pressures on young people, and the teaching and learning approaches in the tutoring sessions may not match those in the schools. Further, some tutoring companies engage in false advertising. To handle such situations, effective mechanisms are necessary for parents and students to seek information and advice, and to make complaints.

The patterns of demand for shadow education presented in this chapter are closely linked to features of the formal education system. In particular, the *Gaokao* and *Zhongkao* are major drivers of demand. Because they are vital to the selection of students and evaluation of teachers and schools, they push students to receive tutoring and teachers to provide tutoring. At the level of compulsory education, reduction in the weight of examinations for assessment and evaluation might lessen the pressures, and changes in content may shift the curriculum of tutoring from examination-orientated training/drilling to real learning and whole-person development. Yet reforms often encounter unanticipated side-effects. One result of efforts by the national government (China, 2010) to alleviate study burdens through shortened school hours and reduced school work has been

increased demand for tutoring by parents, students and teachers in order to bridge perceived gaps. One way forward might be to give schools and local authorities more discretion to decide on the extent to which school work should be lessened and school schedules changed according to local contexts and institutional specifics.

The demand patterns noted the higher participation in tutoring among students in the developed regions, in urban areas, from students of more prosperous family backgrounds, and in schools of better quality. These patterns add to the existing inequalities in formal education. Governments at different levels may continue their efforts to promote balanced development of education by strengthening support to schools in poorer regions and by raising the quality of low-ranking schools. In rural areas where little tutoring is available through commercial channels, free tutoring provided by the schools may help students with learning difficulties.

Ideally, policy decisions should be built upon sound empirical studies. Literature on shadow education in China has been growing, but some studies have had weak methods and vague conceptualizations of tutoring. More research on the nature and impact of shadow education will extend understanding. This chapter has especially been concerned with tutoring in academic subjects, though recognizes that tutoring in other domains may also be important for social and economic development. More information is needed on the nature of different types of tutoring and on the impact of tutoring on learning. Whatever the definitions adopted by researchers, it is clear that shadow education has greatly expanded in China during the last three decades, and is likely to continue to expand.

Finally, returning to the wider picture with which this chapter commenced, patterns in China may be compared with those in other parts of Asia and beyond. Shadow education was once associated particularly with East Asian societies such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan but has now become a global phenomenon. The introduction of the market economy has allowed the shadow education in China to 'catch up' with patterns in other parts of East Asia. Indeed on the present trajectory shadow education seems set to become a standard component in the lives of young people at all levels of education, especially in urban areas and increasingly also in rural areas. Shadow education is also growing in other parts of the world, including Africa, North America and South America, though in China already seems to be greater in scale.

Nevertheless, shadow education in China is not yet as entrenched as it is in South Korea, for example. The authorities therefore still have opportunities to shape the phenomenon. In this process they may recognize the positive sides of expanding the learning of young people, contributing to human capital, and harnessing the different resources in society. On the other side, they may seek to alleviate excessive burdens on young people, avoid corrupting influences, and seeking harmony between in-school and out-of-school learning.

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SECTION II
TEACHING UNDER CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

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7. TEACHING UNDER CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

The Experience of Migrant Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a broad term used to describe the movement of populations from one place to another. Economic globalization and modern transportation technologies have greatly enhanced the mobility of people across national boundaries. With its international focus, the current debate on migration issues often ignores or overlooks the movement of populations within nation-states. According to the recent census of China, China's migrant population reached 221 million in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). It is claimed that China is experiencing the largest internal migration in human history (Fishman, 2005). While globalization has contributed to the widening gap between northern and southern countries internationally, within China it has exacerbated the gap between China's eastern coastal and western regions. As a result, many migrants are moving to China's coastal cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai. It is estimated that another 300 million people are expected to move in the next three decades, particularly from rural to urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). Migrant workers are often referred to as temporary workers from China's rural areas working in its urban construction industry, manufacturing, food and domestic services, and providing a source of abundant, cheap, and exploitable labour for China's market economy. What is less recognized, however, is that included among migrant workers is a large group of well-educated teachers – themselves migrants – teaching in migrant schools. Little is known about this group of teacher, and it is especially unclear how they fare as migrant workers in China's market economy. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to explore the experience of migrant teachers in China. In particular, it examines how China's market economy has impacted the status and teaching and living conditions of migrant teachers.

GLOBALIZATION, MARKET ECONOMY AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

China managed to resist globalization until 1978, when the late Chinese leader Deng Xiao-ping launched the “open door” policy that gradually shifted China toward a socialist market economy. With its ascension to the WTO in 2001 and the completion of its market opening pledges in 2006, China formally entered the age of the

market economy. As a result, the country has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, migration, urbanization, and privatization – all required by economic globalization. According to Anderson (2002), mass migration is one of the new world disorders created by globalization. The integration of the world economy has required the mobility of people across national boundaries as “global nomads” (Jordan & Düvell, 2003). Migration has subsequently become integral to the creation and maintenance of a globally flexible workforce to be deployed at the discretion of the host country. As Jordan and Düvell note, migration is “a requirement of, a response to and a resistance against, global institutional transformation and integration of the world economy” (p. 63). Globalization and migration, then, are inextricably intertwined.

Ritzer (2007) defines globalization as “an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world’s spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces” (p. 1). In the current literature on globalization, the neglect of the social dimension is “rather glaring”, particularly with regard to questions of social inequality, power and the global-local relationship (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 58). It is evident that globalization from above favours open markets, free trade, deregulation and privatization, all of which work for the benefit of wealthy nations and, moreover, the economic elite of these nations. There is evidence suggesting that we are experiencing widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” in global society, devastating environmental problems, declining civic participation and community, and increasing mistrust and alienation among citizenries (Welch, 2001).

China’s market economy coincided with a new stage of globalization when the integration of the world economy required China’s cheap labour, abundant natural resources, and gigantic consumer market. Indeed, over the past 30 years, China has experienced “an economic miracle” (Dutta, 2006, p. xii) and a “massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge” (Brandt & Rawski, 2008, p. 1). In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the United States in terms of gross domestic product. Despite the claim that the Chinese enjoy more freedom than at any time in recent history (Jiang, 2008), China is also facing unprecedented challenges, including rising unemployment, socio-economic disparity, corruption, environment degradation, and an inadequate social safety net (Cheng, 2008). In particular, despite the fact that migrant workers have made indispensable contributions to China’s booming economy, their social and political status remains low. They work long hours, often at possibly the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. Despite this, they are “underpaid or even unpaid after months of hard work” (Lo, 2007, p. 138). In some places, the overdue or defaulted payments to migrant workers have become an important cause of social instability (Xiang, 2004). In their adaptation to urban life, migrants face multi-faceted barriers (Guo & Zhang, 2010). As institutional and economic barriers have denied migrant access to affordable public housing, many of them live in “migrant enclaves,” which are officially regarded as “slums or shantytowns with chaotic land use, dilapidated housing, severe infrastructure

deficiency, intensified social disorder, and unsightly urban eyesore” (Zhang, 2005, p. 250). As a result, a new urban underclass consisting of migrant workers emerged in many Chinese cities (Solinger, 2008).

While many migrants are temporary sojourners, some bring families to the cities. One prominent issue facing migrant families concerns access to education for migrant children (Goodburn, 2009; Liang & Chen, 2007; Lu, 2007; Zhu, 2001). Given the transient nature of migration, it is difficult to assess exactly how many migrant students there are in China. It is estimated that approximately 20 million migrant school-aged children have accompanied their parents in relocating to cities in China (Wong, Chang & He, 2009). Despite China's education law, which putatively provides equal access to nine years compulsory education for all school-aged children, migrant children are often deprived of such opportunities because they do not have urban household registration or *hukou*. Research shows that migrant children are much less likely to be enrolled in school compared to local children; a relatively large proportion of migrant children delay schooling owing to the interruption of migration (Liang & Chen, 2007). Liang and Chen also point out that migrant children suffer most during their first year of relocation. Amongst these children, enrollment is only about 60 percent. Parity is reached only after five years. Furthermore, there are substantial regional variations regarding migrant children's education. Surprisingly, migrant children in destinations with high levels of development and high concentrations of migrants, such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai, tend to experience more barriers to education because local governments in these regions are more likely to impose rigid controls as a way of deterring permanent settlement of migrant families (Lu, 2007).

Until recently, to enter local public schools, migrants were required to pay a number of extra fees, including “education endorsement fees” (*jiaoyu zanzhu fei* 教育赞助费), “education rental fee” (*jiaoyu jiedu fei* 教育借读费), “education compensation payment” (*jiaoyu buchang fei* 教育补偿费), “school choice fee” (*zexiao fei* 择校费), often totaling in the thousands of yuan. Because most migrants work at low-paying jobs, they cannot afford the additional fees. Even with the recent ban on extra fees, many migrant children are still excluded because they do not have the documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate, education rental permit) to satisfy entrance requirements. Local prejudices mean that, even with all the required documents, public schools still use every excuse to refuse accepting migrant students due to concerns that migrant children will lower their academic standard and ranking. Even for the “lucky” ones who manage to enter the public system, migrant children often face cultural and social stigmatization and discrimination because of their migrant status, out-of-date clothing, and regional accents (Goodburn, 2009; Li et al., 2010; Wong, Chang & He, 2009). As a result, many children suffer from social isolation, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. According to Wong et al. (2009), migrant children are more likely to receive discipline from their teachers, treatment that might have a subsequent impact on their mental health. Wong et al. also identify discrimination as another significant risk factor for the psychological wellbeing of migrant children. It is possible that

migrant children who experience discrimination and unfair discipline at school may feel so alienated and misunderstood that they eventually drop out of school at an early age. Hence, one of the greatest challenges is to help students overcome a sense of inferiority wrought by their subjugated status (Inwin, 2000).

Where public schools are neither accessible nor affordable to migrant families, a common option has been to enroll their children in unlicensed, under-funded and inadequately staffed schools specifically for migrant children (Irwin, 2000; Kwong, 2004; Woronov, 2004). It is estimated that there are between 200 and 300 migrant schools in Beijing alone (Inwin, 2000; Lai et al., 2012). While some proprietors of such schools are altruistically motivated to provide affordable education for migrant children, others are driven by profit or the need to make a living, or a combination of these reasons. Unfortunately, these schools lack the good conditions of public schools. Many of them are shanty schools housed in makeshift sheds, typically unsafe and overcrowded, with poor lighting and inadequate air circulation (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). In addition, pedagogical standards are low and the quality of teaching poor owing to lack of qualified teachers, adequate equipment, books and other teaching materials. More importantly, they do not have governmental recognition or support because they are seen to encroach on government jurisdiction (Li et al., 2010). Furthermore, local governments are concerned that if they provide the financial support for migrant schools, such actions might lead to a drastic expansion of the migrant population, and thus create a further burden (Zhu, 2001).

Despite the recent proliferation of research on internal migration in China and migrant children's education, none of these authors have mentioned the situation of migrant teachers. These are teachers, themselves migrants, whose job is to teach in schools specifically built for rural to urban migrant children. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the teaching and living conditions of these teachers under China's market economy. A case study approach was adopted for this investigation because as a research methodology it enables a focus on the particularity and complexity of a single case to understand an activity and its significance (Stake, 1995). Shenzhen and Zhuhai in Guangdong Province were purposefully selected as its research sites for this case study because it was there that Deng Xiaoping initiated experiments with the market economy in the 1980s, a policy shift that led to the subsequent mass migration needed to support the booming economy. The study employed literature review, document analysis, and in-depth interviews. Twenty-one teachers from six primary and secondary schools were interviewed from May to December of 2010.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Context

One important feature of case study is that it generates thick descriptions that go beyond mere facts and surface features of the case to include details, context, and other such descriptive and interpretive elements of the case (McGinn, 2010). The

thick description generated by this case study gives readers information needed to understand the context of Shenzhen and Zhuhai as well as migrant teachers' experience. As stated earlier, Shenzhen and Zhuhai were selected as research sites because they were two of the first four special economic zones (SEZs) established in China in the early 1980s. It was in Shenzhen that China decided to experiment with capitalism and the market economy in 1980. Subsequently, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen followed suit. Its success led China to expand its SEZs to include another fourteen coastal cities across ten provinces (Dutta, 2006). One reason for the initial choice of Shenzhen and Zhuhai as China's first SEZs was their proximity to Hong Kong and Macao and their potential to lure foreign investment. This strategy also meshed well with the thirst of the world economy for cheap labour and natural resources. As globalization has penetrated China over the past 30 years, Shenzhen and Zhuhai developed into a high-tech and manufacturing hub.

Turning to the educational context of Shenzhen and Zhuhai, in 2009 Shenzhen had 974 kindergartens, 346 elementary schools, and 285 secondary schools (Shenzhen Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2010). In addition, there were more than 255 non-government schools in Shenzhen, many of them are run by entrepreneurs or corporations primarily for migrant children. These are referred to as *minban* (people managed) schools. It is estimated that there are 255 *minban* schools in Shenzhen (BBS, 2011). The primary interest of this study is with this group of schools. Four schools were chosen from Shenzhen's 255 *minban* schools: one elementary school (School A) and three combined elementary and junior high schools (School B, C & D) (see [Table 1](#)). Zhuhai's educational system is much smaller than Shenzhen's, consisting of 170 kindergartens, 192 elementary schools, and 53 secondary schools (Zhuhai Municipal Government, 2009). There are 31 *minban* schools in the city of Zhuhai serving a population of half a million migrants. Two schools were chosen from amongst all public and *minban* schools, a combined elementary and junior high school (School E) and a junior high school (School F). With respect to the combined elementary-junior high schools, this study only focused on the experience of secondary school teachers there. In total, 21 teachers were interviewed, five elementary and 16 junior high school teachers.

[Table 1](#) summarizes the history, student population, number of teachers, ownership, and fees each school charges. Each school is relatively new, having been established in the late 1990s or early 2000s. School A is owned by an incorporated entity whose share holders are former village residents whose agricultural land was given over to urbanization. The villagers invest collectively in real estate and other businesses under a limited corporation. They rent out School A to a board for ¥500,000–800,000 a year. The other four school sites are privately owned by entrepreneurs. Some own more than one school, with one owner surprisingly holding more than 10 schools of this kind. Most hire retired principals from outside of Guangdong province to run the school, but they hold little authority over school finances. School fees are monitored by municipal governments, but vary significantly (from ¥1,100 to ¥5,000) based on the location of the school and its physical condition. Because most migrants work at survival level jobs, many find the tuition fees excessive.

Table 1. Selection of Shenzhen and Zhuhai schools

Name	Location	Grade	Year of Est.	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School A	ShenzhenUrban	Elementary (Grade 1-6)	1997	1,500	52	Collectively owned	¥2,600
School B	ShenzhenUrban	Combined Elementary and Junior High Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900 (Elementary: 1400; Junior High: 500)	58	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥3,000; Junior High: ¥5,000
School C	ShenzhenUrban	Combined Elementary and Junior High Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900	55	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,600; Junior High: ¥2,300
School D	ShenzhenSuburban	Combined Elementary and Junior High Grade 1-9)	2003	1,600	60	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,100; Junior High: ¥1,800
School E	Zhuhai Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High Grade 1-9)	1997	2,000 (Elementary: 1,200; Junior High: 800)	70	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,400; Junior High: ¥2,100
School F	Zhuhai Urban	Junior High School (Grade 7-9)	1987	1,800 (migrant: 1,000; Local hukou: 800)	91	Public	Free

Built in 1987, School F is the oldest and the only public one included in the study. It enrolls both locally born and migrant children. As the “indigenous” population has dwindled, the school has gradually opened up to the migrant children who now account for 60% of the school population. Not every migrant child is eligible for admission. In order to enroll, they have to have been residents of Zhuhai for a minimum of five years, and must provide a number of documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate). Unfortunately, many migrants cannot meet these requirements. For example, with respect to the one child certificate, many families are from the rural areas where more than one child is allowed under China’s family planning policy. Additionally, the children of parents who fit into categories known as “special talents” do not have to meet these requirements. These include those designate “high-tech talents,” business people with certain amount of investment, and people from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan. Although public schools are banned from charging extra fees, in reality the new policy still discriminates against rural migrants when it comes to granting access to public school.

Conditions vary significantly among these schools. Some have new buildings; others are located in deserted factories. Adequate space is a problem in most, with the exception of School F which remains a public school despite its intake of migrant children. One school uses its roof for extracurricular activities because of inadequate courtyard space. Students in another have to rotate when they come to do morning exercises and extracurricular activities. It is important to note that all six schools were recommended and approved by the local education bureau. All have not only been licensed by the local education authority but also awarded the title of municipal key school (市一级学校). The condition of unlicensed and non-recommended *minban* schools is left to the reader’s imagination.

Motivations for Migration

Among the 21 interviewees, five were elementary school teachers and the rest were junior high school teachers. Thirteen had bachelor’s degrees, six had 2-3 year diplomas from junior teachers’ college, and two had master’s degrees. All 21 teachers had migrated from elsewhere in China, with the majority from Hunan and Hubei provinces. During the interviews, one of the discussions focused on reasons for migration and whether the market economy has created more opportunities or simply false hope. Responses from migrant teachers clearly show that economic reasons were the most important motivations for their migration to Shenzhen and Zhuhai. One teacher from Heilongjiang explained:

Relatively speaking the economy in the north is not as developed as the south. Maybe there are more opportunities in the south. I always believe people in the north are more conservative in terms of ways of thinking and managing things. This is why I decided to move here to give it a try. (E097)

Shenzhen and Zhuhai attract people from all over China because they are symbols of “all things possible” (Fishman, 2005). As Fishman notes, people from elsewhere in China, particularly young people, see them as places “where a migrant’s dreams of work, adventure, and love might all come true” (p. 90). One respondent explained that it is the attraction of city life that drew her to Shenzhen. In her words, “I’d like to experience the outside world while I’m still young” (A085). Many moved to Shenzhen and Zhuhai to satisfy their curiosity. Shenzhen and Zhuhai also offer escape from workplace or family problems for some of the teachers. One teacher from Hebei relocated many years ago because she was not happy with her former school principal.

As with migrants in general, one issue facing many migrant teachers is that they do not have local *hukou*. Most are registered as temporary residents. Instituted in 1958, *hukou* is a registration system originally designed to prevent rural-to-urban migration. Under the *hukou* system, everyone is assigned a *hukou* location, either rural or urban. Whereas the benefit of the former is the way it ties people to agricultural land (and, thus, to a means of subsistence), the latter provides access to jobs, housing, and benefits. In essence, the *hukou* system defines who you are, where you belong, what your life chances are, and how much access you have to resources (Fan, 2008). Because it was extremely difficult for rural migrants to survive in cities without urban *hukou*, the system once had the effect of keeping rural–urban migration to a minimum. Owing to labour shortages resulting from the economic boom, the relaxation of *hukou* since the mid-1990s has facilitated labour mobility and pushed forward China’s urbanization, which increased from 19.6% in 1980 to 43% in 2005 (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2008). In large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, however, *hukou* remains a primary gatekeeper. One has to meet many requirements to obtain a local *hukou*, including maximum age, years of residence, level of education, employment status, etc. Since most of these teachers are employed on a contract basis, it is almost impossible for them to obtain a local *hukou*. Without it, however, it is impossible for them to enjoy welfare benefits or to find schooling for their children. Considering all these difficulties, several married teachers have left their children with their parents in their hometowns. The teacher from Hebei who was introduced earlier said she lives in Shenzhen on her own. Her husband is taking care of her elderly parents-in-law in her hometown. They only have time to visit during school holidays. When asked about her plan to apply for Shenzhen *hukou*, she had this to say: “I’m 45 years old. I’ve already exceeded the eligibility age for applying for Shenzhen *hukou*” (A086). Even with local *hukou*, all participants believe that rocketing housing prices mean that they will not be able to afford to buy an apartment and settle down in Shenzhen and Zhuhai permanently. Many indicated that they will eventually return to their hometowns. It is sad that many migrant workers, including teachers, cannot become active participants in the way they had originally hoped, despite the fact that they contribute significantly to the building of new cities like Shenzhen and Zhuhai.

Issues of Workload

As Kwong (2004) notes, many migrant schools are inadequately staffed. In public schools, teachers usually teach 2 classes a day, usually at the same grade level. Most subject teachers in migrant schools teach 3-4 classes a day, although not necessarily at the same grade level. At School D, the only fine art teacher teaches 17 classes of fine arts across different grades to almost half of the school's students. The scale of this problem is magnified by large class sizes. In the past 10 years, China has begun to tackle the problem of excessive class size. In Shenzhen and Zhuhai, for example, education authorities have regulated standard class size to about 50 students per class, still large by European or North American standards, but nevertheless an improvement. In addition, homeroom teachers (*ban zhu ren*) have many more responsibilities than subject teachers. They not only teach academic subjects, but are also required to do administrative work, including keying student records into the data base and performing a number of pastoral duties. One homeroom teacher described her daily routine involving supervising student's morning exercise and reading classes, cleaning the school compound, and escorting students home. Teachers usually start their day from around 7:30 in the morning and finish up around 5:30 pm. Some also work in the evenings and during weekends. It is common for teachers to work 12 hours daily. Because many students live far away and do not go home at lunchtime, homeroom teachers have to supervise students' midday naps. It is clear that teachers' responsibilities go far beyond teaching academic subjects, even extending to the care for students' safety and basic needs. One teacher described homeroom teachers as "nannies":

No matter how trivial things are, the homeroom teacher is like a nanny of the class. They have to take care of many things, including things required by the school, we just mentioned noon nap and lunch. I have to serve them lunch by myself and the younger students need supervision after lunch. We have about 10 minutes break after lunch and the school will ring the bell for the noon break. Students will then go back to their classrooms to rest and sleep. If the students cannot sleep, they can read a while. The school requires the homeroom teacher to monitor them at that time because some students may go out for example to internet café so if something happens to the students both the school and the teacher will be responsible for it. So the teacher will sit in the classroom resting with the students. (E096)

Many teachers have to spend evenings and weekends marking assignments, preparing for new lessons, or attending meetings. In interviews, teachers discussed their evening work in further detail. In School D, teachers are required to report to the school office at 7:30 am. Because School D is located in an isolated suburban village, most teachers live on campus. After a whole day's work, teachers have to attend two regular weekly meetings in the evening after dinner, one for the whole school and another of the academic subject teaching group. They also have to visit with students

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in the evenings. It is unlikely that they have any time left for recreational activities, nor the space or facilities to do so. Trapped in the school compound 24 hours a day, teachers have become commodities who are sold to the school and dispatched at the discretion of school owners and management.

Teacher's Pay, Living, and Working Conditions

Despite working long hours and taking on heavy responsibilities, migrant teachers are paid poorly. The majority surveyed in this study earn between ¥1,000 and ¥3,000 a month, far below the average monthly income of ¥6,000–7,000 earned by public school teachers in Shenzhen and Zhuhai. To compare the two cities, pay in Shenzhen is even lower than in Zhuhai, although it has the highest GDP per capital among major Chinese cities. This fact draws our attention to another important point of comparison, i.e., public school teachers are not well paid in comparison with other professions, such as engineering or information technology. Interviewees were also keen to point out that a factory worker or vegetable vendor can make ¥2,000 a month.

At this stage it is important to discuss the impact of teacher's earnings on the quality of teacher's lives. If we compare the current salary with that of a decade ago, it appears that at the present teachers are better off. However, it is well known that China has experienced significant inflation in the last thirty years – 8.7% in 2008 alone, a number reported to be the highest in a decade (CNN, 2008). More importantly, food prices jumped by 23% in 2008. One teacher commented that her salary does not last till the next pay day so she often has to ask for help from her parents. Another teacher compared the current pork price with the 1990s and stated that they used to pay a few yuan for a pound of pork and now it costs more than 10 yuan for half a kilo. In reality, the material conditions of teacher's lives have deteriorated because increases in salary have not matched inflation.

One manifestation of the impact of teacher's salary on the quality of their lives relates to their housing problem. Before China adopted privatization and marketization approaches, teachers enjoyed housing benefits, although they often lived in poor conditions (Guo, 2005). With such welfare schemes dismantled, teachers are expected to purchase their own housing. In light of this, we explored with interviewees the possibility of teachers purchasing their own homes under current market conditions. Emphatically, these teachers believe that it would be impossible. In the district where School A is located, the average price for purchasing an apartment is ¥10,000/m², which is not the highest in Shenzhen (the highest had reached ¥30,000/m²). The price in Zhuhai is slightly better at ¥15,000–20,000/m², which is still beyond the purchasing capability of most teachers.

How do teachers survive in a marketized and commercialized society on such meager salaries? Some have to rely on their spouses, usually the husband, to bring in a bigger pay cheque. Others have to get a second job, usually tutoring in their spare time. Because it is prohibited by the school, interviewees were very cautious to say much about this practice, despite the researcher's emphasis on confidentiality.

One teacher commented: "It is impossible to survive here in Shenzhen without an additional job. Teachers' salary can't make a living. It is common that people have other jobs besides teaching" (C091).

Since most teachers are migrant workers, they need places to live. Since they cannot afford to buy their own places, they have to rely on the schools. Luckily all six schools provide dormitories, mainly for single teachers, as part of their remuneration package. The challenge, however, is for four to six people to share a room in poor conditions. These are often located on the top floor of a classroom building. It is noisy and hot in summer and cold in winter. One teacher commented that it is not even as good as university dorm:

Frankly, it cannot be compared to my university dorm. There are four single bunk beds in one room. Basically every bed is taken. We store things in the upper bed and sleep in the lower one. We have shared washrooms and two big tables, no closets. The conditions are worse than university dorms. Not only the room is small, but also the beds are very shabby. The bathrooms don't have showers. We have to boil water with kettle and use the bucket to take a shower. Frankly, the conditions are not good. (E099)

None of the schools provide housing for married couples. In School D, one couple who are both teachers at the same school live in a 10 m² room built in the empty space between staircases. They considered themselves "lucky". The researcher got permission to visit this room. Basically there is a single over a double bunk bed, a desk, a wardrobe for storing clothes, a computer, and a TV. They have a two and a half years old child who is living with grandparents in their hometown because they cannot look after him properly. They used a similar space in the stairwell one floor below to build a washroom that is shared with another family. When asked how they coordinate the shower timing, she told me:

Before we use the washroom, we usually check with each other. They live downstairs and we live upstairs. They like to take a shower in the morning and we're used to having a shower in the evening. Usually the time works out fine. (D095)

Food was another hot topic in the interviews. There are two major challenges with school canteen food. Firstly, teachers eat in the same canteen with students. Usually four to five chefs cook for over a thousand people. The quality of food is a problem for most teachers. One teacher compared it with her university student canteen food and felt "we might have more choices in university, but not here" (B089). Secondly, people come from different parts of China, but the local chefs mainly cater to Guangdong tastes, a style food considered bland and dull by outsiders. One teacher stated, "I understand it is hard to satisfy a lot of people with different tastes. For instance, people like me from Hunan like spicy food, but they only provide mild food here" (B091). Several teachers commented that they have to get used to the food because they do not have enough money to eat outside, nor do they have the

time or facilities to cook for themselves. If they do not adjust their tastes or accept this affront, they will go hungry.

A consistent message received from interviews with migrant teachers is that workloads at *minban* schools are heavier than public schools; pay is lower and working and living conditions are poorer. Under China's market economy, the nature of teaching has also changed. Once conceived as a highly respected profession, teaching has become a commodity that is traded in the market. The responsibilities of teaching have been transformed from teaching academic subjects to include providing services to students. In addition, teachers' working conditions are far from adequate. Besides the issues discussed above, office space is a problem for all of them. Two schools use renovated factories and four have relatively new buildings. Luckily none of them are housed in makeshift sheds (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). However, offices are crowded, typically holding 10 teachers in a small office. School C has 14–15 people sharing an office. Teachers felt comforted that classrooms are equipped with multimedia facilities such as computers and LCD projectors, and that they can now use PowerPoint for teaching. In most schools, however, the same subject groups or teachers teaching the same grade (5–10 people) share a computer. Many teachers had to use their personal laptops for teaching or lesson preparation. It is important to keep in mind that all the schools we visited were recommended by local education authorities. These schools are not only licensed, but have also won the title of key municipal schools (市一级学校). There are schools which are not licensed where the situation could be even worse.

Social and Political Status of Teachers

As discussed above, Shenzhen and Zhuhai are places where the market economy first took hold in the early 1980s. In light of this, it is important to ask: has the market economy created more opportunities for migrant teachers? Has teachers' social and political status been improved under China's market economy? We had numerous discussions with migrant teachers about these questions. When the questions were posed, participants hesitated to respond because they feel that the market economy has nothing to do with them. One teacher argues that the market economy created instability for teachers because their teaching contracts could be terminated at any time:

Many teachers don't feel secure to teach in a *minban* school or work as a substitute teacher. We used to have an "iron rice bowl" with a secure employment teaching in public schools in our hometowns. Now we have a porcelain rice bowl. The situation could change any time. There are too many unstable factors. (B088)

Another teacher reported that one thing market economy has brought to the society at large is that it has stimulated competitive consumption (F103). Many teachers feel the pressure to purchase a house or a car in order to keep up with the rest of the society.

To return to the question “has the market economy improved teachers’ social and political status?”, the reality appears rather disappointing. Here is one response:

Most parents in our schools are migrant workers. Like migrant workers, our social and political status is low. Public school teachers look down upon us. We do the same job [as public school teachers], but are paid one seventh or one eighth of their salaries, or even one tenth. They can get more than 10,000 yuan a month, and we only get 1000. Sometimes we internalize all this. We don’t see any future. We even look down upon ourselves sometimes. (C091)

The same teacher compared teachers’ current situation with the 1990s and said that “teachers’ status is even lower than the 90’s when parents thought highly of us. But now I can’t find my value. Sometimes I ask myself ‘Why am I still a teacher?’” (C091).

Teachers had a lot to offer when asked what can be done to improve teachers’ social and political status. One teacher commented:

To improve teachers’ social and political status, the first thing is to raise teachers’ salaries. Only by doing this can we improve how students and parents view and treat teachers. Students and parents know how much we earn. If the salary is increased, teachers don’t need to go for another part-time job. They will devote wholeheartedly to teaching. With a monthly salary of 1000 yuan and no savings, some young teachers have to borrow money from colleagues for a visit back to their hometown. (C091)

The suggestion to raise teachers’ salaries is shared by another interviewee, who is a school principal. He argues that the issue needs to be tackled urgently. If it is not handled properly, it could cost the society more than just money. He stated:

The biggest challenge for our school [School D] is that teachers’ salaries are too low. The teachers’ average monthly salary is about 1600 yuan, for new teachers 1300 to 1400, and older teachers about 2000. It is too low. Teachers cannot even afford trips to visit their hometown. Some teachers haven’t got married at the age of 27 or 28 because it is hard for them to find spouse with such low salaries. It is time to raise teachers’ salaries. If this is not done in 3 years, it will become one of the most serious social problems for Shenzhen City. (D093)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated the experience of migrant teachers in China with the intent of finding out how China’s market economy has impacted the status and teaching and living conditions of migrant teachers. Adopting a case study approach, it drew on one-on-one interviews with 21 school teachers in Shenzhen and Zhuhai of Guangdong Province. The study reports that, fuelled by forces of globalization, China has gradually shifted from a centrally planned economy to

a market economy. As a result, China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, urbanization, and internal migration. The profound socio-economic and political transformation poses significant fundamental changes to education in China. Despite China's economic miracle, migrant teachers' status and teaching and living conditions have not improved. On the contrary, they have deteriorated because migrant teachers are living in poor housing conditions and being paid less owing to high inflation rates, expensive living costs, and soaring housing prices. Furthermore, they face heavy workloads and greater responsibilities, and, consequently, more pressure and stress. Many teachers have to tutor outside of school hours or work a second job to make ends meet. Under China's market economy, the nature of teaching has also changed. Once conceived as a highly respected profession, teaching has become a commodity that can be traded in the market. In addition, teachers' working conditions are far from adequate.

The experience of migrant teachers speaks to the paradox of internal migration under China's market economy – migrants are “discursively marginal, yet simultaneously central” (Woronov, 2004, p. 301). On the one hand, migration is central to China's booming economy; China's economic success depends on low-cost migrant labour, including migrant teachers. Migrant workers perform tasks that no one else wants to do and have contributed significantly to the economic boom of China. On the other hand, the government is not willing to recognize migrant workers as bearers of substantive rights as urban citizens because they are often seen as a source of trouble and social instability. Migrant workers may be allowed to work in cities, but are deprived of a wide range of entitlements to urban welfare and benefits (Zhang, 2008; Zhang & Wang, 2010). In elucidating how the notion of urban citizenship is interpreted in reform-era China, Zhang and Wang argue that migrants, even those holding a residence permit, experience higher survival and opportunity costs to themselves and for their family members. They are entitled to only partial social protection, suffer from social exclusion and marginalization, and face many uncertainties and insecurities for their future. Migrant workers are often considered as temporary and floating outsiders and transients (Zhang, 2008).

This study evokes debates on issues more important than those initially laid out. Through an account of the experience of migrant teachers in China, this study contextualizes the concept of globalization by examining its impact on China through the influence of the market economy. One important debate this study evokes pertains to issues of social justice and equity. Many argue that the market economy has produced not only an economic miracle but also glaring inequality (Davis & Wang, 2009; Lee, 2009; Postiglione, 2006). As Davis and Wang note, the practices and institutions of socialism appear to have receded into a distant past. China is converging toward a pattern of inequality in which “the returns to capital exceed those to labour” (p. 16). As Lee further explains (2009), social injustice is ubiquitous, a view that is not restricted to the “losers” but also to ordinary Chinese of different generational, educational, and occupational backgrounds. It seems clear that there is a dire need for the Chinese government to take active measures to reduce social injustice and

inequity. In light of the challenges facing migrant teachers, a number of ameliorative measures seem inescapable, including reducing teachers' workload, decreasing class size, increasing teachers' salary, improving teachers' welfare, and raising teachers' social and political status. More importantly, migrant teachers deserve recognition as legitimate urban citizens with equal rights and entitlements.

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8. THE IMPACT OF THE MARKET ECONOMY ON ENGLISH TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

With the open-door policy in 1978, China initiated a transformation from planned economy to market economy, a transition in which English has become an essential requirement. In 1998, the Ministry of Education official in charge of foreign language education, Cen Jianjun, stated:

If a nation's foreign language proficiency is raised, it will be able to obtain information of science and technology from abroad and translate it into the native language. Ultimately this will be turned into production force. (Cen, 1998, cited in Cai, 2006, p. 3)

Put simply, the Chinese government sees English language learning as paramount to the nation's economic competitiveness in the global market. Such an assumption constitutes the discourse of linguistic instrumentalism, which emphasizes utilitarianism of learning English for sustaining economic development as a society and for social mobility as individuals (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2008). This discourse pervades language education policies, the increasing emphasis of English Language Teaching (ELT), and English curricular reforms in China. China's admission into the World Trade Organization in 2001, Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai's hosting of the 2010 World Expo have been foregrounded by a major acceleration of provisions and planning on behalf of English throughout Chinese education. Over the past 30 years the spread of English in China has accelerated, affecting education at all levels. In January 2001, China decided to make English compulsory in elementary schools from Grade 3 (age 8) upwards. English education is, prompted by market forces, expanding to lower levels (i.e., below Grade 3) despite being non-compulsory. In 1999, cities such as Beijing and Shanghai introduced English at Grade 1 (age 6) level. These schools are aiming to improve the skills of students entering the mandatory phase of English learning. English is a compulsory subject in university entrance examinations, and university students with non-English majors who fail College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) do not receive their university diplomas. CET-4 is also a prerequisite for admission to graduate schools. English majors are required to pass the Test for English Majors 4 (TEM-4), a more difficult test than the CET, in order to graduate. Non-English majors and English majors are encouraged to take CET-6 and TEM-8 respectively,

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in order to improve their employment prospects (Cheng, 2008). Recently China has issued a policy calling for the use of English as the medium of instruction in many universities for certain subjects such as information technology, biotechnology, new material technology, finance, economics, and law (Feng, 2011).

English has become a requirement for those seeking decent employment, social status, and financial security. This reflects the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism by individuals. College graduates with competence in their own discipline plus good English skills are more likely to find employment in foreign enterprises, joint ventures and cooperatively run enterprises than those who lack such skills, and are, therefore, positioned to demand the highest starting salaries (Gao, 2009; Yang, 2006). As such, students are motivated to learn English. As one administrative assistant in a technology company in Beijing stated, English ability enables social mobility: “those with a good command of English usually have more choices and chances...to be promoted to an upper level of the society” (Li, 2009, p. 214). In present-day China, English is the language of symbolic capital, socioeconomic value, and power (Bourdieu, 1991).

MARKET ECONOMY AND ENGLISH CURRICULAR REFORMS

Because of the superior social and economic prestige that proficiency in English has accrued, English language teaching has been intensely promoted by the government. Much of the impetus for English curricular reforms in China has come from forces of economic globalization, as the nation attempts to shape its education systems to provide the skills needed to participate and compete in the growing global economy. In January 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued a document entitled “Guidelines for Promoting English Teaching in Elementary Schools” (Ministry of Education, 2001). It replaced the focus of the 1999 curricular on receptive skills such as reading, with a new emphasis on productive skills for interpersonal communication (Ministry of Education, 2001). Similarly, a new English language curriculum for senior secondary schools was published in 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2003) and is notable for including both ‘humanistic’ and ‘instrumental’ aims for English education (Wang, 2006). The humanistic goals focus on developing students’ cross-cultural awareness and positive values and attitudes such as confidence and cooperative spirit (Cheng, 2011). The new curriculum places less stress on grammar, reading, and writing, and more on listening and speaking. More emphasis is placed on developing students’ practical communication skills, particularly oral skills. The purpose of this top-down movement to reform ELT in China is to develop the communicative skills of Chinese English learners, preparing both individuals and the nation for competition in the global economy.

This paper explores current issues for English education under the market economy in China. Although these issues are getting increasingly serious and deserve attention from both within and outside China, they have not been widely

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reported in the literature (see Oplatka, 2007). Teachers' voice and their perceptions of their work and career issues in developed countries are well studied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Day & Leitch, 2001). It is important to explore the teacher's perceptions in developing countries that differ from the developed world in terms of social, economic, cultural, and educational structures. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What is the impact of market economy on English education?
2. How do English teachers respond to the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism embedded in language policies?
3. How do the working and living conditions and status of English teachers change under China's market economy?

This study explores the impact of market economy on English education and on English teachers based on data collected from schools in two representative Chinese cities in Zhejiang Province.

RESEARCH SITE AND METHOD

Zhejiang Province is one of the most economically advanced provinces. Two cities were chosen: Hangzhou and Wenzhou. Hangzhou is Zhejiang's capital city and its GDP reached 5098.66 billion yuan in 2009, ranking the second among all provincial capitals after Guangzhou (Hangzhou Municipal Government Work Report, 2010). Hangzhou was also chosen because of its renowned education system, which produced numerous famous writers, scientists and scholars in the last century.

Wenzhou, a leading player in the economic reform, became the first city to allow individual and private enterprises in 1978. Residents' per capita disposable income has exploded under the market economy, from 422.6 yuan in 1981 to 28,021 yuan in 2009, ranking them third highest among China's urban dwellers (Wenzhou Statistics Bureau, 2009). In 1993, Wenzhou was the spearhead of marketization and privatization of education, permitting *minban* schools to collect tuition, allowing parents to pay school choice fees, and letting *minban* schools hire their own teachers and set up their own standards for teacher salaries (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010). As a result, *minban* schools have mushroomed, reaching 1,748 in 2009, with 413, 000 (27.3%) students registered (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010).

With the permission of the local education authority, I visited four schools in Hangzhou (see Table 1). Founded in 1904, School A is one of the key senior high schools in Zhejiang Province. Almost all its graduates are successfully admitted into university, 60% of whom go to top universities such as Beijing University and Qinghua University. School B, a public junior high school, is known for its small English class sizes, about 30 students in each class, compared to groupings of over 50 students in other schools in the city. In 2010, the school selected four to six English teachers to a sister school, a junior high school in Indiana in the United

Table 1. Selection of Hangzhou and Wenzhou schools

Name	Location	Grade	Yr of Est.	# of Students	# of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School A	Hangzhou Urban	Senior High (Grade 10–12)	1994	2,028	145	Public	Free
School B	Hangzhou Old downtown	Junior High (Grade 7–9)	1904	600	73	Public	Free
School C	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7–9)	1995	1,020	95	State-owned Minban	12,000 yuan per year
School D	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7–9)	1984	1,700	161	Public	Free
School E	Wenzhou Urban	Combined Junior and Senior High (Grade 7–12)	1971	2,800	241	Public	
School F	Wenzhou Suburb	Combined Elementary and Junior High (K–9)	2008	720 elementary; 360 junior high	80	Private minban	Elementary: 42,000 yuan per year Junior High: 48,000 yuan per year

States for professional development. School C is a state-owned *minban* school well known for the high performance of its students in English reading. From July 2002, School C was officially placed under the jurisdiction of Hangzhou Education Bureau. School D is known for its small class sizes of 34. Twenty-eight percent of its graduates go to key senior high schools and more than 50% to reputable senior high schools. It is perceived as one of the top three public junior high schools in Hangzhou.

I visited two schools in Wenzhou (see [Table 1](#)). School E is known for its Sino-Australia High School Course Joint Programme, a partnership with a college in Victoria, Australia. In the program local (Chinese) teachers teach Victoria curricula in English. If students successfully pass all courses, they are simultaneously awarded a Victorian Certificate of Education in Australia and a Senior High School Certificate in China. School F is a *minban* foreign language boarding school. It was invested by an entrepreneur and is collaboratively managed by the entrepreneur and educational professionals under the jurisdiction of Wenzhou Education Bureau. The entrepreneur hired the principal who in turn hired teachers. The employment of teachers and the choice of textbooks are approved by the Bureau. The school is located in a well-known “overseas Chinese town” in Zhejiang Province. In that town, most residents have migrated to countries such as France and Italy to do business and have sent their children back to live with their grandparents. The school is known for its high quality English education. Students have 5 classes in English each week since Grade 1 (other schools begin English lessons in Grade 3). They also have one English class per week taught by a native-English speaker. Each year students go to a summer camp in either the UK or Australia.

Data for the study were collected through document analysis, questionnaires, and individual interviews. I collected schools’ mission statement documents and information brochures. The questionnaire collected demographic information (see [Table 2](#)) regarding teachers’ age, gender, educational background, the context of teaching, class size, and grade level, as well as information on teachers’ daily activities, workload, and pay. Interviews focused on teachers’ lived experience of teaching English under China’s market economy, including challenges and opportunities, teaching and living conditions, and political and social status. Data from the questionnaires and interviews complemented one another in significant ways, enriching our understanding of the experiences of Chinese teachers. In addition, site visits and class observation helped us interpret the information collected on questionnaires and in interviews. For triangulation, multiple research methods were adopted.

In sum, I visited four schools in Hangzhou in May 2010 and administered 15 questionnaires and interviewed 13 respondents. In December 2010, I visited two schools in Wenzhou, administering 13 questionnaires and conducting 11 interviews. In total, I collected 28 questionnaires and conducted 24 interviews. Each interview lasted for 30 to 60 minutes.

Table 2. Teacher participants' information

School	Teacher	Gender	Age Range	Education	Years of Teaching	City	Location	School	Grade
A	A 001	F	41-54	Bachelor	11	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	A 002	M	41-45	Bachelor	23	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
B	B003	M	41-54	Master	25	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B004	F	36-40	Bachelor	11	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B005	F	25-40	Bachelor	4	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	B006	M	41-54	Bachelor	23	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	C007	M	> 55	Bachelor	46	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C008	F	41-54	Bachelor	24	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
C	C009	F	25-30	Bachelor	5	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C010	F	36-40	Bachelor	13	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	C011	F	36-40	Bachelor	10	Hangzhou	Urban	State-owned <i>minban</i>	7-9
	D012	M	36-40	Bachelor	18	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	D013	F	36-40	Bachelor	15	Hangzhou	Urban	Public	7-9
	E014	F	> 55	Bachelor	30	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E015	M	31-35	Master	9	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E016	F	31-35	Master	10	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E017	F	41-54	Bachelor	23	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
	E018	F	31-35	Bachelor	10	Wenzhou	Urban	Public	10-12
F	F019	F	26-30	Bachelor	6	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	1-6
	F020	F	31-35	Bachelor	11	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	1-6
	F021	M	41-45	Bachelor	20	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F022	M	> 55	Bachelor	32	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F023	F	26-30	Master	1	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9
	F024	M	> 55	Bachelor	33	Wenzhou	Urban	Privateminban	7-9

INFLUENCE OF THE MARKET ECONOMY ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

Minban Schooling

Participants reported that a crucial change in education under the market economy has been the establishment of *minban* (“people-managed”) schools. One principal explained that in Zhejiang there are two types of *minban* schools: private *minban* and state-owned *minban*. They are invested and managed by individual and state-owned entrepreneurs respectively. As a principal of the state-owned *minban* school, he was not concerned with profit. He explained that the local government supports state-owned *minban* schools because the government uses these *minban* schools to attract successful corporations to invest in local areas, thus increasing local GDP. He was concerned, however, that his school might close down at anytime, thus he spent much of his time recruiting the city’s best students: “I don’t get paid if I don’t have enough students” (C007 represents School C, participant 7). For him, competitive student recruitment is one of the more significant effects of China’s market economy, an observation consistent with those of other studies (Chan & Mok, 2001).

As a *minban* school, School C collects about 12,000 yuan tuition from each student per year. In 2010, it collected 14,400,000 yuan from 1,200 students. The administrative structure of *minban* schools requires that they be run like a profit generating enterprise. The principal commented: “In Hangzhou it is a trend that wealthy families send their children to *minban* schools whereas poor families send their children to public schools. This widens the gap between the rich and the poor. It also leads to increasing disparity in the allocation of educational resources between schools” (C007). This claim was echoed by other participants. As one teacher said, “Education equity is yet to be realized in China. For example, in our district the education quality in public schools is not so good, so some parents send their children to our *minban* school” (C010). The link between *minban* schools and educational quality was explained by one respondent, who reported that that *minban* schools use high salaries to attract high-quality teachers and recruit good students, activities that disadvantage public schools.

Education Inequity

Many participants identified tremendous inequities in the current education system. Most students in China progress through elementary to senior high schools entirely within their areas of residence. Wealthy students’ parents, however, can send their children to better senior high schools outside of these areas. Usually these schools charge a school choice fee (择校费). One teacher commented:

School choice fee reflects education inequity. Rich people can send their children to good schools whereas children from poor families can only stay in poor rural schools. That’s inequity. School choice is not based on students’ merit but on money. (D013)

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In addition to school choice, participants commented on the unequal allocation of education resources. One teacher (E017) reported that key middle and secondary schools in urban areas have better resources and qualified teachers, those with Bachelors' or Masters' degrees with English majors. High school fees also mean that these schools can afford to hire native English speakers as teachers although many of whom have no training in teaching English or education. For example, the principal in School A in Hangzhou proudly introduced: "We have 20 English teachers, including two foreign teachers, for 36 classes in total. It's about one English teacher for two classes." In contrast, in some rural areas, many schools can afford only one English teacher. One teacher said:

Some villages employ an 'itinerant teacher' (走教老师). That means one English teacher is employed by a school in a village, but she is responsible to teach different English classes in several villages because there are not enough English teachers in rural areas. (F021)

The transfer of qualified English teachers from rural to urban schools increased rural-urban disparity. For example, one teacher, who taught for twenty-two years, was recognized as one of the best English teachers in a small county in Zhejiang Province. In 2002 she applied for a position in a nationwide recruitment notice for high level English teachers in Wenzhou. She was hired immediately. She said: "I used to earn about 2,000 yuan a month. Now I earn 4,400 yuan a month" (E014). She added that fourteen other teachers, who were recruited at the same time, came from rural areas in Inner Mongolia, Jiangsu, and Hubei provinces. As one of China's most economically advanced cities, Wenzhou, with "double the average" salary, has attracted many talented English teachers from the rural areas of different parts of the country. This has disadvantaged rural schools. While the market economy has brought increased mobility to an elite group of teachers, it has widened the disparity between rural and urban schools.

Importance of English

The market economy has heightened the role and status of the English language in China. One teacher said:

Since the economic reform and China's opening-up, the whole society, including ordinary people, the government and professionals in English teaching, have regarded English as a very important tool. (B003)

This teacher recognizes the significant role of English in China, which has been well documented (Feng, 2011; Gil & Adamson, 2011; Jiang, 2003). His view of English as "a very important tool" reflects the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2008). At the same time, other participants questioned the role of English as a gatekeeper. One teacher said: "English ability

is a requirement to apply for graduate schools. You can't get in if you don't do well in English exams. I don't agree with that" (B003). He explained that competence in English should not be used to judge a person's talent and value. He went further to question the global hegemony of English (Guo & Beckett, 2007). He stated:

When foreigners come to China, why should we speak English to them? Why can't we just speak Chinese to them? I used to walk on the streets in the United States and people didn't speak Chinese to me. Instead, I had to speak English to them. (B003)

This participant raised a critical question about the coercive power relationship between English language and Chinese language. He asked why English-speaking people assume they can travel and expect others to communicate in English, thus questioning the global dominance of English (Phillipson, 2008).

Some participants expressed concern that the value placed on English under the market economy is leading to the neglect of Chinese language learning. A teacher reported that he noticed many junior high school students write inaccurate Chinese characters in their essays. He explained that parents send their children to English classes after school hours, take them to "English corners" (designated areas in parks and city squares where one can go to practice speaking English), pay for trips to participate in English speech contests, or employ tutors to help with English, but not with Chinese (E016).

Other participants feel that English is not only a tool for communication but also a vehicle to transmit Anglo culture. For example, a teacher said: "I let my students in Grade 7 watch *The Simpsons*... I use that to replace a reading period... Our reading lesson only has 40 minutes, and one episode in *Simpson* is 20 minutes, so the length is good" (F023). After one semester's practice, she felt that her students had learned a lot about American popular culture through *The Simpsons*. In our conversations, students proudly shared their knowledge of American celebrities such as Tiger Woods and Shirley Temple. When asked where they learned about these people, they showed us specific lessons from their textbook *Go for it!* (People's Education Press, 2005). We observed students who happily chanted Christmas carols in English surrounded by beautiful Christmas decorations, but knew nothing about the history of the Silk Road. Some students proudly told us they preferred MacDonal and KFC food to Chinese food and their parents often rewarded them with these Western meals if they did well in their exams. Participants were concerned that the spread of English would lead to loss of their own culture as their students came to value Western culture over Chinese culture, one of the dangers of globalization. The great danger, said participants, would be the decline of the social status of the teaching profession constructed primarily within the language of the market.

IMPACT OF THE MARKET ECONOMY ON ENGLISH TEACHERS

Teachers' Working, Living Conditions, and Salaries

All participants reported that the market economy has improved their working conditions. In all six schools I noticed that each classroom is equipped with a multimedia projector. All of the English teachers use these projectors to show PowerPoint slides or movies. Most of the teachers in our study were provided with a desktop or laptop computer. They have access to the Internet in their classrooms or in their offices.

In contrast to these well-equipped computer classrooms, many participants could not afford housing, so they rented small apartments. A teacher reported:

It is very difficult for teachers to live a decent life with regular salary in Wenzhou because of the market economy. Wenzhou's housing price is 30,000 yuan per square meter. If I want to buy an apartment of 100 square meters...it will cost me over three million yuan. (E016)

Some *minban* teachers live in apartments provided by their schools. For example, another participant reported:

My wife and I are living in the school. The school gives us two separate rooms. The rooms are designed for students, so there is no kitchen. The washroom is big, so we cook in the washroom. (F024)

Other participants' living conditions are even worse. One teacher rents an apartment of less than 40 square meters in Hangzhou. She shares a bathroom and kitchen with six other families on the same floor. She pays 1,700 yuan for rent, almost half of her 4,000 yuan salary (C009).

When asked about the impact of market economy on teachers, another teacher responded that her salary has increased: "Since 2010, my salary has increased from 2,000 yuan to about 3,000 yuan per month" (B004). Teachers' salaries vary according to the number of years of teaching experience and promotions. A teacher, who has been teaching for more than 30 years, earned 4,500 yuan per month (E014). Teachers' salaries are also influenced by educational background. For example, a teacher who obtained a Master's degree from the UK said, "My salary is about 7,000 yuan per month. The housing price in Wenzhou is so high that I cannot buy a house" (E015).

Since *minban* schools set their own standards for teachers' salaries, some in Wenzhou pay high salaries in order to attract the best teachers. For example, a teacher in School F reported a salary of about 9,000 yuan per month, partially attributable to her Master's degree from a famous university (F023). In the same school, another teacher earned about 15,000 yuan per month (F024). This teacher commented that because he was a "master teacher" (特级教师) at the national level, he was hired to lead professional development for all the teachers in his school. For

most teachers, however, despite an increase in their salaries, their quality of life has worsened because of the high costs of housing and living.

Teaching under the Pressure of Exams

Most participants in the study reported that they feel extreme pressure from administrators and parents. One factor behind this pressure is the need to prepare students for exams. A teacher reported that “Teachers begin to prepare students for exams, rather than fostering their communication skills. Students in Grade 7 start to prepare for the exams in Grade 9” (B006). The exams at the end of Grade 9, known as *zhongkao* (中考), determined whether a student goes to a key senior high school, which in turn determines whether a student could go to a university. Another teacher called *zhongkao* “a traffic wand” (指挥棒):

I would like to teach English in my own way, but I can't because my teaching is evaluated by *zhongkao*, a traffic wand. I hope I could teach less grammar in class, creating a comfortable environment in the class, so my students would be more interested in learning English. If I focus on conversations, they cannot pass the exams; if I teach them grammar, they might pass the exams. I feel that my teaching is constrained. (C009)

Similarly, teachers in senior high schools start to prepare their students for university entrance exams in Grade 10, as illustrated in the following comments:

In Grade 10, we gave students many exercises to do in order to prepare them for the exams at the end of Grade 12. If they don't practice from Grade 10, they won't have enough time to do that in Grade 12. They need to practice how to write exams. (E017)

Another teacher explained that the number of students admitted to Qinghua University or Beijing University is used by upper levels of government as important indicators in assessments of local officials' administrative performance. This driver of competition for positions in the top universities in the country penetrates even junior high schools:

There is an annual task on how many students must go to Qinghua University and Beijing University. If you fail to accomplish the task, then everyone is criticized, from the major figures responsible for education, to the director of the education bureau, to principals, to teachers, and to students. That's how the pressure passes to us. (C008)

This teacher questioned the attitudes toward the central role of exams in both teachers' and students' experiences of education. The teacher argued that systemic change is needed: “The whole society and the education system need to change” (C008).

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Change of Teachers' Status

Many participants reflected on the decline in the status of the teaching profession. As one teacher put it,

Teachers used to be at the sacred social status in the Chinese society and were highly respected by the parents, but now some parents in *minban* would think 'I pay you, you have to serve me'. (C008)

This participant was concerned that while a teacher was once considered to be an "engineer of the human soul", he/she is now seen to have such low social status in part because parents believe that they can purchase the teacher's services. To reinforce parents' such belief, many English teachers offer tutorials to make money outside the school. One teacher said: "sometimes the money they make from tutoring is more than their salary" (D012). With formal teaching jobs offering such poor economic returns, many of the teachers in this study provide private tutoring for supplementary incomes.

Some participants reported that they find their work unsatisfying due to the low status of teachers and tremendous pressure from exams. One participant reflected that she used to enjoy teaching at the earlier stage of her career, *i.e.*, before the 1990s, because there was no exam score competition between schools. She said: "I taught not because I had to prepare my students for the exams, but because I had a passion for teaching...Now I feel teaching is becoming more and more mechanical...Now if I could choose again, I would not choose to become a teacher. I feel this is very different from my ideal of teaching" (C008).

DISCUSSION

Commercialization of Education

As a result of globalization, English teaching in China has experienced unprecedented marketization, privatization, and commodification (Mok, 2005). Commercialization of education in China is a result of the educational reforms of the last two decades, which brought mushrooming private schools at different levels. The study presented two types of private schools: state-owned and private *minban* schools. China now requires compulsory education of 9 years, which is free to all the students. However, School C, a state-owned *minban* junior high school (grades 7–9) in Hangzhou, charges each student about 12,000 yuan per year. This amounts to more than one third of the annual per capita disposable income of Hangzhou urban residents, which was 30,035 yuan in 2010 (Hangzhou Statistics Bureau, 2011). In that same year, the school generated over one million yuan. Even though the principal stated that he was not expected to provide a return on investment because the school was invested and managed by a state-owned enterprise, the school was profit-driven. Unlike the principal in School C, the leader of School F, a private *minban* foreign language

school, proudly stated that among the 1,700 *minban* schools in Wenzhou, this was one of the best. Annual tuition for an elementary student is about 42,000 yuan and for junior high students about 48,000 yuan. This is more than the annual per capita disposable income of Wenzhou urban residents, which was 31,201 yuan in 2010 (Wenzhou Statistics Bureau, 2011). The fee includes tuition, uniforms, lodging, meals, and upkeep. Despite the high annual fee, the school has grown quickly. In 2008 when the school was first established, it had about 40 students. Enrollment increased to 1,080 (720 elementary and 360 junior high) in 2010. In total, the school generated about 47 million yuan in 2010. Each year the students in the school go to a summer camp in either the UK or Australia. Nongovernmental educational institutions in China were required to observe the following provision of the 1995 Law on Education: “Any organization or individual may not establish schools or other educational institutions for the purpose of making profit” (Art. 25). The findings of the study, however, clearly show that in Wenzhou the private *minban* foreign language school, like the state-owned *minban* school in Hangzhou, is profit-driven and serves an elite (Borevskaya, 2003).

The Impact of the Increasing Dominance of English on Chinese

Participants acknowledged the importance of English to increasing China’s global competitiveness, but they questioned the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism, the gatekeeper role of English, and the impact of the increasing dominance of English on Chinese language. In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson asserts that “globally, what we are experiencing is that English is both replacing other languages and displacing them” (1992, p. 27). Phillipson’s insights are particularly relevant to China, where the increasing predominance of English works to devalue Chinese languages. Xu Jialu, a well-known Chinese linguist, notices that the learning of English is valued more in China than Chinese, mostly because English skills are better appreciated in the job market (Xu, 2007). The higher market value placed on English is leading to the neglect of Chinese languages, and a research report by the General Administration of Press and Publications shows proof of this. According to Xu, mistakes can be found in nearly all the Chinese dictionaries on the market, not to mention other books. He states that nowadays, even most well-educated Chinese cannot write or speak the Chinese language correctly. The excessive zeal for English negatively impacts students’ Chinese language development. To address this concern, Xu calls for the general public’s attention to Chinese language learning as the Chinese language and characters are the hallmarks of the Chinese people (Xu, 2007).

Cultural Imperialism

As part of globalization, the global dominance of the English language has been exploited as a tool of colonisation (Pennycook, 1998) and neocolonialism. The

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hegemony of English as a global language is evidently a paradigm creating a misconception that English is superior language and that English is better taught by native speakers of English (Kubota, 1998). In this study, both teachers and students perceive native speakers as more valuable as Chinese English teachers, even if native speakers have not been trained to be teachers. Both School A, a public school in Hangzhou and School F, a private *minban* school in Wenzhou use native English speakers as part of their recruitment strategies to attract top students. Furthermore, the central premise of linguistic imperialism is that the spread of English represents a culturally imperialistic project, which necessarily imparts English language culture to its second or foreign language learners (Melchers & Shaw, 2003). Currently, most English textbooks and readings in China, from kindergarten to university, approved by the national textbook censorship committee, either originate in the Anglo countries or represent Anglocentric culture in the name of authenticity. As a result, many Chinese students know more about the Anglo culture than Chinese culture. In the example of watching *The Simpsons*, both the teacher and her students uncritically accepted American popular culture. The students were familiar with American celebrities such as Tiger Woods, Shirley Temple, and American lifestyles from their textbook *Go for it!*, compiled by the People's Education Press and Thompson Learning. Some young Chinese students seem to internalize the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture and the inferiority of their own culture (Orton, 2009; Xu, 2004). As Xu (2004, p. 87) suggests,

Chinese students already have no problems tolerating and accepting Western cultures in terms of language expression, clothing, concepts and customs. In contrast, it is Chinese culture that is being unprecedentedly ignored, leading to the degradation of Chinese language, culture, and ethnic values among some students.

The idealized West in authentic English reading materials needs to be challenged. There is a need to develop English reading materials that reflect Chinese culture. It is therefore important to produce localized curricula (Canagarajah, 2005).

Tensions in English Education Reforms

As mentioned above, English curriculum reforms have focused on developing students' oral language. The implementation of these reforms contradicts the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism, and this creates tensions for English teachers. One of the tensions is whether teachers should teach English for the exam or teach for the purpose of interpersonal communication. As described above, English is a prerequisite for university entrance. Recently, a passing grade in English exams was made a prerequisite for secondary school entrance, and admission to a good secondary school almost guarantees an admission to a good university. The format of these English exams is predominantly multiple choice and has been found to constrain language teaching in a negative way. These exams require students to

retain large amounts of vocabulary, grammar skills and reading comprehension skills. Many teachers focus on these skills in their teaching and ignore students' communicative competence as required under the new English curriculum. Students' scores on the exams influence teachers' evaluations and salaries. The impact of the tests on the secondary education system is heightened by the fact that the "mean scores of students are employed widely to evaluate teaching, schools, and even education departments on various levels" (Cheng & Qi, 2006, p. 63). Teachers tend to work overtime to prepare their students for the exams. Furthermore, classes are relatively large (more than 50 students) so students seldom have a chance to speak, leaving schools to graduate students with the capacity to pass grammar and multiple choice oriented English exams but little ability to actually do what they passed the exams to do, *i.e.*, communicate. This makes it difficult to implement the curricular demand to stress oral English (Orton, 2009).

Another tension in Chinese English education reform and development is educational inequity (China Daily, 2009). The participants in the study reported increasing disparity in the allocation of educational resources including public investment, qualified teachers, and adequate school facilities. For example, in School F, teachers are offered salaries of 108,000 yuan to 250,000 yuan per year, much higher than other schools in Wenzhou. As a result, the school attracts the best teachers, those who have obtained Masters' degrees in English from prestigious universities. The school recruits top students from the whole city of Wenzhou. Many of these students pay a school choice fee of about 25,000 yuan as part of the requirements for admission. The school choice fee allows wealthy students to go to high quality schools outside their residence areas. The school choice fee is one manifestation of education inequity. In other schools, particularly in rural areas, there are few English books and materials and a severe shortage of qualified English teachers. For example, one English teacher participant is called an 'itinerant teacher' (走教老师). She is employed by a school in a village, but is responsible for teaching different English classes in several villages. Some teachers have had little formal training in the teaching of English and many have learned oral English on their own. There is evidence that China is experiencing a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" (Davis & Wang, 2009; Han & Whyte, 2009).

Working and Living Conditions, and the Change in Teachers' Status

The teachers in the study reported that they are satisfied with their working conditions. In contrast to their working conditions, most participants reported that they cannot afford to purchase a home because of soaring prices, particularly in Wenzhou. In 2010, Wenzhou's housing prices were among the highest in the country, ranging from 30,000 yuan to 50,000 yuan per square meter. One teacher in a *minban* foreign language school in Wenzhou reported that he lived in two separate rooms designed for students and cooked in the washroom because there was no kitchen. Compared

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with teachers in advanced market economy societies, the teachers in the study lived in poor conditions.

The teachers in the study expressed concern that teachers' status has declined considerably in the last decade. Once conceived of as the most glorious of professions, teaching is now constructed as a commodity (Kutoba, 2011) under the market economy in China. Parents, who have the ability to pay, expect teachers to provide the best service to their children. Teachers are complicit in the erosion of their social position. Many English teachers now earn extra income from private tutoring of students after school hours. As one participant noted, sometimes the extra income even exceeds the teacher's salary. The private activities of these teachers reinforce the notion of teaching as a commodity (Kubota, 2011). In other words, the roles of teachers and students have morphed to become like those between businesses and clients. The social status of teachers has decreased from saints to civil servants. This is consistent with studies by Guo and Pungur (2008) and Zhou (2002), who found that the social status of teachers, members of a profession once so highly thought of and respected, needs to be reclaimed through renewed professionalism.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is evident from the above discussion that there is a pressing need to develop a strong critical perspective on the impact of English as a global language. That is, future policy should call for the reclamation of local languages and knowledge through critical multilingualism. Critical multilingualism draws our attention to how the spread of English is 'linguistic imperialism' which can impoverish indigenous languages and cultures (Phillipson, 1992), privileging certain groups of people while harming others (Pennycook, 1998). As such, it calls for a critical treatment of the dominance of the English language, the development of critical consciousness (Fairclough, 1995), and the reclamation of the local in this global phenomenon (Canagarajah, 2005). We urge policy-makers, researchers, and educators to question the gatekeeper role of English in education, employment, promotion, social status, and financial security in China.

There is a dire need for the Chinese government to take active measures to reduce social injustice and inequity. To achieve this goal, it is important that equal access to educational opportunities be guaranteed. The Chinese government needs to raise awareness among the public about the important role that teachers play in a knowledge-based society; introduce legislative efforts to improve teachers' wellbeing, and teaching and living conditions; and social, economic, and political status.

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9. OVERWORKED AND STRESSED TEACHERS UNDER THE MARKET ECONOMY

Case Study in Northwest China

BACKGROUND

This chapter is based on a case study conducted in *Xisheng* (pseudonym promised to the participants for anonymity purposes) in Northwest China to explore teachers' perspectives on teaching under the market economy system. The original plan was to study local indigenous teachers, but that was not possible due to political sensitivity of the region at the time of data collection. As a result, we interviewed mostly Han teachers, including as many local indigenous teachers as possible. We think that the study is still useful as it was the first study of its kind and that it was informative regarding the impact of the market economy on teachers in northwestern China. Some findings of the study were discussed in Beckett (2012) and Guo et al. (2013). In this chapter, we refer to that work and discuss additional data that were not discussed in those publications. The remainder of the chapter discusses ideological and sociocultural contexts and research methods of the study followed by findings and discussions. We conclude with limitations and implications of the study.

IDEOLOGICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

Neoliberal Market Economy

During the past three decades, the People's Republic of China (P. R. C.) underwent numerous changes and reforms guided by neoliberal market economy globalization ideology (Beckett, 2012) that impacted all walks of life, including ways of being and ways of doing. Market economy system made it possible for unprecedented number of families to become financially richer enabling them and their children to have access to resources that were inaccessible to many. Globalization pushed the country as a whole to reorient its pedagogical policies and practices to prepare its citizens to compete globally evidenced by the introduction of student-centered teaching/learning practices in general, English education to earlier grades, and *Hanyu* medium instruction approach in minority areas (Beckett, 2012).

As discussed in Beckett (2012), market economy system, guided by a neoliberal ideology, promotes intense competition for global resources reducing the world

to a market place that pursues the most gain for least investment. Some argue that neoliberalism is a class project that creates “ever increasing inequalities between and within states” (Peters, 2011, p. 190; also see Lipman, 2012) by promoting a one nation, one language, and one culture rhetoric in which “all individuals, freed from their ethnic origins, ... their traditional cultural beliefs, can participate in a modern democratic society” (Peters, 2011, p. 38). As such, it is antagonist to diversity and “sustainability interests of indigenous languages and cultures” (MacPherson, 2012, p. 193). It systematically excludes groups historically defined as Other (Peters, 2011). The current *Hanyu* (official national language also known as *Putonghua*) medium instruction policy which various governments refer to as “bilingual” education for indigenous students to enforce homogeneity is one example of P. R. C.’s neoliberal agenda because it allows for stratification of languages by assigning economic value to them (Beckett & MacPherson, 2005; MacPherson, 2012), rendering non-*Han* languages less valuable because they are spoken by relatively fewer people. It also helps justify the displacement of indigenous and minority languages as medium of instruction with increasingly intense push for replacing them with that of *Hanyu* under the rhetoric of homogenous society (Beckett, 2012; Beckett & Postiglione, 2010, 2012).

Sociocultural Contexts

Teaching and teachers in China enjoyed centuries of respect and honour except during the cultural revolution during part of the 1960s and 1970s (Guo & Guo, 2012). P. R. C.’s market economy has benefited many as evidenced by the fact that the country now has the world’s second largest economy (Guo et al., 2013) which allowed it to successfully launch a space mission and created a sizable middle class. Unprecedented Chinese citizens now have the economic power that affords their children and themselves various resources such as multimedia learning tools and access to the Internet. However, there is little research on how market economy may have impacted teachers, especially those who work in the Northwestern P. R. C.

Available research indicates that market economy reform brought about significant changes in education reflected in curricula reform as well as living and working conditions of urban and rural teachers. They show rural and urban disparities, marginalization of minority languages in education, inadequacy of accessible and affordable education for the children of migrant workers (Guo et al., 2013). For example, S. Guo (2012) case study of 21 migrant teachers in southern P. R. C. revealed that economic miracle resulted from the market economy did not improve the living and working conditions of migrant teachers. In fact, migrant teachers’ welfare deteriorated as they were insufficiently paid, lived in poor housing conditions, and overworked. They were forced to pick up additional work such as after school tutoring to make ends meet. Guo concluded that market economy created social injustice and inequality in P. R. C. An investigation of the working and living conditions of urban and rural school teachers under market economy by Li (2012) in central P. R. C. found urban rural inequality from her analysis of data

collected from 18 teachers selected from seven schools, reflected in teachers' salary, pensions, workload as well as their living and working conditions. Furthermore, even the seemingly increased living standards of the urban teachers did not translate into improved well-being due to the increasing disparity between teachers' salaries and the cost of housing as well as job insecurity and dissatisfaction because of decreased rights and exclusion in decision making. These findings echo that of Y. Guo's (2012) interview study of 24 English teachers in eastern P. R. C. which revealed the impact of market economy in the form of linguistic instrumentalism on English education and English teachers' wellbeing. Findings of that study also showed that despite salary increase, inflation left the teachers still living in poor conditions. Commodification of education created service provider and client relationship between teachers and students' parent where the fee-paying parents demand service for their money.

Market economy reform in P. R. C. has significantly impacted the country's 113 million members of indigenous and minority populations socioeconomically, socio-politically, and sociolinguistically (Becket & Postiglione, 2010, 2012) with implications for teachers and their welfare (Beckett, 2012). Studies show market economy system contributes to high turnover rate among teachers who leave their teaching position for more lucrative jobs (Chang & Lv, 2006), leaving some rural schools with almost no teachers with postsecondary education and higher (Pan, 2009). Despite economic progress, poor working conditions, heavy workload, and work-related stress also contribute to a high teacher turnover rate among minority teaches (Chang & Lv, 2006; Zhou, 2012). According to Beckett (2012) and Ma (2009) research on indigenous teachers in northwestern P. R. C., teachers were also stressed due to the language in education reform that made *Hanyu* as the language of instruction for all students under the economic opportunity rhetoric. This was stressful for teachers because they believed that the policy was put in place without sufficient support, leaving indigenous teachers and students having to teach and learn in a language in which they did not have sufficient proficiency to engage in grade appropriate knowledge transmission and acquisition. Teachers were further stressed about the financial and time demand required for professional development necessary to keep up with the reform.

It is clear from the above discussion that while the market economy reform in the P. R. C. benefited the country's economy as well as students and their parents, its benefit for teachers suggests frustrations and stress. This chapter extends the discussions with additional findings that elaborate some of the frustrations and stress and shed some light on how neoliberalism transpires in Northwestern P. R. C. under the banner of market economy reform, particularly in relation to teaching and teachers' wellbeing.

METHOD OF INQUIRY

Research Site

The site for the study was a Northwestern P. R. C. province of *Xisheng* (pseudonym promised to the participants for anonymity purpose) inhabited by 47 ethnic groups,

but 60.7 percent of the population comprising of 13 major ethnic communities. The participants were 22 teachers from four schools (labeled as schools A, B, C, and D in this chapter) from *Xishi* (pseudonym, also promised to the participants for anonymity purposes) with a population of 2.08 million, about 27.3 percent of whom were Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Huis, Mongols, and other smaller ethnic population. The rest of the population of *Xishi* was that of *Han* ethnicity.

School A was a high profile school with a history of nearly a century. 27 percent of its 190 teachers held or were pursuing graduate degrees. 745 out of its 3,785 student population were middle school students (Grades 7-9). The rest of them were high school students. School B was ethnically mixed school (*minhan hexiao*) where *Han* and non-*Han* students and with over 50 years of history. Ten years ago, teachers at School B were divided into Native/indigenous language and *Hanyu* departments based on their teachers' and students' first languages. *Hanyu* department was composed of 87 teachers and the rest of the 202 teachers were in the Native/indigenous (Uyghur) language department. The school had 1818 students in total, with 21 middle school classes in *Hanyu* language department and 19 middle and high school classes in the native/indigenous Uyghur language department. School C, a subordinate unit of the provincial government, was an experimental school with over 60 years of history. The school was equipped with modern educational technology, known for its multimedia classrooms and known as one of the best middle schools in the province. 18 out of its 305 teachers held graduate degrees; 13 were research fellows either at provincial or municipal levels; ten were national core teachers (who played lead roles in the new curriculum training), and five were members of the provincial education reform committee. Student population ranged from kindergarten to high school totalling about 5,600, more than 3,000 of whom were high school students. School D, affiliated with an agricultural university, had 60 years of history. It had 152 teachers and 2,395 students. 1,023 of those students were in its high school division and 1,372 of them were in the middle school division.

Participants

Participants of the study were 22 (9 males and 13 females) junior and senior high school teachers recruited by a *Han* research assistant from the four schools described above. Four of the teachers were in an age range of 26–30, eight were in 31–40 range, four were in the 41–50 range, and six were in the 51–55 age range. The original plan for the study was to recruit predominantly local indigenous teachers from rural areas, but due to political sensitivities in the region, that plan did not materialize. As a result, 16 teachers of *Han* ethnicity, four teachers of Uyghur ethnicity, one teacher of Kazakh ethnicity, and one teacher of Tujia ethnicity volunteered to participate in the study. Even though the data came from participants mostly of *Han* ethnicity, we believe the findings of the study are still valuable as they are representative of working and living conditions some teachers in similar contexts.

OVERWORKED AND STRESSED TEACHERS UNDER THE MARKET ECONOMY

The participants' monthly income ranged from 500 to 6,000 *yuan* (\$78 to \$938 CAD), with one participant reporting income between 1,001–2,000 *yuan* (\$156 to \$312 CAD), 12 participants reporting income between 2,001–3,000 *yuan* (\$312 to \$469 CAD), six participants reporting income between 3,000–4,000 *yuan* (\$469 to \$625 CAD), and one participant reporting income between 5,001–6,000 *yuan* (\$781 to \$938 CAD). Twenty-one of the 22 participants were full-time teachers with years of service ranging from 5 to 32 years. Table 1 summarizes some basic demographic information graphically. Note that T stands for teachers and that each participant is numbered in the order they were interviewed for reporting convenience.

Table 1. Participant demographic information (modified from Beckett, 2012)

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender*</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Years of Services</i>	<i>Monthly Income</i>
T1	F	Han	Hanyu	36–40	13	2001–3000
T2	M	Han	Hanyu	36–40	20	3001–4000
T3	F	Uyghur	Uyghur	31–35	10	2001–3000
T4	F	Han	Hanyu	41–45	24	3001–4000
T5	M	Han	Hanyu	51–55	30	3001–4000
T6	F	Uyghur	Hanyu	41–45	25	2001–3000
T7	F	Uyghur	H & U**	36–40	N/A***	1001–2000
T8	F	Han	Hanyu	31–35	12	2001–3000
T9	M	Han	Hanyu	31–35	8	2001–3000
T10	M	Han	Hanyu	46–50	24	2001–3000
T11	M	Han	Hanyu	51–55	30	Under 500
T12	F	Uyghur	Uyghur	31–35	11	2001–3000
T13	F	Han	Hanyu	26–30	8	2001–3000
T14	F	Han	Hanyu	46–50	24	2001–3000
T15	M	Kazakh	Kazakh	26–30	5	3001–4000
T16	M	Tujia	Hanyu	26–30	6	2001–3000
T17	F	Han	Hanyu	26–30	6	3001–4000
T18	F	Han	Hanyu	31–35	11	2001–3000
T19	M	Han	Hanyu	51–55	32	5001–6000
T20	M	Han	Hanyu	51–55	32	3001–4000
T21	F	Hui	Hanyu	51–55	30	2001–3000
T22	F	Han	Hanyu	51–55	30	N/A***

Note: Gender*: M = Male, F = Female M & U**: H = Hanyu, U = Uyghur
N/A***: Not Available

Data Sources and Analysis

Data sources included a demographic survey, in-depth interviews in *Hanyu* by a *Han* research assistant, and document analysis by another *Han* research assistant and by the authors. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by two *Han* research assistants in Chinese and translated and analyzed by the authors. The demographic survey data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics. The transcriptions of the interview data were analyzed for categories and reorganized logically for salient themes and sub-themes constantly comparing to the research purpose and foci (Spradley, 1980). This inductive analysis approach allowed us to construct meaning from data for “making sense of the social phenomenon” we are studying (Hatch, 2002, p.180). The prominent themes emerged from the analysis are presented and discussed in the next section of the chapter.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Unequally Beneficial and Dogmatic

As discussed in Beckett (2012) and Guo et al. (2013), all 22 teachers participated in the study unanimously agreed that market economy reform benefited their work environment evidenced by increasing investment by various levels of governments, ministry of education, and school districts in new teaching resources, modern and strongly build libraries, painted sports grounds, and automatic school gates. Market economy system also enabled schools to raise additional funds from increased student enrollment and through company sponsorship. Teachers found the specific resources such as computer equipment, over-head projectors, and internet installment in teachers’ offices and classrooms benefited their lesson plans as they made resource searching and finding more efficient and effective. They made it possible for the teachers to bring PowerPoint slides and other media integrated lesson plans to class. Additionally, teachers elaborated that availability of multimedia was useful for demonstration of dangerous experiments and abstract concepts to help students understand concrete examples as well as for vivid presentation of historical events. Some schools made use of the technology resources to set up their own websites for intraschool as well as interschool resource sharing.

However, teachers were thoughtful and selective about technology utilization. According to them, older teachers (e.g., age of 40, 50) used less multimedia because it took them longer to adjust to the modern technology and they were concerned about its potentially negative impact on students’ learning. For example, they worried about the possibility of uncontrolled and possibly negative internet information that could distract students from learning school subjects in general and Chinese characters (orthography) in particular. Many teachers emphasized that multimedia should be seen as a teaching tool whose purpose is to improve teaching quality and effectiveness, but the use of technology should be thoughtful and context

dependent. Math teachers in particular believed that using chalkboard demonstration of mathematical problem solving processes is more effective than PPT slide demonstration and therefore the use of the latter should be limited in math classes.

While teachers thought their schools could benefit from the market economy system more, they were concerned that resource allocation among urban and remote suburban schools was unequal. They said that schools like theirs in *Xishi* were much better resourced with teachers and teaching equipment than suburban and rural schools that actually needed resources more to improve education. The participants were critical of budget allocation that seemed dogmatic and careless, inconsiderate of local needs, and wasteful. The following interview excerpt with Teacher 5 represents such sentiment:

Some of the investments appear dogmatic and careless rather than thoughtfully geared toward local reality and needs. For example, our campus has room for only one set of football (soccer) frame, but we were given two sets based on the numbers of students we have. Since we don't have room for two sets, the extra set could have been given to a school that has bigger campus. Alternatively, the extra funding could have been invested in getting us a regular-sized football field that we need, but don't have.

The above findings indicate that market economy benefited the participants and their schools through government and company investments, which helped improve physical environment of schools and helped improve teaching with the help of technology tools (see Beckett, 2012 for more details). However, they also suggest disparity in resource sharing among schools in *Xishi* and *Xisheng* where investments were possibly made dogmatically without sufficient contextual feasibility and needs assessment study. Such dogmatic and careless distribution of resources could leave the more needy population such as suburban and rural schools and students further behind while taking care of the needs of those who are already well-resourced.

Overworked and Stressed Teachers

The benefits of market economy resulted in governmental and company investments did not seem to help teachers reduce their workloads and stress. On the contrary, various reforms under market economy seem to have increased teachers' workload and stress evidenced by the fact that the participants reported having taught 2–3 classes per semester with most of the class sizes ranging between 50 and 70 students. Many of the teachers taught approximately 200 students a semester and some taught up to 300 students. Even though grading assignment and lesson preparation varied depending on subject contents, the teachers participated in the study spent much time grading assignments, up to three hours daily in addition to many more hours they spent on lesson preparation. For many teachers, teaching and grading took almost all of their work hours during the day, especially for homeroom teachers. Additionally,

teachers tutored students between classes or after school often outside their work hours and responsibility.

The teachers also felt tremendous stress inflicted on them by the competitive *Gakao* (university entrance examination) pressure intensified by the market economy system. All 22 teachers pointed out that they and their fellow teachers were stressed because of the high expectations and demands from parents, schools, and teachers themselves. Parents count on teachers to prepare their children to pass *Gaokao* and get into their dream universities, which usually are the key universities. Schools also look to teachers for maintaining and raising their reputation by getting higher percentage of their students admitted into top-tier universities such as Beijing and Qinghua universities. Several teachers mentioned that their schools evaluated their teaching achievements by ranking students' test scores weekly and monthly. Although teachers understood that schools do it with an intention that teachers could see the differences and learn from one another, "the pressure on teachers is tremendous. ... scores speak to all. Even a difference of 0.2 is considered a gap", Teacher 17 said.

It is clear that both the parents and schools evaluated teachers' achievements based on students' test scores and *Gaokao*. As a result, teachers had to work hard to help achieve those goals. This is very well summarized by Teacher 18 as follows:

It's a really big pressure for us. Although schools do not prioritize and emphasize much about the numbers of the students going to college and percentages of them being admitted to the key universities, that is de facto the measure of schools' success. There is nothing that we can do to change how people think. As key middle schools, people care more about your achievement in terms of percentage of students going to colleges. If you don't get good *Gaokao* scores, nobody acknowledges what efforts you have put in. It is what it is. Parents have high expectations towards their children regardless of their abilities. All they think is that they sent you to this school and you should go to one of the key universities.

While *Gaokao* was always important and competitive in China, including *Xishi*, the influence of market economy seems to have intensified the competition much more due to the increasing competition for jobs. As explained by the participants in the study, under planned economy system, all university graduates were guaranteed jobs that were assigned to them. Under the market economy system, people have the freedom to choose jobs on their own, the advantage of which is that graduates look for what they would like to have rather than being stuck with jobs that they are assigned to have. However, as the prosperity resulted from market economy enabled more students obtaining college diplomas, the competition for job market increased fiercely, which also increased the competition for getting into the best universities in the nation as a way to secure good jobs upon graduation. Teachers further pointed out that market economy created a strong competition among schools that compete with one another on *Gaokao* scores and the percentage of students admitted to key universities, both

of which help recruit more of the best students and attract more funding. All these competition add to teachers' workload and stress as they are pressured to work harder and more to help more of their students secure entrance into top universities.

The fact that teachers work extra hours and teach and tutor students after school and during weekends is also partly due to the competition. Teachers complained that *Gaokao* related pressures and workload impacted their health negatively evidenced by weaker immune system and depression for some, especially among homeroom teachers who work longer hours undertaking more responsibilities and tasks, checking homework, solving problems, coordinating with other subject teachers, and communicating with parents by organizing parent-teacher meetings after school (see Beckett, 2012; Guo et al., 2013 for further details).

The participants elaborated that university entrance based heavily on college entrance test scores, school education, especially high school education focused mostly on transmitting knowledge for exam purposes and test taking skills training. Many teachers expressed concerns about such an extreme focus on intellectual knowledge and test skills stating that such narrow focus neglects moral education and character building as well as psychological development of their students. As explained in the excerpt from Teacher 18.

I think we should acknowledge our economical development and achievement since the market economy reform, even though we have not been fully accepted into the world economy and that there are still many issues that need to be fixed. However, we cannot ignore the development of humanity anymore. We should pay more attention to the development of social sciences and humanity disciplines, the study of social phenomena as well addressing psychological and ideological issues and development, without which our education that focuses too much on instant economic benefits and intellectual knowledge would produce mediocrity at best.

Some participants were worried about the impact of such neglect of moral and ethical education, expansion from schools to society as a whole in the name of economic development. Many teachers were nostalgic of the days when their students received more well-rounded broad education and said that students in the past were better developed both in regular school subjects as well as physical, moral, and citizenship educations in much more effective and relaxed environment. They lamented that their current students do not have many extracurricular activities due to tremendous *Gaokao* pressure. Teachers thought that missing of moral education could cause many psychological and mental issues, presenting challenges to both parents and teachers. Teacher 18:

Humanity and moral issues, broadly speaking can be beliefs or faiths, have been neglected. Many social problems have occurred such as psychological issues and mental illness. Suicide rate has increased among both students and common people.

Furthermore, teachers were under tremendous pressure to update knowledge and improve teaching quality to meet the changing needs of curriculum and students. They were in constant professional development state learning new technologies and teaching strategies self-teaching and participating in professional development programs. They feared that their knowledge would be outdated if they did not learn new things and that they would be replaced if their teaching did not bring positive learning outcomes for students, which students and their parents could report to school authorities.

Obviously, the market economy reform contributed to improving physical school environment and students and parents. However, it did not seem to have positively impacted teachers' physical and emotional wellbeing. On the contrary, the reform seems to have added to the teachers' workload and stress as the teachers felt the constant pressure to engage in professional development to keep up with the changes and help their schools and their students to compete for higher scores and university admissions. These findings confirm S. Guo (2012) and Li (2012) findings which showed that teachers participated in those studies also felt overworked and stressed due to changes resulted from market economy reform.

Teacher-Parent and Teacher-Student Communication

The teachers participated in the study stated that the impact of market economy also changed their work with parents who became more educated and knowledgeable, posing challenges to communication with them. While Chinese parents always valued education, parents see education even more importantly setting higher expectations for their children, teachers, and schools due to more intense competition under market economy. According to the participants, instead of respecting teachers' knowledge and expertise in teaching as they used to, parents make comments on and suggestions for education and teaching methods. If they disagree or dislike a teacher's method, they contact school principals, which sometimes can result in replacement of teachers. Teacher 10, who taught since mid-1980s, witnessed the changes in teacher-parent communication:

One or two decades ago, teachers not only taught students but also students' parents. That was how things were done. But the economic development of the country has put an increasing demand on us, particularly with regards to parent teacher communication as the communication nowadays is on equal basis. Teachers are really polite to parents in a way that parents begin to teach teachers. 20 years ago, parents would feel intimidated by and highly respectful of teachers. But generally, they showed high respect towards teachers. Now parents are more knowledgeable and they could make comments about and suggestions for your teaching, a phenomenon that is becoming prevalent.

As we see here, market economy seems to have created another kind of inequality that added to teachers' stress. That is, because of the market economy system, teachers and their students' parents no longer receive equal pay for their jobs as they did under planned economy. As a result, parents could be in financially superior position to teachers and therefore feel more important and feel comfortable about making demands, a finding revealed in Y. Guo (2012) and discussed earlier in the current chapter.

According to the teachers, students grew up under market economy are also more challenging to teach. For example, abundantly resourced with computers and internet, students are exposed to all kinds of information some of which teachers may not even know, putting demands on "teachers to have improved and more in-depth knowledge and better teaching techniques" (Teacher 10). Students are more confident, but are also individualistic. Further, they lack social skills and diligence, necessitating teachers to rethink the content they teach as well as strategies they use for teaching them, another source of additional workload and stress.

"Bilingual" Education

Another impact of market economy on teachers in *Xishi* is that of *Hanyu* medium instruction, which the local government and the teachers refer to as "bilingual" education. This is a model that requires content subjects (except language arts and music) teaching and learning be carried out in *Hanyu* by all teachers including local indigenous teachers who do not speak *Hanyu* as their first language. The purpose of the "bilingual education" policy and practice is to accelerate the spread of *Hanyu* among non-*Han* indigenous population under the rhetoric of opportunity. *Hanyu* has been part of local education for decades, but until the introduction of market economy system, it was taught as a second language while content subjects were taught and learned in indigenous languages such as Uyghur and Kazakh, except to those who chose to attend *Hanyu* medium of instruction schools. As pointed out in Beckett (2012) and Beckett and Pistiglone (2012), it is important for all citizen of P. R. C., including indigenous peoples of *Xisheng*, to learn *Hanyu*. However, requiring all teachers to teach most school subjects in it before they are sufficiently resourced and prepared linguistically and pedagogically can be detrimental to educational development and present various challenges and frustrations.

The participants in the current study pointed out that if implemented well, a real bilingual education model can help improve education quality through sharing resources from both indigenous language (*minyü*) and *Hanyu* departments. It could equip students for more job opportunities and better understanding among students and teachers of different ethnicities with improved communication skills. Many of the teachers grew up locally and received their education in their native languages were asked to teach with little *Hanyu* they acquired during college in no more than a year or two, which was far from sufficient time to acquire a language to teach in

it. Moreover, the teachers participated in the study were stressed with concerns that their students did not have sufficient *Hanyu* proficiency to understand what was taught to them. They were worried that the “bilingual” education policy was carried out too soon before necessary resources were in place and before students and teachers were ready for it. The following excerpt from Teacher 5 explains it well:

... bilingual education can be effective, but it's been implemented too fast too soon. It was introduced to middle school students who never learned in *Hanyu* before. It needs a process, actually a long one, for students to learn the language enough to be able to learn in it.

Clearly, “bilingual” education is promotion of *Hanyu* towards monolingual policy and practice implemented without sufficient and necessary resources such as qualified teachers. It was also implemented to teach students who did not have threshold *Hanyu* proficiency to learn in it jeopardizing students educational development despite ample research evidence that concluded necessity of five to seven years for learners in second language to be able to learn academic subjects in it (see Cummins, 1984; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

According to the participants, various after school and summer time professional development opportunities were available for improving their *Hanyu* proficiency locally as well as in other parts of the country. However, taking advantage of those opportunities proved to be challenging due to teachers' busy teaching schedule and schools' inability to arrange for substitute teachers, leaving most of these teachers resorting to self-teaching and learning from their Han colleagues. Such arrangements, however, were disempowering for the local teachers as it puts them in subordinate position making them the learners from their *Han* colleagues whose first language was made to be the language of instruction, rather than colleagues who learn from each other with equal positions. There is no doubt that various reform, especially the “bilingual” education model, added stress to indigenous teachers.

Need Recognition and Help

As discussed earlier, teachers participated in the study acknowledged positive impacts of market economy citing improved work environment and life in general (also see Beckett, 2012; Guo et al., 2013). A further analysis of the data, however, also showed discontent with undifferentiated monthly salaries that do not match inflation making raising families and attending to their elderly challenging, which the teachers said was demotivating. Teacher 8:

Regardless of the different amount individuals invest in their work, everyone gets similar amount of pay. There is an end-of-the-year workload evaluation that is used for some bonus pay or deduction of pay depending on the workload. But the amount of the bonus is too small to make any difference for higher motivation. In fact, it's demotivating.

The sentiment regarding discrepancy between workload and payment was further elaborated by homeroom teachers who stated that the subsidies (e.g., 30 yuan = \$5.09 USD monthly stipend plus 400 yuan = \$68.03 USD for annual performance) for extra responsibilities were far from matching the workload that required by those tasks. The teachers also felt insufficient societal recognition for the value of work and lack of collegial and societal acknowledgment for their psychological wellbeing. They wished their governments did something to help them get the recognition they deserved so that they could contribute more happily.

There seems to be frustration among teachers regarding discrepancies between expected income for teachers' investment in their work and the actual income as well as teachers' income and their needs, which is another source of stress. We asked the teachers what, if any, are the channels through which they express their concerns and have them addressed. According to the participants, issues and concerns were usually taken to teachers' union, which acts as a bridge between the teachers and the school administrations through annual teachers' representative council meetings. Teachers' representative councils gather teachers' concerns and opinions and make suggestions to the school administrators at the annual meetings, where all the important policies are discussed and approved. However, some teachers pointed out that the role of the council meeting is not that important as very few suggestions made by teachers are included in the final policies or implementation. In fact, as pointed out by one teacher, the annual meeting time had been reduced from two-days to less than a half day.

Teachers' unions also carry out activities such as distributing holiday gifts; organizing celebratory and sports activities; and visiting retired and sick teachers. Other union activities included psychology expert lectures on stress management as well as school-wide free physical examination organized once every two years. Teachers acknowledged the work that the union did for them (e.g., sports activities that the union organized) and its role as a bridge between teachers and administrators. Nevertheless, some teachers were also critical of their union for not reaching out to all teachers as some of them did not even know who their union representatives were. Others thought that direct communication between individual teachers and principals could be more efficient and effective.

There seems to be frustration among teachers regarding perceived deficiencies between amount work and level of income and their financial obligations to their families. There also seemed to be frustrations about the mechanism to access to the administration with their concerns and issues as the teachers' union did not appear to have done an efficient and effective job of representing teachers and attending to their welfare under the market economy system. For example, while it is good that the union represented teachers through teachers' representative council, an annual meeting is far from sufficient to address the changing needs of teachers.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We discussed a case study that explored northwestern P. R. C. teachers' perspectives on teaching under market economy system. Findings revealed that teachers thought market economy benefited their working conditions, but the profits of market economy could be more equally shared and investments could be more thoughtfully made. Findings of the study also suggest that teachers were under constant time, physical, and emotional stress as they underwent frequent professional development and worked with more resourceful students as well as their more demanding parents. Teachers reported discrepancies between their salaries and effort and wishes for recognition and assistance. Indigenous teachers raised concerns about negative impacts of "bilingual education", the *de facto Hanyu* medium instruction practice policy and practice on minority students' knowledge acquisition and educational development.

These findings signal a need for a more systematic and planned reform that integrates the voices of people such as teachers who are directly impacted by the reform and establish investment policies that benefit more schools, particularly suburban and rural schools that are in more dire needs. It is obvious that *Xisheng* and *Xishi* governments could do a better job of benefiting schools, teachers, and students by investing revenue gained through market economy system. Specifically, they can hire more teachers to reduce class size which can contribute to better quality education and healthier work-force as that could ease teachers' pressures with fewer work hours. As suggested by the participant in the study, a more scientific evaluation system could be developed for teaching assessment as well as university entrance that takes into consideration the long term effect of teaching and learning on students' life-long learning. Support that mediates teacher parent and teacher student interaction and communication should also be put in place to relieve teachers' of stress.

Researchers and policy-makers need to evaluate the "bilingual" education policy and practice to generate better policy that has students' educational needs and psychological wellbeing in mind. They also need to study indigenous teachers' concerns and needs regarding teaching in a language that they do not have sufficient proficiency in and put in place a more reasonable professional development policy and practice.

It appears that, while much has changed due to market economic reform, the role of teachers union has not. While sports activities, free health examination, and stress reduction lectures are helpful, teachers' unions could adjust to the needs of contemporary teachers and help them address more specific needs such negotiation of workload reduction and salary adjustment for teachers. It should facilitate negotiation and establishment of labour rights to collectively bargain stress free work environment for teachers.

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10. PRIVATE TUTORING CUM BOARDING AGENCIES AND THE CONTROLLED DECENTRALIZATION OF CHINA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

As part of *minban* education, private tutoring agencies have emerged and consolidated in tandem with the development of the market economy in China. Their introduction has been viewed as a product of the paradigms of controlled decentralization and privatization of the Chinese education system. This paper, based on case studies of private agencies offering both tutoring and boarding services in the province of Henan, finds that, although they are considered illegal operations according to the current government's rules and regulations, these agencies are thriving and expanding. Under controlled decentralization, local governments have not given the agencies legal status; instead, they use the lack of clarity in the central government's policies as an excuse for avoiding the imposition of regulations. If local governments were to grant tutoring agencies legal status, it would imply sponsorship of an examination-oriented education and opportunities to access out-of-district schools. Such access is possible when the agencies accept students from remote places, focus on achieving high examination results, and use their *guanxi* to improve the chance of admission. Such practices are, at least officially, contrary to the central government's policies.

By balancing the claims of profitability and social responsibility, private tutoring cum boarding agencies offer better education and services to migrant families, upgrade test scores, and provide channels to out-of-district schools. They have survived and obtained legitimacy due to the support of teachers and parents.

It is argued that the controlled decentralization policy has led to a complicated relationship between local and central governments; the acquisition of the power to interpret and implement policies at the local level, particularly in a market economy, has created opportunities for new initiatives, which challenge the traditional organization. In a sense, these complexities have allowed room for these agencies to survive, especially since the regulatory framework governing them is inadequate.

PRIVATE TUTORING CUM BOARDING AGENCIES AND CONTROLLED DECENTRALIZATION IN CHINA

Dramatic changes have taken place in China, including upheavals in the social service sector. The "over-burdened" government has retreated from the role

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of omnipotent provider to that of regulator. Education is one of the many areas demonstrating the effects of these changes. With a budget insufficient to meet the increasing demand, education has undergone the following radical changes in recent years: market deregulation; privatization and marketization of education services; promotion of competition among schools; empowerment of parents and students, as consumers, to make choices; and diversification of income sources as a result of the transfer of funding from the state to society (Chan & Wang, 2009; Yan & Lin, 2004).

Private Tutoring Cum Boarding Agencies in China

Private tutoring is defined as “fee-based instruction in academic school subjects that is supplementary to instruction mainstream schools provide free of charge. Private tutoring includes lessons provided one-on-one or in small groups by individual instructors and companies” (Silova et al., 2006, p.13). Since it is not an independent educational activity and has ties with the mainstream education system, some studies refer it as “shadow education” (Bray, 1999; Stevenson & Baker, 1992). Dang and Rogers (2008) point out that, in terms of financing, the services are paid by the users (or, usually, their parents or guardians), though some special tutoring programs are financed by other sources, including the government. Private tutoring is available in many countries, such as China, Japan, Romania, Egypt, Kenya, the United States, and the United Kingdom (Bray, 2011; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Buchmann et al., 2010; Dang & Rogers, 2008). Scholars have argued that the growth of private tutoring in formerly socialist countries is due to the fact that the new market-driven economy has revealed the inadequacies of these countries’ educational systems (Bray, 2011; Silova et al., 2006; Stevenson & Baker, 1992).

Private tutoring has become an enterprise in China as a result of the privatization and marketization of education. Although there are a range of private tutoring services, this study focuses on the “small dining tables” for students (*xiaofanzhuo*) and “trusteeship classes” (*tuo guan ban*). Unlike other types of tutoring, they offer both education and boarding services to primary and secondary school students. They closely follow the formal curriculum, offer intensive homework assistance and examination preparation, and provide other services such as transportation. These tutoring cum boarding services attract families who are willing to pay for supplementary education, as well as room and board, in order to improve their children’s academic opportunities and ensure their safety.

These agencies that have boarding facilities have harnessed the opportunities afforded by the processes of controlled decentralization and privatization of education, and have responded to the call for quality schooling in rural areas and the need for supervision of children whose parents’ employment does not allow them to be full-time caregivers.

Controlled Decentralization in the Education System

The emergence of private tutoring cum boarding agencies is a product of the decentralization that has characterized the economic transformation of China in the past three decades. Mukunsam and Bray argue that decentralization can be divided into two categories—functional and territorial: the latter involves de-concentration (transfer of tasks and work but not authority), delegation (transfer of decision-making authority from higher to lower levels, though this authority can be withdrawn by the centre), and devolution (transfer of authority to an autonomous unit that can act independently without permission from the centre) (2004, p.225). Hanson (1998, p.112) defines decentralization in China as “the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility, and tasks from higher to lower organizational levels or between organizations”. Painter and Mok (2008) describe two paths of decentralization in China—from central to local governments and from the public to the private spheres—which have created tension between the central and local governments.

Local governments were given more power to demand funds from their district and assumed greater responsibility in the financing of education services (Chan & Wang, 2009, p.32). The central government still has ultimate power, however, and decentralization applies only to specific issues. The state’s role as a regulator and overall coordinator has been strengthened rather than weakened under the policy of decentralization, which is why it is referred to as a “controlled” process (Mok, 2003, p. 4).

Faced with limited resources and increased demands, local governments must design programs within the framework established by the central government (Ngok & Chan, 2003). Decentralization, especially in the financing of education, has created greater flexibility for local governments. It has revealed undefined territory within the education system, which allows local governments greater autonomy in asserting their own agenda. With various policy vacuums and no clear policy directives, local governments are not overly hampered in pursuing their own aims. Still, the development of education is uneven because poorer regions have fewer resources for education. West and Wong (1995) note that decentralization has intensified fiscal pressures at the county level. Access to resources beyond the local budget is limited in poor regions, which results in a lower quality of service and greater regional disparities.

Decentralization and privatization have created new barriers to education for the poorest children, which, in turn, have increased inequality among regions and deepened the division between urban and rural areas. The fiscal decentralization pursued since the 1990s resulted in an educational system where the county takes the responsibility for senior secondary school, the town and township take responsibility for junior secondary school, and the village takes up responsibility for primary school (*xian ban gaozhong, xiangzhen ban chuzhong, cun ban xiaoxue*). The responsibility for financing compulsory education in rural China rests with townships and villages.

However, under the highly centralized revenue system for public service delivery, compulsory education encountered significant financial difficulties in many poor areas, and there were substantial and widening education fiscal disparities across locations.

Faced with striking inequalities among regions, the central government adopted measures to reduce them and introduced rural taxation reform. The *Decisions on Basic Education Reform and Development* prepared by the State Council in 2001 formed a new administrative system in which the State Council makes the leading policy, different levels of local governments take charge of implementation and management, and county governments act as the major agency (*zai guowuyuan lingdao xia, you difang zhengfu fuze, fenji guanli, yi xian weizhu*). The central government shifted the administrative responsibilities for rural compulsory education from the village and township level to the county level.

The central government also implemented the “Two Exemptions, One Subsidy legislation,” which exempts poor students in rural areas from paying tuition and miscellaneous fees, and subsidizes students who are staying in boarding schools. It also provided grants to cover textbooks, and local governments supplied miscellaneous fees and subsidized boarding students’ living expenses. In 2004, the State Council circulated the 2003-2007 *Action Plan for Revitalizing Education*, which set out the government’s intention to eliminate tuition and other fees, and provide free textbooks and subsidies for needy rural students completing their compulsory education by 2007.

It is a fact that the educational resources of urban and rural areas in China are unequal; this is just one of many disparities. Although the State Council modified the educational districts in rural areas, which used to be “county-based”, in the ten years that followed this modification, the number of rural schools has decreased, contributing to the desolation of rural society and the creation of a situation “crowded in city, weak in township, empty at village” (Wang, 2013).

Controlled decentralization has complicated the relationship between central and local governments, and increased the disparity between urban and rural areas. Parents living in rural areas who want a better quality of education for their children choose schools in county centres or urban areas. Since some parents have left their hometown to work, private tutoring cum boarding agencies have sprung up, driven by the demands of parents. At present, however, these agencies are illegal operations according to the government’s rules and regulations. Central and local governments have not included these agencies in their official agendas.

As a private provider of education, tutoring agencies are subject to certain policies. The *Minban Education Promotion Law* issued in 2002 covers tutoring centres as well as other institutions. The subsequent *Regulations on the Implementation of the Minban Education Promotion Law* (2004) declares that tutors must have the same minimum qualifications as teachers in schools. Paying for private tutoring provided by public school teachers is strongly discouraged. According to the *National Rules of Professional Ethics of Teachers* issued in 2008, teachers should not be paid for

tutorial services and, more generally, should not gain personal profit from their positions as teachers.

Private tutoring cum boarding agencies have flourished in a context that is complex and ambiguous. The central government has not established relevant policies, with the exception of Article 66 of *Minban Education Promotion Law*, which states that “the administrative measures concerning the operational non-state training institutions registered in the administrative organs of industry and commerce shall be separately formulated by the State Council.” The means of administering and regulating non-state training institutions have not been specified. Since the private tutoring agencies offer tutoring and boarding (and caregiving) services, most local governments do not assume the responsibility of monitoring them.

An examination of private tutoring cum boarding agencies provides insight into children’s educational needs and also the issues plaguing the Chinese education system. In 2005, there were 25.33 million migrant children under 17 years of age and 73.26 million left-behind children (Yang et al., 2011). The central government has issued policies including *Temporary measures for the schooling of children and adolescents from the migrating population* (1998), *Notice on suggestions on further improvements of education for migrant children* (2003), and *Notice on approving the abolishment of tuition fees for children of compulsory age in cities* (2008). It instructed the governments of “inflow cities” to assume the responsibility for funding education and required public schools to be the main education provider for migrant children (*yiliurudi zhengfu weizhu, yigongli xuexiao weizhu*). Despite these measures, the problems associated with the education of migrant and left-behind children persist. Because of the system of household registration, these children encounter major obstacles when they attempt to enter public schools in host cities. Some cities even shut down their migrant schools from 2003. The children cannot enter schools that set entrance examinations because they do not have the local *hukou* that enables them to write these exams. Migrant children are forced to return to their hometown. When they reach the senior secondary level, they have no choice but to return, because the curriculum, college entrance examination, and administration policies are different across provinces and regions. Migrant parents and their children are separated, and parents are no longer able to provide daily care.

These education issues are a test of the government’s capacity to manage the changes accompanying controlled decentralization (Chan & Wang, 2009, p.33). Private tutoring cum boarding agencies are worthy of consideration because they meet the demands of migrant parents and students. As a part of education system, they have far-reaching implications for providing education, lessening social inequalities, and improving the lives of students, families, and teachers. An examination of these agencies provides insight into the functionality of the education system, the relationship between central and local governments, and the effect of policy in the educational field.

THE STUDY

This study focuses on the case of City D in the southwest of Henan province. Its economy is largely based on agriculture. It has a population of 1,730,000, including 540,000 migrant workers. Many labourers have left City D to work in Beijing, Zhejiang, Guangdong, and other provinces, and the number of children left behind has reached 130,000 in 2011. With the growing number of rural students receiving schooling, City D's educational resources are under pressure (Table 1). In response to demands from parents and students, private tutoring cum boarding agencies have sprung up, offering teaching, as well as boarding.

In addition to reviewing relevant documents for our research, we interviewed six local government officials, 13 owners of private tutoring organizations, 20 teachers, 20 students, and 20 parents. The results confirm that the agencies are illegal operations according to the current rules and regulations. Nevertheless, they are thriving and expanding.

Table 1. Education provision in City D

Year	Junior middle school education			Primary education		
	Number of schools	Number of students	Teachers	Number of schools	Number of students	Teachers
2011	56	53,527	3,237	592	164,880	7,086
2010	59	54,112	3,340	587	160,706	6,799
2009	59	46,812	3,230	565	137,300	6,765
2008	61	45,552	3,304	565	128,804	6,956

Source: Education Bureau of City D, Henan province

THE EXPANSION OF PRIVATE TUTORING CUM BOARDING SERVICES IN CITY D

Private tutoring cum boarding agencies arose in response to the deterioration of rural education; the difficulty of access to education for migrant children in new cities; the structural constraints of college entrance exams, which force children to return to their hometowns because of household registration; and the increasing desire for quality education on the part of parents and children. Since 2000, these agencies have been introduced, established, and become a fixture in City D. During the early stages of their development, most were in the form of host families, who offered children academic guidance and boarding services. An operator of this type of agency said, "At the beginning, we just took care of children we knew. Then we realized there were so many children requiring care. They were so pitiful, so we choose to look after them."

From 2004 to 2005, the demand for tutoring and boarding services increased because many students returned to their hometown, either because they were not

eligible to attend the public schools in their new location, inadequate migrant schools which were eliminated in cities or the college entrance examinations they were required to write were different from those for students with urban *hukou*.

An owner of an agency told us that the success of these enterprises is directly related to improvements in the parents' financial condition: "There are more and more migrant workers leaving counties and villages. Their horizons broadened. Since the parents have more money, they are willing to spend it on their children's education, and do not want their child to receive education in a village school." Although the government has adopted a "proximity enrollment policy", parents prefer to pursue better educational opportunities, even if they cost more money.

Since 2010, the rapid increase in the number of school-aged children in both the city and the country has led to overcrowding of the public schools in City D. Some classes in key public schools have more than 70 students, with three students sharing a desk or five students sharing two desks. According to one student, "I turn my body on the side in class. I try to shrink myself in order to keep a distance from others." In response, the local government rigorously oversaw school choice, enforcing the central government's policies, which are intended to deter students from choosing key public schools. These inspections created difficulties for rural children who were left behind by their parents. Since the major market for private tutoring cum boarding agencies is rural students who opt for urban schools, these inspections by local government increased the difficulty of school choice for left-behind students. However, because of the demands of parents and students, the agencies show stable development after a short period of slow business growth.

Driven by the demands of parents, especially migrant workers, who often do not have the capacity to care for and tutor their children, private tutoring cum boarding agencies have developed rapidly. The examination-oriented education system, the low quality of mainstream education in rural settings, the restrictions on rural students' access to education in urban areas have all contributed to the emergence and prevalence of these agencies. The transition to a market economy has resulted in an increase in the salaries of many workers but not teachers. Local governments in rural areas and counties offer teachers salaries that barely cover their basic necessities. Many teachers find alternative ways to supplement their incomes. Some chose to work part-time in tutoring agencies; some resign from the public schools to take up full-time posts as tutors. Retired and otherwise unemployed teachers also find employment in these agencies.

The Strategies of Private Tutoring Agencies

Private tutoring cum boarding agencies have adopted various strategies to survive and thrive: they maintain a balance between profit and social responsibility, pledge to offer better education and services to migrant families where children cannot live with their parents, improve test scores, and provide access to out-of-district schools. By doing so, they have won the trust of parents and students.

The Balance between profit and social responsibility. There is no need to obtain official approval from government to set up a private tutoring agency. As one operator noted, “Anybody can set up tutoring agency if they want”. The operators of agencies include full-time teachers, substitute teachers, retired teachers from rural areas, and other persons who do not have full-time jobs.

With the marketization reform, the workload, payment, wellbeing, social status, teaching and living conditions of teachers have changed (Guo et al., 2013). Austerity measures and educational reform have resulted in a marked diminution of teachers’ social and professional status, leading some full-time teachers to set up, or affiliated with, private tutoring agencies. Often, popular teachers will introduce their students to these agencies, and offering promise to these students that the agency can bring them a better chance to be admitted to out-of-district schools through *guanxi*. Though the government prohibits regular teachers to establish or serve in these agencies, they tactfully adopt the title of “substitute teachers” to evade the responsibility.

From the operator’s perspective, the success of the agency defined by its profits. However, when asked why they set up an agency, none of them answer “for profit.” Instead, they describe it as “a charitable cause”. Operators who were formerly teachers are especially prone to emphasize the responsibility and mission of education as the explanation. By referring to this social responsibility, the operators intend to differentiate them with other profit-maximization businesses. Though their services are never free, they claim that they are educating those students in need. This claim relieves the operators, particularly those who are former public school teachers, from moral condemnation due to earning money from students, and improve their legitimacy. In China, imparting knowledge and educating people is a morally respectable occupation that should not be tainted by the profit motive. Private tutoring cum boarding agencies, however, manage to straddle two aims—to earn money and to provide a social service—while avoiding questions about their teachers’ professional identity and ethic.

Catering to the needs of separated migrant families. An increasing number of parents are leaving the country to work in the city. The education and care of their “left-behind” children pose a problem. Given the growing acceptance of the commodification of education, the weak rural education system, and the difficulty migrant children facing in gaining entry to urban schools, private tutoring cum boarding agencies offer a solution to the problems of left-behind children. A teacher observed,

Most of the children who choose our agencies are left-behind children. Their parents are migrant workers who want to earn more money. These agencies have rules and can systematically supervise these children. The agencies fill the free-time of children, and restrict the time spent surfing the internet and playing internet games. These children, even when they were at home with grandparents, were neglected.

Many of the parents of left-behind children are considered “peasants;” they hope that their children can get rid of that label. If their children could live in the city and study at private tutoring cum boarding agencies, they would experience a more inspiring intellectual environment, improve their academic performance, find better careers, and escape their parents’ fate.

Most parents do not consider this service expensive, even though the agencies can charge up to RMB 2,000 per semester (i.e., 3 months). As one parent commented, “If you rent a room so your children can stay with you, it would cost much more. Now, we have the ability to pay for it.”

For parents who are migrant workers, private tutoring cum boarding agencies relieve them from the burden of tutoring their children. They are free to pursue employment, which will increase the family income. More importantly, these agencies provide parents, particularly mothers, with a reason to find employment. They would be criticized for giving up their caregiving responsibilities to pursue money. Sending their children to tutoring agencies and investing in their education offers a rationale for their actions. One parent observed, “Since the teacher in agency can teach my child better than I could, I believe it is a responsible choice”.

Improving test scores in an exam-oriented education system. Given China’s exam-oriented education system, the status of a school is primarily based on its test scores. Even at the primary school level, parents are anxious to find appropriate tutoring agencies to help their children learn. Referrals among parents and relatives are very common. One teacher observed, “Our students actively introduce our agency to others, and we do not know where the parents learn about us. They call and consult us. Parents are from various places, including Zhejiang, Beijing, and Wuhan.”

The facilities and environment of some agencies did not meet safety standards. During our fieldwork, we went to agencies that were crowded, close to garbage dumps, and with kitchens that would not pass a food safety inspection. These issues were not attended to because the parents’ primary concern is test scores. A mother told us that she was dissatisfied with the agency’s living environment and facilities, but she would overlook these problems if her children developed good learning habits and achieved high test scores.

Referring to the risks associated with substandard facilities, a teacher pointed out,

Generally speaking, the agencies are located near the schools, and they could go to the school in five minutes, which reduces the risk. For these left-behind children, the fact that the agency is close to the school gives parents better assurance. It is even better than living with their grandparents. In fact, the agency comes to pick up the children after school. If there were no tutoring agency, these children would play in the street and it would be more risky.

Providing access to out-of-district schools. As we have noted, private tutoring cum boarding agencies often hire regular and part-time teachers who have close ties

with public schools. These teachers can ease the access to out-of-district schools for the children they tutor. In earlier days, when the local government did not strictly regulate and implement the policy of in-district allocation of places, some agencies even promised parents that they could ensure their children entered key public schools. Some agencies even helped parents to prepare faked documents.

GREY AREAS AND QUESTIONABLE LEGALITY

As a result of addressing pressing needs, private tutoring cum boarding agencies have survived and gained legitimacy from teachers and parents. However, while they are not entirely prohibited by law, they exist in a grey area: their status is basically illegal according to the laws of controlled decentralization in China's education system.

Shadowy Status

A private tutoring cum boarding agency offers more than one service—both tutoring and boarding—which means that it does not conform easily to government definitions. It has been argued that because it provides tutoring, it should be regulated and monitored by the Education Bureau. The Education Bureau, however, argues that it provides mainly caregiving services and, therefore, differs from general tutoring school. Private tutoring agencies do not meet the registration standards prescribed by the government for general tutoring schools. Again, one could argue that, because it collects fees, it should be regulated as a general service agency, but there are not rules and policies in place for such supervision. An official at the Education Bureau pointed out,

Now there is no specific bureau to govern the private tutoring agency. It is a blind legal area. If the Education Bureau inspects it, these agencies will reply these children in the agencies are their relatives, and it is a normal arrangement. We had a conference and discussed how to tackle it many times, but there is no answer. Nobody can compile the guidelines and policies since the local county government did not have the power to legislate. We believe the government must intervene and regulate it, but we pass the buck when deciding on the means and agents of regulation...Since there isn't a policy, none can regulate it. You must govern according to law and policy, but it is in a vacuum. As a result, it is difficult to ban or eradicate it.

Under the controlled decentralization paradigm, the central government lays down general policies, and local governments put their instructions into practice and monitor the outcomes. Lacking clear central government policies, local governments find it difficult to intervene. They also have a good excuse for not taking action. Though local governments have not given these agencies legal status, they also do not intervene to prohibit their operation.

Illegal Status in Controlled Decentralization

The illegal status of private tutoring cum boarding agencies is a symptom of the privatization and marketization of education under controlled decentralization. Local governments are responsible for governing and funding education. Tutoring agencies should be supervised and monitored by local government. Since the tax reform, however, fiscal pressure on local governments has significantly increased, as they were given much greater responsibilities for implementation. Many local governments do not have the incentive or the funds to solve the problems in the educational field.

If local governments did grant legal status to these agencies, it would imply that they supported the examination orientation of education and students' right to choose out-of-district schools. Accessibility to out-of-district schools was made possible when these agencies accepted students from remote areas, improved their examination results, and used their *guanxi* to promote admission. Such actions defy the spirit of the central government's policies.

Parents and students opting for these agencies want to improve the chances of acceptance to good schools. The aim of tutoring is to upgrade examination scores. While the Chinese school system remains exam-oriented, local governments wish to improve the quality of education. Therefore, they cannot officially approve of these agencies even though they accept their existence.

An official of the local government commented,

It meets the desire of people—parents want to send their children to agencies. But we do not dare to approve it. If it is approved by government, it means a burden to the students. However, we tolerate it since it indeed increases the test score, so parents, students, and teachers are willing to support it. But it can't be legitimized. It is against the ideal of quality education.

A teacher expressed a similar view:

The public school ostensibly did not encourage private tutoring agencies, and it did not encourage teachers to manage and participate in private tutoring agencies in principle. However, in fact, if there are agencies around school, and if they can improve the test scores of students, the principal will be commended. So why would they oppose it?

The central government wants to solve the problems in the education system by replacing an exam-orientation with a focus on quality. This implies a shift from traditional rote learning to more creative pedagogical approaches with higher level of student participation. However, as Kipnis points out, the shift in the dominant education paradigm does not necessarily benefit the majority of rural children (2001, p.23). If the university acceptances are still based on examination results, it is natural that both parents and students concentrate on improving test scores. It is also natural that they

will look for opportunities, such those afforded by these agencies, to do so. The local government officials that we interviewed share this view. One told us, "It is a good thing for the government, although it against the policy, it benefits the growth of children."

At the same time, if local governments acknowledge and regulate private tutoring cum boarding agencies, it implies that these agencies have legal status and that students have a right to access schools outside their district, in defiance of the school-district regulations. It also implies support for students who wish to move from one district to another, which would further encourage the flow of students from rural to urban areas. An official at the Education Bureau concluded,

The development of private tutoring cum boarding agencies meets social needs, though there is a contradiction in the policy. With the increase of migrant workers, the rural public schools do not meet the increasing needs of incoming children. The low quotas of public schools cannot meet the needs of migrant workers' children. These children do not have the opportunities to enter public schools in the cities. They have to stay in their hometown and find private tutoring agencies. The governments have tried their best to expand quality schools and improve schools in rural areas, so that children can receive quality education in their county and village. However, at this stage, the investment of education is determined by the central government, province, and county, and we do not have the funds to subsidize rural schools. It is hard to improve the situation in rural areas.

If left to market forces, it is likely that tutoring would gather further momentum. As commercial private tutoring, with or without boarding, agencies spread, they will offer more opportunities and chance to migrant children.

The local government did not engage to supervise and monitor private tutoring cum boarding agencies and its problems which should be the responsibility of local government. Local governments, then, realize that, though these agencies cannot be legalized, they also cannot be eradicated. They have adopted a muddling-through approach: they hold that the agencies are not illegal, but that does not necessarily mean that they are legal. Although the central government disapproves of teachers who gain profits from students and parents and have issued policies to prohibit it, the officials of local government have different views. One describes the agency personnel as "diligent people catering to the parents who emphasize examination-oriented education." Another noted,

Rural families have enough money to send their children to tutoring agencies. It is not a monopoly. It is market economy. It is realistic and rational. Given our exam-oriented education, it is right. If we had quality education, it would be wrong.

It seems that the situation will be left to market forces. It is still unclear at this stage how, or even whether, the local government should monitor and regulate these agencies.

CONCLUSION

Private tutoring cum boarding agencies have emerged under controlled decentralization, driven by the demand of parents and students, the low quality of mainstream education in rural areas, the exam orientation of education, the lack of social services and support for rural children, and the declining salaries and status of public school teachers. Controlled decentralization has led to a complex relationship between local and central governments. The nature of this relationship leaves room for private tutoring cum boarding agencies to survive, because the regulations covering them are inadequate. These agencies have adopted strategies to gain legitimacy: balancing profit and social responsibility, offering better education and services to separated families, upgrading test scores in exam-oriented educational system, and providing channels to out-of-district schools. They are not confined to Henan province: they are mushrooming and multiplying in other provinces.

The emergence and expansion of these agencies reflect the deepening inequalities in urban and rural education provision. Although the central government has passed legislation to eliminate fees for nine years of compulsory education, and to minimize the gap between urban and rural areas, other policies such as dismantling teaching points and combining schools¹ (*chedianbingxiao*) weaken rural education. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of social services and support for left-behind children in rural areas and migrant children in cities. Furthermore, the parenting style and ideology of rural parents have changed under the marketization and privatization. The Chinese have traditionally venerated education, and there is a widespread willingness among parents to invest in their children's schooling (Hansen, 2013). However, with marketization, parents have transferred the responsibility of parenting to private tutoring, with or without boarding, agencies. This, of course, can lead to problems that arise from a lack of parental care, supervision, and teaching, which no agency can replicate.

As commercial operations, these agencies meet the demands of parents and students in order to survive. It could be argued that they maintain and exacerbate social inequalities since they place poorer households at some disadvantage. Paying for tutoring is an additional burden for poor rural families and may lead to other problems.

Although we cannot determine whether the impacts of private tutoring cum boarding agencies are, on the whole, positive or negative, we know that more attention must be paid to them so that "policy makers may then decide what dimensions are desirable and to be encouraged, and what dimensions are undesirable and to be discouraged" (Bray, 2011, p. 52).

Under the controlled decentralization, there are areas where policies and instruction from central government are not forthcoming, so local governments have adopted the strategies of acquiescence and ignorance: they do not monitor or challenge the status quo unless there are serious problems. Without monitoring,

however, there is the risk of substandard, and even unsafe, facilities. Some agencies are said to possess “trusteeship but lack responsibility” (*tuoerbuguan*). Some agencies just offered food and accommodation, but did not educate and tutor students. One parent told us,

The teacher in that agency is very bad. This year she recruited forty to fifty students. But she forced students go home twice a month and locked the door. Some students have no family home. There was no place for them to go, so they had to go to an internet bar. The teacher believes these students are neglected by parents!

In such situations, the government should not evade its responsibilities. As Bray argues, governments must “devise regulations and incentives, and they can identify ways to engage with and/or harness market forces;” they should “also heed the signals that the shadow education system sends about the nature of mainstream schooling” (Bray, 2011, p.52).

Other countries have taken various positions regarding private tutoring. Bray (2003) identifies four types of measure: banning, ignoring, recognizing and regulating, and actively encouraging (Table 2). Policy-makers have different attitudes towards private tutoring and adopt various measures according to their belief in its positive or negative influence, their ability to control it, and their perception of the needs of society (Bray, 2003; Dang & Rogers, 2008; Silova & Bray, 2006).

The response of the Chinese government to private tutoring cum boarding agencies is apparent ignorance. This may be because local governments do not feel they have the power to monitor the situation, do not consider it important, or prefer to leave it to market forces. The agencies themselves are a double-edged sword. On one hand, they address a collective need and act as compensation for limited schooling opportunities (Lee, 2007). The service (or business) can have the positive effects of tailoring education to the needs of students and parents, enhancing academic achievements, contributing to human capital development, and providing employment for tutors. On the other hand, these agencies may exacerbate inequalities, put excessive pressure on children and youth, and operate in unsafe conditions.

The government should focus on monitoring and regulating these agencies, and address concerns about the implications of their market orientation. Governments should require the agencies to be registered and, thereby, transition from a legal grey area to legal status gradually. Such regulations would ensure basic standards for facilities and safety, and outline the agencies’ responsibilities to investors and teachers. Furthermore, governments could subsidize certain agencies as a means of educating left-behind and migrant children who are in need. The government could acquire resources and funds from society, and develop partnerships with NGOs to give assistance to needy children, thus promoting the goal of equity in education.

Table 2. Government policies toward private tutoring in selected countries / territories

Type	General Policy	Typical Measures	Country	Remarks
1	Prohibit private Tutoring	– Total ban on private tutoring	Cambodia, Myanmar Mauritius, Republic of Korea	Prohibition was implemented at various times in these countries, but they were ineffective because of government's inability to enforce them.
2	Ignore	– No regulation	Croatia, Georgia, Nigeria, Mongolia, Sri Lanka Canada, United Kingdom	Most of these countries have weak institutions and do not have the capacity to regulate private tutoring. These countries have strong institutions and have the capacity to regulate private tutoring. However, they consider the private tutoring market outside of their sphere of responsibility.
3	Recognize and regulate	– Generally prohibit private tutoring for lower grades and teachers from tutoring their own students. – Regulations accompanied by inspections and sanctions on private tutoring fees, class sizes, syllabi. – Regulations on infrastructure of private tutoring centers. – Reduce stratification in the education system, reduce disparities in schools, raise public awareness about negative effects of private tutoring.	Hong Kong, Lithuania, Mauritius, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, Vietnam	
4	Actively Encourage	– Encouragement policies toward private tutoring. – Subsidies for private tutoring, dissemination of information to link potential tutors and clients, training courses for tutors, taxation incentives.	Singapore, South Africa, Zanzibar (Tanzania)	These countries believe that private tutoring contributes to human capital development and caters to the needs of students.

Source: Dang & Rogers, 2008, p.36.

NOTE

- ¹ In 2001, the State Council promulgated the *Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education*, and required rural compulsory education to be planned and reformed according to the local conditions, according to the general principles of the nearest primary school enrollment, the relative concentration of junior secondary school and optimization of educational resources. Since then, closing down and merging of schools throughout the country began. However, some local governments just did it half-heartedly, which caused negative effects, such as longer distance to schools (hence, greater safety concern), higher travelling costs. As a result, drop-out cases increased. In response, in 2006, the Ministry of Education issued the *Notice for the Practical Adjustment of Rural Primary and Middle Schools* which prohibited the reduction of education budget in the name of adjustment of schools; and in 2012, the General Office of the State Council issued *The Opinion on Managing Rural Education Compulsory Schools Layout Adjustment* called for standardizing the progress of closing and merging schools, prohibiting ungrounded closing and merging of rural compulsory schools.

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SECTION III
CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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11. CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE 1977

Possibilities, Challenges and Tensions

INTRODUCTION

It has been over 35 years since China introduced its Reform and Opening-up policy. During this period of time China has convened numerous conferences on the achievements of Chinese higher education, and copious Chinese books have been published to examine its road of development. Meanwhile, the international community has also been paying close attention to the development of Chinese higher education, with many English language publications available².

Even though the timeline shows that China's market economy is likely to start from 1978, or 1984, or even 1992, behind the changes of Chinese higher education in the past three decades, the invisible hand with the real power is definitely not the market economy. By retrospectively the recurrent historical backwards and forwards, readers would gain a more integrated overview of how the present Chinese higher education came into being so that the clue and weight of the market economy as a factor could be understood more cautiously and precisely.

Rather than reviewing the current system and associated statistics³, this chapter focuses on how Chinese higher education was reshaped toward the end of the Cultural Revolution and thereafter. The main body of this chapter is divided into three parts. First, The Historical Context provides necessary background knowledge to understand the uniqueness of Chinese higher education system before 1977. The New Journey outlines changes that occurred from 1977 to 1984, key processes from 1985 until today, and striking transformations on university campuses. Finally, The Crossroad introduces its latest reform plan, summarizes the achievements of Chinese higher education in the past three decades, and unfolds the inconvenient challenges ahead. China in this chapter refers to mainland China.

Before beginning, readers must note and understand three points. First, the transformation of Chinese higher education has been so grand and complicated during the latest decades that it is "mission impossible" to describe all the details in a single article. Second, writing about Chinese modern history is risky and unrealistic to some extent. Some historical authorities and events play a critical role and some facts are still shrouded in mystery. Third, the authors are Chinese scholars, insiders to the Chinese higher education community, which inevitably influences the paper in many ways, such as its references and narrating perspective. Therefore, although

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this paper's statements are all based on credible facts and research, prejudice due to selectivity leaves the paper open to criticism.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

China has been prioritizing education for millennia. From 134 BC, Confucianism began to monopolize education for the emperors' political consideration. After the emergence of *Keju* (Imperial examination) in the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD), education and examinations opened the way to political careers, power, and wealth. *Shuyuan* (Academies of Classical Learning), a form of private schooling, became glamorous in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) and continued to be the main form of higher learning for hundreds of years.

Yet, as the contemporary western world had stepped into cultural modernization and technological revolution, the emperors of Qing, the last feudal dynasty of China, were blindly arrogant with the illusion of "The Middle Kingdom". The bitterness as a defeated nation in the 1840 War (triggered by Sino-British opium trade) and the next wars, twisted with the shock brought by Western technology and culture, whipped it to learn from *Manyi* (the barbarians). In the field of education, foreign churches were allowed to set up schools; the government began to dispatch students abroad. New schools established in the late *Yangwuyundong* (Westernization Movement, 1861-1894) to teach Western languages, politics, economy, laws, and technologies began to shake the central status of Confucian classics in education, and modern universities were seeded. In 1902, abolishing *Keju* and the subversion of *Shuyuan* symbolized the collapse of the Chinese traditional education system.

When the Republic of China was established in 1912, it gradually established an integrated modern schooling system "following the American model" (Tian & Shang, 2006, p. 175). Despite political chaos and rising anarchism on the campuses, Chinese higher education still enjoyed a golden age in the three decades of the 20th century with many universities nurtured and grown to be outstanding⁴. This was before the Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945) broke out.

When the Communist Party of China (CPC) took power in 1949, it did not simply continue what remained from the previous government. Rather, it was keen to establish a higher education system of its own to follow and support socialism. Before the Cultural Revolution, higher education in China experienced three momentous changes driven by the transformation of the political system (Hu, 2003), 1) imitating the Soviet system, 2) *Jiaoyudageming* (the Great Educational Revolution), and 3) *Tiaozhengzhengdun* (the adjustment and consolidation).

After a very short time taking over colleges and universities owned by the previous government (124 schools), foreign churches (21 schools), and the private sector (60 schools) as distributable resources for the new all-public higher education system, the CPC government began sweeping reform based on the Soviet mode. The main measures included establishing a centralized and all state-owned university system and founding the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS), which removed the

science research function from higher education (Xie, 2004, pp. 75–87). Moreover, this reform dismantled the previously comprehensive universities into single departments, and then realigned them into new single-discipline institutions. This layout did not change much over the next 40 years until the 1990s when those institutions merged again into larger comprehensive institutions (Hu, 2001).

Jiaoyudageming, started in 1958, was a part of *Dayuejin* (the Great Leap Forward). It resulted in many wrongdoings in practice, such as the overstrained political criticism of the scholars and their research, chaos within teaching. In 1961, it was terminated and the education system was led back to normal. Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution started in 1966 interrupted these good efforts.

During the Cultural Revolution, education emerged as “both a means and an end” (Pepper, 1991); and higher education was severely affected. All universities and colleges stopped enrolling students late in 1966. Enrolment partially resumed in 1970, but admission then became largely based on family political class rather than academic merit⁵. This admission policy was originally intended to expand opportunities for the students from working class and peasants, and to produce new intellectuals loyal to the working class and peasants. The admission process, however, turned into unequal competition due to bribery and nepotism, with most enrolled students being of low academic potential (Liu, 2010).

Furthermore, a sequence of political movements targeting intellectuals continued to endanger the university faculty. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, many professors and senior administrators were humiliated as the “reactionary academic czar” by the Red Guard. Intellectuals who had been targeted in the pre-1966 political campaigns, such as *Sixianggaizao* (the Brainwashing Movement) (Xie, 1999), *Fanyou* (the Anti-Rightist Movement) (Li, 2002) and *Fanyou Kuodahua* (the Expansion of the Anti-Rightist Movement) (Yu, 2009), were crushed in the Cultural Revolution again. From 1965 to 1977, the number of professors decreased from 3,500 to 2,200; associate professors from 4,300 to 3,500; and lecturers from 29,200 to 27,200, although about 8,000 new faculty members (not qualified academically) were recruited from 1970 to 1977 (Ying, 2008).

The problems in recruiting qualified students and keeping excellent teachers, along with poor teaching conditions, insufficient academic training and the popularity of “useless schooling” resulted in a profound decline in the quality of higher education. Additionally, research activities and postgraduate education in the universities were either transferred to the national laboratories or stopped, and many works of literature, archival materials, and cultural relics were damaged.

THE NEW JOURNEY

In 1976, Mao Zedong died in September, *Sirenbang* (the Gang of Four) fell in October, and the Cultural Revolution ended. The government led by Deng Xiaoping, a strong statesman, and his colleagues subsequently pursued national reconstruction of Chinese higher education.

Preparing for Change: 1977

Deng Xiaoping's statecraft was very constructive. His ideas regarding science and education were deeply affected by those of Hu Yaobang and Hu Qiaomu (Tsou, 1994, pp. 120–122), especially two reports they wrote in 1975⁶. Deng regarded intellectuals as a major force in rebuilding the country rather than *Choulaojiu* (the Stinking Ninth Category of Class Enemies, a disparaging term advocated by Mao Zedong to name intellectuals). A recorded private conversation depicts Deng's strategic thinking two months before he returned to the political centre. In this record, he said that the mission of Chinese government was to realize modernization; that science and technology would play a key role in this process; and that education should be developed first to produce the necessary talent to conduct important research. He also pointed out that education and science were key areas for restoring social order and that “within the party a special atmosphere—to respect knowledge and intellectuals and to fight against the wrong ideology that disrespects intellectuals—must be created” (Deng, 1994d).

As soon as Deng regained political power around July 1977, he volunteered to take responsibility for administering science and education. His efforts started with the five-day Symposium on Science and Education in August, 1977. He invited 33 scientists and educators as well as some leaders of the CAS, the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Policy Research Office of the CPC Central Committee to the meetings. Deng did not give an opening speech by convention, and most of the time he was listening carefully. But the attitudes and suggestions of the participants evidenced in the Symposium confirmed the faith Deng had in the new direction for education. In Deng's closing speech (Deng, 1994a), he spoke of higher education many times. He suggested concentrating resources to strengthen some selected *Zhongdiandaxue* (key universities) and gradually increasing their research capacity, framing all higher education institutions around a national set of uniform subjects, and recruiting students directly from high schools.

Of all the consequent policies, resuming the college entrance examination is deemed to be “the turning point that ushered in the whole reconstruction of Chinese education” (Yan, 2008). In December 1977, 5.7 million candidates rushed to *Gaokao* (the national college entrance examination), and after the exam was administered, 273,000 were admitted by 404 colleges. From that point on, all colleges select their students every year according to the scores the students obtain in *Gaokao*. While many issues around *Gaokao* has been in hot debate, the general consensus seems to have arrived: the examination provides a relatively fair, effective, and efficient channel for the flow of intelligent young men and women in a country that was—as it is now—so thirsty for talent but limited in educational resources.

Turning Around: 1978–1984

For the governors of such a huge country, efficient decision-making and determined execution were of primary consideration, especially at this crucial moment when the

public were expecting more explicit information about whether the newly established political core was steady, ready to end the chaos, and lead them to a better life. Thus, national meetings came intensively one after another to collect wisdom from the people, reach agreements among different groups, and push all local governments to action under the central government's instructions. Three important meetings in 1978 set the stage for the entire reconstruction in higher education.

The National Conference on Science and the National Conference on Education were held in 1978 by the CPC Central Committee as the first key signals for science and education. Deng made two important statements at these meetings (Deng, 1994b, 1994c). With his support, three detailed proposals were formed. The first two described the principal plans (1978–1985) of science and technology, and education at the national level, and the third was designed to regulate individual institutions.

At the end of 1978 came the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, an epoch-making transition in Chinese modern history, which reformulated an unprecedented political line to build a socialist society with Chinese characteristics. With this meeting, *Lianggeguji* (Two Estimations) and *Lianggefanshi* (Two Whatever) of the previous political authorities were declared wrong, thus the period between 1949 and 1965 was praised to be the best times for the development of science and education in the short history of the new republic. Furthermore, China had long fallen away from the mainstream of international higher education, and the central government was conscious of the gap both within and beyond China's borders. Therefore, many measures initiated by the central government in the early reconstruction were taken, on the one hand, to model the higher education system after 1965's principles and, on the other hand, to enlarge its size and scale. Most of them involved momentous administrative statute.

Reorganizing the teaching body. In March 1978, *Guanyu gaodengxuexiao hui fu queding he tisheng jiaoshizhiwu wenti de qingshibao gao* [Report on Restoring Teachers' Posts and Ranks in Higher Education Institutions] was released. Late this same year, the central government started to *Boluanfanzheng* (set wrong things right) and rehabilitate intellectuals who had been humiliated during and before the Cultural Revolution. As the teaching body gained enthusiasm for work, *Guanyu gaodengxuexiao jiaoshi zhize ji kaohe de zanxing guiding* [Provisional Regulations on the Duties and Evaluations of Teachers in Higher Education Institutions] was issued in November 1979 to assure the quality of the teaching staff.

Rebuilding key universities. Issued on 17 February 1978, this initiative aimed to benchmark the higher education institutions, immediately improve the quality of higher education, adapt the universities to meet economic and social needs, and build some universities into both education and research centres conferred with privileges, such as concentrating prominent teachers, high-quality resources, and the best students (Hu, 2006). These policies paved the road for Project 211 and Project 985 in the 1990s, and the hierarchical system of Chinese universities today.

Readjusting higher education institutions. The number of higher education institutions in both 1965 and 1970 was 434, but it decreased to 387 in 1975. Accordingly, the central government instructed institutions that had been moved, merged or split during the Cultural Revolution should retrieve their original status and institutional regulations, and some new institutions should be built. From 1977 to 1978, the number of higher education institutions increased by 50% to 598, and continued to increase to 902 in 1984. Still, only public colleges and universities were legitimate.

Restoring the postgraduate education. From 1978 to 1984, 23 universities were accredited to establish graduate schools. In December 1980, the Academic Degrees Commission in charge of Chinese graduate education administration was established under the State Council. China began to enrol doctoral students in 1982, and 18 students received their doctoral degrees in 1983 to become the first doctoral graduates in China after 1978.

Establishing a uniform framework of subjects. By 1979, several suggested subject catalogues of higher education subjects had been published with the support from MOE. Several years later, the mandatory Gaodengxuexiao benke zhuanymulu [Catalogue of Higher Education Subjects] came into use. Although this catalogue has been frequently revised, it is criticized for being inflexible and not adapting to the changing times.

Developing a diversified system. To help more high school graduates gain access to higher education, different types of higher education institutions, such as broadcasting and television universities, correspondence colleges, evening schools, and short-term vocational schools (at the level of junior college) were introduced or expanded. Private institutions were not lawful until 1982 when China started to encourage business ventures and other legal non-public sponsors to set up educational institutions.

Re-establishing extensive international communication. In June 1978, Deng proposed to officially dispatch students to study abroad (Zhou & Teng, 2008). Within 20 days, his proposal turned into MOE's written policies. The first group of 52 selected students went to the United States in December 1978, and the first university delegation visited the US in September 1978. Two teams of senior higher education administrators went abroad to survey six countries' higher education in 1979, which resulted in a far-reaching influence (Zhu, 1992). In 1983, the intense propaganda on Deng's Three Orientations (making education geared to the needs of modernization, of the world and of the future) inscription gave rise to an upsurge in the education community of international communication.

General data (see [Table 1](#)) shows the reconstruction policies were quite successful, and the groundwork had been laid for further development.

Table 1. Higher education data in 1962, 1965, 1970, 1978 and 1985⁷

	<i>HEIs</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Enrolment</i>	<i>Graduates</i>	<i>New Enrolment</i>
1962	610	144,000	191,000	830,000	177,000	107,000
1965	434	138,000	195,000	674,000	186,000	164,000
1970	434	129,000	183,000	48,000	103,000	42,000
1978	598	206,000	312,000	856,000	165,000	401,000
1985	1,016	344,000	527,000	1,703,000	316,000	619,000

Vigorous Strides: 1985-2007

After Deng went behind the scenes in the late 1980s, the Chinese government went further in the direction he had explored, and several comprehensive plans and policies for education were made. They roughly expressed the public's needs and the broad consensus within the higher education community rather than merely the will of the government or political authorities. They were by no means the only source or reason for changes within higher education in this vast and complicated country. They did, however, sketch the reforms, and recorded how China responded to the changing context. The following documents were selected as the most influential periodic coordinating plans and policies.

Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Educational Reform [*Zhonggongzhongyang guanyu jiaoyu tizhi gaige de jueding*], May 1985. The educational reform this document launched was in reality a companion of economic reform that started in 1984 and introduced more market forces. The essential effect of this education reform was that it drove "the reallocation of power and change of operational mechanism initiated by the authority over the highly centralized public education" (Liu & Li, 2008). Some universities took on bold reforms, then. Nevertheless, the student movements in the late 1980s alerted the government to take back administrative power and tighten control of the students and faculty in the universities.

Compendium of Educational Reform and Development in China [*Zhongguo jiaoyu gaige he fazhan gangyao*], February 1993. This document came after Deng's Southern Tour in 1992, together with *Guojia jiaowei guanyu jiakuai gaige he jiji fazhan gaodengjiaoyu de yijian* [Suggestions of the State Education Committee on Speeding up the Reform and Development of Higher Education]. The two documents signalled a return of a free atmosphere in higher education, under which private institutions were supported and the research functions of universities were advanced. China expanded the enrolment of postgraduate students, and started to invest in the fundamental sciences and applied sciences such as Project 211.

Higher Education Law [Gaodengjiaoyu fa], August 1998. This law provided the general regulations on higher education. The form and spirit of Chinese higher education that developed since 1977 were codified in this law.

Revitalization Plan for Education in the 21st Century [Mianxiang 21 shiji jiaoyu zhenxing xingdong jihua], January 1999. This plan was developed by the MOE to help turn education into a driver of new economic growth. The goal of Chinese higher education by 2010 was made to be “increasing the gross enrollment rate to about 15%” and “building up some world-class universities and subjects” (such as Project 985). Hence, providing education to the masses and building world-class universities became chief goals in Chinese higher education.

Decision of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Deepening the Educational Reform and Propelling the Quality-Oriented Education [Guanyu shenhua jiaoyu gaige quanmian tuijin suzhijiaoyude jue ding], June 1999. This decision brought up the concept of “quality-oriented education”. Under this policy, from 1992 to 2002, as many as 493 regular higher education institutions and 215 adult institutions were merged into 305 new institutions (of which 278 were regular ones).

Suggestions on Reforming Personnel System in Higher Education Institutions [Guanyu shenhua gaodengxuexiao renshi zhidu gaige de shishi yijian], June 2000. It went further in devolving employment autonomy to institutions than the 1986’s *Gaodengxuexiao jiaoshi zhiwu shixing tiaoli* [Provisional Regulations on Faculty Ranks in Higher Education Institutions]. In this document, ending the lifelong employment relationship between a university and its staff was a critical turning point in institution-level higher education reforms.

Law on the Promotion of Non-public Education in PRC [Minban jiaoyu cujin fa], December 2002. From 1978 to 1997, non-public higher education existed as an accessory to public education, although it mushroomed after Deng’s South Tour in 1992. National policies neglected it until 1997 when the private sector grew too big to ignore (Tong, 2009). It was the first specific law to encourage non-public education. Together with its Enforcement Regulations issued in 2004, various non-public higher education institutions won a better operating environment. In 2003 and 2008, “independent school”⁸ was legalized and regulated as a new type of private institutions by two additional laws. Today, about 20% of higher education enrolments are in the private sector. But in reality, the private institutions are still treated unequally in funding, recruiting students, and some other aspects. Neither the education quality nor the reputation of private colleges and universities could compete with that of the public schools.

Revitalization Plan for Education: 2003–2007 [2003–2007 jiaoyu zhenxing xingdong jihua], February 2004. The sections concerning higher education in this

plan emphasized the ideas and actions to build high-quality universities and subjects (such as investing more in Project 211 and Project 985) and to initiate various projects on innovation, research and quality assurance. In 2003, the first group of students graduated after the considerable enrollment expansion. Thus, a project to assist graduates in finding employment was pursued in this plane.

The elaborate wording of these plans and policies embedded a subtle balance between reality and ideal, concentrated good insights into the changing times, embraced short-term goals, and left space for promising progress in the long run. Behind the reform enthusiasm from 1985 to 2007, there was at least the political zeitgeist (e.g., Deng's South Tour), incidental events (e.g., the Asian financial crisis), and the evolution of core policymakers' views on education (e.g., marketization and massification). Grassroots voices were heard, albeit few were directly answered (e.g., the private sector).

Once such plans and policies were released, each institution and individual within the system endeavoured to read between the lines, employ the policies, and grasp the opportunities that could only be captured. Then, chain effects began to ferment and stimulate the community to reform. That's a reason why every part of the system started to move when Premier Wen Jiabao initiated a national discussion in 2008 to decide which approaches Chinese education should take in the coming decade.

Tangible Changes on Campuses

Except for the emergence of fascinating infrastructures, the most visible change on university campuses has been the expanding student enrolment that increased from 273,000 in 1977 to 1.08 million in 1998. But this was still far from enough. In June 1999, Premier Zhu Rongji announced the decision to massively increase higher education enrolment. In the official statement, the purpose was to stimulate economic growth through great domestic demand and consumption and to alleviate employment tension.

Under pressure from the central government (Yan & Chang, 2008), the number of new college entrants suddenly increased by 50% in 1999, and then rose to 6.08 million in 2008. New postgraduate entrants rapidly rose from less than 50,000 in 1994 to 73,000 in 1998; the growth rate in 1999 reached 39.3%; and as many as 446,000 were enrolled in 2008. The enrolment expansion has made higher education more accessible to Chinese youth, but come with many problems, including a severe quality crisis and resource shortages (Li, 2004).

Beyond enrolment expansion, five dramatic changes are given special mention.

Campus culture. Students enrolled in the late 1970s and the 1980s were ambitious learners with the sincere ideal to change the lagging motherland. While the zealous young people in the students' movement imbued that decade with an artistic and idealistic ethos, it was criticized as *Jingshenwuran* (ideological contamination) and *Zichanjiejiziyouhua* (bourgeois liberalization) then. In the 1990s, the market

economy was brought onto campuses. Students at that time were more preoccupied with the prospect to earn a good living; indeed, because college graduates were no longer ensured employment after graduation, the diploma gradually departed from its educational value. As the 1980s generation, China's Generation Y, entered higher education, they brought new vigor to campus with unconventional behaviours and strong egos (a predictable outcome of the One Child Policy and cultural change), and caught much media attention of both criticism and praises. Nowadays, the 1990s generation as true digital natives with an interesting blend of globalism and nationalism, is ruling the campus.

Learning experience. Generally speaking, the ubiquitous politicization in education has been gradually reduced since 1977, and teaching and learning have been improved. The overwhelming concept of marketability in the 1990s treated higher education somewhat as a commodity. The transformation towards a market economy not only resulted in the end of free schooling and guaranteed jobs for graduates, but also prompted reforms in the classrooms. New curricula, foreign textbooks, bilingual classes, foreign lecturers, information technology, new pedagogical approaches such as case studies and seminars, all have appeared in Chinese classrooms. Today, quality-oriented education, general education, innovative education that combines teaching and research, and profession education are widely-implemented teaching concepts and patterns. Continuously adjusting subjects, implementing the credit system and the elective system, introducing minors and double-degree programs, and devolving some administrative authority from the university level to the departmental level are very common. Further, English learning is compulsory, and China has even set up a national system to test college students' English skills.

Sino-foreign cooperative institutions and programs. The first Sino-foreign (Sino-US) one was established in 1986. After China's access to WTO in 2001, the policy to establish such institutions and programs transitioned from "limited opening" to "partial commitment." From 1995 to 2007, several laws and administrative regulations were issued to set the standards for such institutions and programs. At present, the foreign institutions must find a local partner to settle a branch in China successfully. As of January 2011, 32 institutions and 358 programs for undergraduate education, along with 13 institutions and 137 programs for postgraduate education have been conferred official approvals⁹. These institutions and programs, along with numerous student exchange programs, provide domestic students with more options for higher education. They are mainly high-quality oriented, but still limited in size and scale.

International mobility. Both international students coming to China and Chinese students going abroad for higher education each year have increased steadily in the past three decades. The former grew from 1,200 in 1978 to more than 60,000 in 2008, with most from Asian countries, more than half learning Chinese language and

literature, and only a few coming to China for master's or doctoral study (He, 2008). On the contrary, data show that among the 1.1 million Chinese citizens staying abroad, about 75% are to obtain higher education or to conduct academic research. Additionally, more than 90% of who went abroad in 2009 were self-funded¹⁰. The main factors related to the fever to study abroad include the demand for high-quality higher education from the rising middle-class, the cultural capital and perceived distinction embedded in the experiences, and the demand for higher education unfulfilled by domestic institutions or the opening-up policies in education (Li, 2008). The phenomenal brain drain worries the patriots, but increasing encouragement and support from the government and the institutions, especially the key universities (Fan & Jiang, 2010) is certain.

Research in universities. After the Cultural Revolution, reviving the CAS brought tensions to its relationship with the higher education institutions because they had to compete for researchers and research resources. Now, they are not only competitors but also close cooperative partners. Key universities play a profound role in strengthening China's R&D. Each university in Project 985 is allocated billions of research grants per year from the central and local government, Natural Science Foundation, and other funding organizations. As the investment snowballs, Chinese universities have been making rapid progress in research performance. For example, Zhu's research (2009) shows that after the "bubble years" from 1994 to 2001, research performance (indicated by SCIE papers) in Chinese universities has been greatly advanced in both quantity and quality under a direct research incentive scheme. There is still a long way to go, however. According to the Academic Ranking of World Universities¹¹, China's top 5 only ranked among world's top 151–200.

THE CROSSROADS

2020 Reform Strategy

The year 2008 marked the beginning of a new phase in Chinese higher education. Premier Wen Jiabao coordinated the discussion and the broad consultation among the stakeholders, which finally led to the document *Guojia zhongchangqi jiaoyu gaige he fazhan guihua gangyao* (2010–2020) [National Outline for Medium and Long Term Educational Reform and Development (2010–2020)]. This outline represents the most exceptional plan in Chinese modern history of education in terms of its level of social engagement, according to the news release by the working group (Jiao, 2010). More than 4.5 million suggestions were received from the public. Even President Hu Jintao contributed his direct efforts to modify the document.

The two-year process consisted of four phases. The definitive version of the outline was released in July 2010. The 28,000 word document comprised four sections, 22 chapters and 70 points. The first section included the Overall Strategy; the second included the Missions of eight education types (in which "higher education"¹² was

the fifth); the third addressed Overall Institutional Reform; and the fourth detailed Overall Supporting Measures.

In the outline, the Overall Strategy for educational reform targeted “educational modernization, forming a learning society and transforming China into a country with globally competitive human resources by 2010.” The core mission of higher education reform was stated as improving the overall quality (including the quality of teaching, research and social services) and optimizing the structure and nurturing institutional diversity. The expected institutional reform stressed six aspects, including talent cultivation, the examination system and the admission process, the modern university system, the modern schooling system, the governing system, and the opening-up of education.

The comprehensive measures to be taken include to guarantee overall financial investment from the government and to improve the funding mechanism. The key programs related to higher education included quality programs and international cooperation programs. The specific pilot reforms related to higher education include Tiptop student projects, college admission process, modern university system, governing system and mechanism for local educational investments and province-level funding.

It is evident in the outline that both the Chinese government and the academic community have recognized challenges and problems in higher education (such as instances of inferior quality and shortcomings of the contemporary system) and the necessity to acclimatize with the times. The general public’s impressive engagement showed they had high expectations about the new round of educational reform. Whether the outline will be fully accomplished is in question, however, because the policy history of Chinese higher education reveals that some educational ideas could be emphasized in the text again and again, but are never truly accomplished.

Achievements

Currently, China has a complete education system from kindergarten (for children under age six), primary school (six grades), middle school (three grades), high school (three grades) and higher education (four years for undergraduate education, two-and-a-half years [or so] for master degree education¹³, and two or more years for doctoral education). Higher education institutions are dominated by the public sector, supplemented by the private sector, and enhanced by the Sino-foreign cooperative institutions and programs.

Compared with the higher education mess at the end of the Cultural Revolution, almost everything reconstructed in this process of starting from scratch (though with inherited handicaps) can be observed as a triumph. A system generally in order is making contributions to the national and local economies and communities, and to the advance of knowledge. And the most spectacular achievements can be identified as the massification and qualified graduates.

The gross enrolment ratio has been rising in recent years, especially since the 1990s. The gross enrolment rate was only 3.5% in 1991, but by 2002 it had reached 15%, and in 2009 it reached 23.3%¹⁴. Furthermore, many university and college students that graduated after 1982 have stepped forward to lead Chinese development in politics, science and technology, culture and education, economics and business. 1982's graduates have assumed a greater role in the Chinese political circle (Gao, 2008). Eighty percent of today's administrators at Chinese top universities have been replaced by the post-1977 higher education graduates. And, the break of the scientific intellectual lineage that had raised serious concerns in the early 1990s has been closed mainly by the talented university students in the 1980s (Ke, 2008). Therefore, the elites cultivated by China's higher education system after 1977 are virtually shaping China's today and tomorrow with their talents as informed by their particular experiences and views.

Challenges Ahead

Although Chinese higher education has progressed greatly since 1977, criticisms about the current system abound, both externally (from public policymakers, parents, employers, and social commentators) and internally (from administrators, teachers, students, and higher education researchers). Problems hindering China's academic independence, excellence and equity are under discussion. The 2020 Reform Strategy has recognized many of them and is itself a response. But three of the unwritten ones are discussed here.

First, Chinese higher education lacks self-reliance, independent judgment, and sufficient control of its own future. Studies show that the system and its development have been dominated by politics and the economic development guarded by politics. The political factor is mainly the ideological perspective that Chinese higher education should be purely socialist with Chinese characters under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The economic factors stem mainly from policymakers' demands that higher education should serve economic growth, originating from political values. Those political factors have been powerful and intensive, thus pointing to another problem: past reforms of higher education have been always initiated externally, rather than from within higher education system itself, and it may tame the entrepreneurship and gumption of the system. The reform of governing systems toward university autonomy in the 2020 Reform Strategy could be either a mere beautiful promise or a substantial turning point.

Second, the system is weighed down by excessive bureaucracy. Currently, public higher education institutions in China have the status of semi-governmental authorities. Institutional leaders are appointed by the administering educational authority, and administrative units (even academic units) within an institution exhibit similar bureaucratic structure and culture to government bodies. This bureaucracy has contributed to overstaffing, low productivity, and low efficiency. Indeed, it is feeding a crisis of morale in higher education institutions. However, the system is

not a monolithic whole. Sometimes, eye-catching experiments like South University of Science and Technology inspire some hope for their position against bureaucracy but dim soon. Probably, those quieter institutions devoted to internationalization with down-to-earth and solid reform steps are more promising.

Third, proper academic values and ethics need to be established. Recently, many academic scandals damaged Chinese academic image both domestically and internationally. Both of the central inspection groups in Xi Jinping's anti-corruption storm stationed to two prestigious universities, Renmin University in 2013 and Fudan University in 2014, brought bad news about their corruption in admission, construction and research funds. Both *Nature* (Qiu, 2010) and *Science* (Shi & Rao, 2010) published negative articles on academic misconducts in China. However, China is sparing no effort to attract excellent overseas academics by Qianrenjihua (1000 Plan) and other schemes. Those established ones are good genes and the young prominent ones are new blood. How they will function in the system to change the academic culture in the long term is worth the wait.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary Chinese higher education was born partly in denial of, and in opposition to, a long-standing higher learning history of more than 2,000 years. It has grown as a hybrid of the Eastern and Western forms, and has struggled to develop its own identity since 1949. The year 1977 is of special significance in this great process. It was the turning point between chaos and order, and the divide between being closed and opening-up.

In the first few years after 1977, reconstruction under the leadership of CCP and the central government was very effective. Then, a complete higher education system was gradually established after a series of successfully executed reforms in place of the ruin left by the Cultural Revolution. Now, it has stepped onto the track of massification and has contributed millions of qualified human resources to the nation's flourishing economy which has grown up to be the global second top.

Thirty-five years of change, however, is still not enough. Consequently, many tough problems accompanied the dramatic shifts and excessive evolution. The coming decade, with persistent reform and opening-up policy starting with the 2020 reform strategy, holds every possible change that will lead Chinese higher education to a brave new phase of history.

The odds are there to beat. What really matters might be whether it is willing to embrace the reforms deep into core educational and academic values. Besides, there are two clouds—political stability and economic stability—hanging over the country in transition. If possible, they could become the leading factors that direct the development of Chinese higher education. This consideration is not nonsense as China today is confronting an increasing number of serious social problems. It is the best of times, it is the worst of times. The future is full of uncertainty.

NOTES

- ¹ Krzysztof Gawlikowski, Peodair Leihy, Andrea Stith, Wang Qi and Simon Marginson provided helpful comments in drafting this article.
- ² Agelasto and Adamson's *Higher Education in Post-Mao China*, OECD's *Current Issues in Chinese Higher Education*, Min's *Chinese Higher Education: The Legacy of the Past and the Context of the Future* and Hayhoe's *China's Universities, 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* are among the volumes.
- ³ Readers are advised to refer to *Higher Education in China* by Zhejiang University Press and *Tertiary Education at a Glance: China* by Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press.
- ⁴ They are still respected and memorialized by contemporary Chinese intellectuals (P. Chen, 2002; Y. Chen, 2005). Some of them, such as the Peking University led by Cai Yuanpei and the National Southwestern Associated University incorporated during the Sino-Japanese War, are often recalled by the press and the public for their "true university spirit".
- ⁵ The admission from 1949 to 1965 was partially based on family political class.
- ⁶ In 1975, Deng and his colleagues tried to start the construction but failed.
- ⁷ Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1986.
- ⁸ This new type of private higher education institutions are established by the private sector within public universities.
- ⁹ http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/article_read.php?id=12-19700101-59
- ¹⁰ http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2010-03/12/content_1554230.htm
- ¹¹ <http://www.shanghairanking.com/>
- ¹² "Higher education" in this document meant regular higher education, excluding vocational education and continuing education.
- ¹³ Many master degree programs in China exist as a terminal rather than transitional degree education.
- ¹⁴ http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2010-08/03/content_1670245.htm

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12. INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND AGGREGATE EXPANSION OF CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

From the 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese higher education system underwent reforms resulting in decentralization and an increase in both the number of higher education institutions and student enrollment. China began to increase college admission dramatically in 1999, when a decentralized system was put in place. The provincial sector played a leading role in the “massification” of Chinese higher education. It is the kind of competition mentality that provided the momentum and drove provincial governments to expand higher education enrollment in their jurisdictions. Statistical analysis shows that standard deviations among the provinces in terms of college admissions varied narrowly in 1999–2010, and the coefficient even declined for the years of 1999–2004 when the Chinese higher education system expanded dramatically. This implies an improvement in the extent of equalization of higher education opportunity among the provinces. In addition, scale expansion has facilitated the development of a market mechanism for higher education admission and graduate employment. Nevertheless, there are some limitations with expansion under the patterns of decentralization. Due to constraints on provincial finance, dramatic expansion of enrollment may have affected the operating conditions and quality of Chinese higher education.

Although there is a large amount of literature on higher education expansion in China, most research focuses on the influence of expansion on the higher education system and on society. Very few studies analyze in any depth the reasons for this expansion. Wan (2006) believes that a major cause of the expansion since the 1990s is the central government’s efforts to stimulate consumption and ease employment pressures, satisfy relatively high interest and demand for higher education among the public and provide the government with a way to link higher education expansion with a state blueprint. However, most existing studies have only discussed this issue from the perspective of social and economic development or the policy of central government. Very few studies have mentioned the behavior of local governments in the expansion. Against this backdrop, we explore the issue from a different perspective and propose the following three research questions: 1) How does the decentralized higher education administrative system influence enrollment expansion? 2) Are

there any changes in terms of regional gaps, diversity and quality of higher education system with expansion under the decentralized administrative system? 3) Are there constraints on higher education expansion under the decentralized system?

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Higher education expansion, which refers to moving from elite to mass then finally to universal higher education, is a common development worldwide. However, the paths and motivations of higher education expansion in different countries vary due to different administrative systems of higher education (Kerr, 2001; Teichler, 2007; Trow, 2006). Countries with small populations tend to adopt a unitary higher education administrative system, while for those with large populations, both central government and local governments are involved in the process. In the latter case, the higher education system can be divided into two kinds according to the power relationship between central and local governments: the centralized system and the decentralized system. In the existing literature on higher education, very few studies have attempted to explain the relationship between the centralized/decentralized system and higher education expansion. In this paper, the authors will try to create a framework to analyze this issue based on the following views on decentralization and local government competition in China.

Chinese Style Market-Preserving Federalism

Qian and Weingast (2008) propose the theory of Chinese style market-preserving federalism. They suggest that the strong incentive of Chinese local governments derives from two sources. One is administrative decentralization. The devolution of administrative power over the economy gives local governments more discretion over economic decision-making. The other is the reform program of fiscal decentralization, which mainly refers to a contract system for revenue and expenditure of the local governments, allowing the local governments to pursue fiscal incentives. The theory of Chinese style market-preserving federalism provides a unique perspective for analyzing the reform motivation of China's local governments.

Promotion Tournament Theory

Promotion tournament theory can be an important one for analyzing fiscal decentralization and expenditure on public services by the local governments. Promotion tournament is an administrative governance model, which refers to a rule made by the government at a higher level on promotion of officers at lower levels, with winners of the competition being promoted. The criteria for promotion, such as GDP growth rate or other quantitative criteria are created and controlled by the government at higher levels. The central government uses this method to provide a strong incentive to the officers of local governments who care about their political

careers (Zhou, 2007). By using the provincial level data since the late 1970s, Zhou, Li and Chen (2005) find that there is a significant positive correlation between the promotion probability of provincial level officers and the growth rate of provincial GDP. The method of competitive performance evaluation that is applied by the central government in the practices of evaluation and assessment may enhance this effect.

Fiscal Decentralization, Promotion Tournament and Education Expenditure of Local Governments

Most existing studies on the relationship between decentralization, local government competition and education development mainly focus on the effect of fiscal decentralization to education expenditure. Some studies find that the reform of fiscal decentralization encourages competition among local governments and increases the supply of public goods. Gong and Lu (2009) find that there is a positive correlation between degrees of fiscal decentralization and education including higher education expenditure, and that education expenditure increases with fiscal decentralization. But some other studies show that the reform of fiscal decentralization is implemented under a context in which authority between different levels of government is not well defined, and local governments are short of steady revenue. It neither reflects households' preferences for local public goods, nor provides incentives to encourage local governments to provide effective public goods. So that in public goods supplied by local governments, those related to economic growth increase rapidly, while others such as education are insufficient (Shu, 2010).

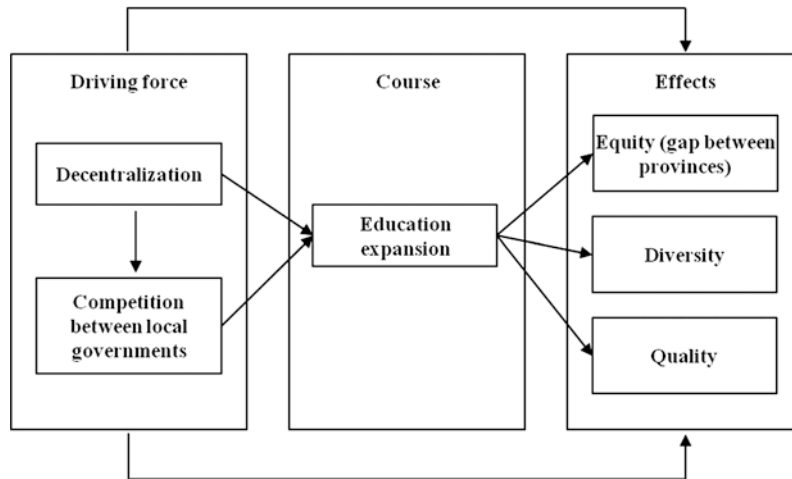


Figure 1. An analytical framework on decentralization, higher education expansion and their interactive effects

Drawing on the aforementioned views, the authors propose an analytical framework in Figure 1, comprising of three parts: higher education decentralization, expansion and their interactive effects. This is also the main logical framework for this chapter. In the last 30 years, decentralization, which refers to change from a highly centralized administrative system to a decentralized one involving both central and local governments, is the primary goal of reform of higher education governance. Meanwhile, expansion is always the theme of higher education development. Scale expansion can lead to some intended or unintended consequences which catch the public's eyes and need to be explored. Three domains of the consequences are defined here in terms of equity, diversity and quality.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, two hypotheses are proposed according to the aforementioned analytical framework. The first hypothesis concerns the driving force of higher education expansion. Specifically it is a decentralized system that can lead to competition among provincial governments for a bigger enrollment ratio, and this can in turn speed up the achievement of the higher education massification objective. The second hypothesis pertains to the consequences of higher education expansion. Both positive and negative effects may be observed. According to a market logic, positive effects are expected to dominate in terms of diversity and equity, and negative effects on quality are to be expected due to resource deficiencies. In the following paragraphs, evidences will be explored and analyzed to verify the above-mentioned hypotheses. The data has been obtained by field work, official yearbooks and statistics.

Process of Higher Education Expansion under a Decentralized Structure

Before China's reform and opening up started in 1978, centralization was the distinguishing feature of China's higher education administration. Most universities were under the jurisdiction of the central government except for some local universities. The mission of these institutions was training specialized talents for particular industries, such as metallurgy, geology, petroleum, machinery, textiles, agriculture, and forestry. Local governments thus lacked the motivation to develop higher education. To a large extent, they regarded higher education as a financial burden and were not willing to increase their expenditure on it. Even in the 1990s when the large-scale mergers of higher education institutions in China began, some provinces were still reluctant to take up responsibility for institutions which had been under the management of central government ministries before their dissolution. Provincial governments also showed little interest in running institutions together with the central ministries. Besides, there were little communication and cooperation between universities managed by central government and those by local governments, which led to barriers between these two kinds of

institutions, as well as the problem of program overlappings (Yan & Min, 1999). Decentralization has been the fundamental mode of reform since economic reform started in 1978. Decentralization, which refers to the shift from a sectoral economy to a regional economy, as well as from a centralized fiscal system to multi-level fiscal system, reflects the trends of the market economy and satisfies this mode of economic development (Xin, 2000). In the context of economic and fiscal reform mentioned above, decentralization, which refers to the devolution of power from central government to local governments, became the thread of higher education administrative system reform since the 1980s, and especially prominent in the 1990s. The Decision on the Reform of Education System made by the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party and the State Council and issued in 1985 stated that:

To encourage governments of all levels to develop education, an administrative system involving three bodies: central government, province (municipality) and central cities will be used.

However, in the mid-1980s, reform proved so difficult that there was no real change in the Chinese higher education administrative system. In 1989, universities managed by the central government still accounted for 32.83% of the total, and the number of students in national universities accounted for 43.89% of the national student body (see [Table 1](#)).

After Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour in 1992, the market economy was confirmed as the primary reform orientation at the 14th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Following this decision, the pace of economic reform speeded up, and the demand for higher education administrative reform rose accordingly. The Outline for Education Reform and Development in China issued in 1993 stated that:

To establish a decentralized educational administrative system should involve both central government and the provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities). The central government is in charge of some key universities which are closely related to national agendas of economic and social development and serve as models for other higher education institutions, as well as those universities which are closely related to certain industries, thus make it difficult for local governments to manage. According to the fundamental policies and macroscopic planning of the central government, provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) will take responsibilities for local universities. Accordingly, the central government should delegate the power of decision making to provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) and extend the latter's jurisdiction to coordinate those universities administered by the central government but located in their territories.

From then on, the reform of decentralization of higher education administrative system moved into the substantiated stage. The State Council continued to draw lessons from the reform in progress. It held four forums on higher education administrative reform in Shanghai (1994), Nanchang (1995), Beidaihe (1996)

and Yangzhou (1998) respectively, and set up a principle regarding the direction of reform. The principle included joint jurisdiction, adjustment of jurisdiction, cooperation between central and provincial governments and institutional mergers (Li, 2003). With the restructuring of the State Council and abolition of some central ministries in 1998, the relationship of administrative subordination of some universities had to be changed accordingly. According to a decision on the administration of universities that had fallen under the jurisdiction of dissolved ministries, the relationships of administrative subordination of 93 universities were altered, and a new governance system was applied in 81 universities under the joint management of both central and local governments. The Ministry of Finance allocated educational funds to local governments at the standards of 1998 budget. Specifically, the amount of the educational allocations equalled the adjusted budget of 1998 (after deduction of special subsidies) plus an addition of 15% of the adjusted budget. The State Economic and Trade Commission, the State Planning Commission and other related ministries confirmed to support the expenditure on facilities at the level of the average of budgetary non-operating revenue over the past five years. The central government was to fund this part for a period of time based on current construction projects, and then the local governments would gradually take over the capital responsibility. The Higher Education Act of the People's Republic of China issued in 1998 stated that:

Administration of higher education would be divided between central and provincial (autonomous region and municipalities) governments, and the local governments would take the main responsibility for planning and coordination of higher education in their jurisdictions, under the guidance of state policy.

In 1999, after 10 years of reform, universities managed by the central government accounted for 23.16% of the total, the number of students of central universities accounted for 30.42% of the total student population, both far lower than those figures in 1989 (see [Table 1](#)). The Announcement on Authorizing Province, Autonomous Region and Municipalities to Examine and Approve the Establishment of Higher Vocational Institutions, issued by General Office of State Council in 2000, delegated the power of approving the establishment of higher vocational colleges to provincial level governments. This action strengthened the decentralized system.

By 1999, when the enrollment expansion started, the decentralized administrative system of higher education has already been formed. The students of local universities accounted for around 70% of the total student body. By the beginning of 2004, 250 higher education institutions out of 367 which had been managed by central government were reassigned to provincial governments after the adoption of a series of decentralization reform measures (Education Year Book of China, 2004, p. 856). In the decentralized administrative system, provincial governments have more authority regarding higher education planning and coordination than before, and higher motivation to run and strengthen universities. For rich provinces in the east, higher education developments did not satisfy their economic status.

There existed a greater ability, more resources, and more enthusiasm to develop their higher education systems. Aside from the provincial governments, there was a potential for other parts of society to become involved in education provision. In affluent areas such as Zhejiang Province, the approval authority and financial responsibility were further delegated to governments at the city level, which led to an enrollment expansion and strengthened the relationship between higher education and the local economy. In summary, local universities played an important role in the process of rolling out mass higher education. After 10 years of continuous expansion of college enrollment, in 2010, the ratio of the number of provincial higher education institutions to the total had risen to 93.41%, and the ratio of the number of provincial college students had risen to 91.26% (see [Table 1](#)).

In conclusion, in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, the process of enrollment expansion and higher education massification was accompanied by the reform of administrative system. The goal of mass higher education was reached under an increasingly decentralized system. The following sections will further elaborate the ways in which this newly decentralized higher education system influenced the expansion of college enrollment.

Competitions among Local Governments under a Decentralization Regime Accelerating Higher Education Massification

China's higher education administration is closely related to the country's national economic and political systems. After reform and opening up began, the decentralization of higher education administrative system was shaped by reforms of the national economic, administrative and financial systems. As for the economic system, the establishment of the market mechanism refers to a change from a centralized sectoral economic model to a decentralized regional economic model. As for the administrative system, the provincial governments were given more authority in terms of planning and decision making than before. As for the financial system, prior to 1980, China had adopted a centralized financial administrative system in which the central government took and allocated all tax revenues. In 1980, China started to implement the decentralized financial system in which provincial governments started to take full responsibilities for their finances. In 1993, China started to implement a localized fiscal tax policy. The path of the reform moved from a centralized budgeting system to a decentralized one (Wu & Ma, 2012). Therefore, in the context of national macroeconomic reform, it was imperative to conduct reform to decentralize the higher education administrative system in the 1990s.

At the end of the last century, the centralized higher education administrative system became decentralized. At the same time, due to the Asian financial crisis and the need to stimulate domestic consumption, the process of higher education massification started (Min & Wen, 2010). Against this backdrop, we now explain how the decentralized administrative system affected higher education expansion,

and how competitions among provincial governments played an important role in the rapid move towards mass higher education.

In economics, the administrative system of China since adoption of the reform policy was seen as an M model in contrast to a U model. The M model refers to a decentralized system. Under the decentralized system, provincial governments set high goals for economic development and implemented their plans under the mechanism of a promotion tournament. This gave incentives to maintain China's GDP growth rate at a relatively high level for a long time (Qian & Xu, 2008; Qian & Weingast, 2008). It became common that if the central government set a goal for economic development, the local governments would set an even higher one in order to compete with each other (Zhou, 2008).

The authors hold that the model of higher education growth should be akin to that of the economy. Table 2 gives details of growth of Chinese higher education in terms of aggregate size and increase rate from 1998 to 2010. It can be seen that there was a rapid expansion of higher education during 1999–2006. The annual growth rate of student population was more than 10%, and the gross enrollment rate rose from 9.8% in 1998 to 22.0% in 2006. The Action for Education Promotion for the 21st Century issued by the central government and the State Council in 1999 set the goal that the gross enrollment ratio should reach 15% in 2010. In the first two years, the expansion of higher education was much faster than expected. The central government then reset the deadline of achieving the goal of mass higher education to 2005. However, it was proved that the reset goal was still conservative, as a 15% gross enrollment rate was achieved as early as in 2002. China thus entered the stage of mass higher education far ahead of schedule. Compared with data from other countries, China took less time to achieve this goal (Hao, Long & Zhang, 2011; Zha, 2011). This leads us to ask: Why did the enrollment expansion of higher education in China occur so much faster than expected? Was there a similar phenomenon in higher education growth as in economic development in the sense that, if the central government set a goal, the local governments set even higher ones in order to compete with each other?

In 1999, when the central government made the schedule of massifying higher education, it did not expect that the enrollment expansion would take off so fast. A possible reason for the rapid expansion is that the local governments and institutions have authorities on enrollment, and their desires that had been compressed for years now broke out because of the expansion policy, which led to the fast growth beyond the expectation. For example, in 2001, the government of Jiangsu Province allowed the universities to break the limitation of enrollment plan set by the Ministry of Education. Universities in the province could increase enrollment as long as they had the ability to do so and ensure quality (Education Year Book of China, 2002, p. 494). In 2001, Sichuan Province planned to enroll 120,000 students, but the actual number was 128,800, 7.3% more than planned (Education Year Book of China, 2002, p. 661). In 2004, the national plan for enrolling undergraduates and junior college students was based on an annual growth rate of 8%, while the growth rate of Shanxi Province

Table 2. Key indicators on higher education development in China (1998–2010)

Year	No. of institutions	No. of undergraduates and junior college students (10 thousand)	The growth of number of undergraduate and junior college students		The number of faculty members (10 thousand)	The scale of the institutions (people per institutions)	Student-teacher ratio	Gross enrollment rate (%)
			Quantity (10 thousand)	Rate (%)				
1998	1022	340.87	23.43	7.38	40.7	3335	11.62	9.8
1999	1071	413.42	72.55	21.28	42.6	3815	13.37	10.5
2000	1041	556.09	142.67	34.51	46.3	5289	16.30	12.5
2001	1225	719.07	162.98	29.31	53.2	5870	18.22	13.3
2002	1396	903.36	184.29	25.63	61.8	6471	19.00	15.0
2003	1552	1108.56	205.20	22.72	72.5	7143	17.00	17.0
2004	1731	1333.50	224.94	20.29	85.5	7704	16.22	19.0
2005	1792	1561.78	228.28	17.12	96.6	7666	16.85	21.0
2006	1867	1738.84	177.07	11.34	107.6	8148	17.93	22.0
2007	1908	1884.90	146.06	8.40	116.8	8571	17.28	23.0
2008	2263	2021.00	136.10	7.22	123.7	8931	17.23	23.3
2009	2305	2144.66	123.66	6.12	129.5	9086	17.27	24.2
2010	2358	2231.79	87.13	4.06	134.3	9298	17.33	26.5

Data source: Authors own calculations based on Report on Education Development Statistics of China. [中国教育事业发展统计公报]. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_335/index.html.

reached 26% (Education Year Book of China, 2005, p. 848). The growth rate of higher education is shown in Table 2. Below, we highlight examples from some provinces: In Hubei Province, the higher education enrollment increased 239.17% from 2001 to 2005, at an average annual rate of 20%, and the gross enrollment rate in the age cohort increased from 14% in 2000 to 24.9% in 2005. In Anhui Province, enrollment increased by 1.7 times from 2000 to 2005, with the gross enrollment rate rising from 8.5% in 2000 to 17.3% in 2005. In Xinjiang Autonomous Region, enrollment grew by 1.49 times, with the gross enrollment rate growing from 8% in 2000 to 19.5% in 2006¹. In 2005, after six years of expansion, the gross enrollment rate for higher education of most provinces had exceeded 15% except in Guizhou Province, Yunnan Province and Tibet Autonomous Region, showing that rapid expansion was common in most provinces.

The fast higher education expansion has brought in public criticism and caught attention of the central government. Investment and quality became two major concerns. Consequently, the central government started to control the expansion of local universities. During the period of the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline (2006–2010), the growth rate of numbers of new college students declined and then remained low. One of the authors of this chapter was invited as an expert and attended a conference in July of 2007, which was organized by the planning bureau of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and dealt with higher education development in five provinces during the period of Eleventh Five-Year Guideline. Materials provided at this conference reflected the active attitude of the provincial governments regarding provincial higher education expansion. Generally speaking, provincial governments set high goals for higher education development (including gross enrollment rate, the number of new institutions, the number of upgraded and transformed institutions, etc.), despite the MOE's message that provincial governments would need to slow down the pace of higher education expansion, and pay more attention to quality assurance. Before the event, the MOE had issued a document in 2006 that conditioned establishing new higher education institutions during the Eleventh Five-Year period, and pointed out some problems in higher education expansion in the past five years, for example:

Some regions pay too much attention to the quantity of enrollment while the quality is ignored, there is still a problematic trend to expand enrollment without considering the availability of resources.²

It required all provinces to control the growth rate, keep the enrollment rate stable and pay more attention to quality. It also made three rules on setting up new institutions: First, the average annual higher education expenditure per student funded by the local government over the previous three years was RMB 5,000 yuan or more. Second, strict control over new institutions would be applied to those provinces with per student expenditure between RMB 3,500 and 5,000 yuan, while the education expenditure accounted for 18% of total expenditure in a province. Third, there would be in principle no allowance of new institutions in the provinces with per student

expenditure less than RMB 3,500 yuan and showing no significant increase in the current year.³

Although the MOE pointed out some problems caused by the fast expansion of higher education, most provinces still wished to keep the high growth rate during the period of the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline. In light of the MOE document, the expert group members (including one of the authors) discussed each province's higher education development plan during the Eleventh Five-Year period, and provided comments for modifications. Below are a few excerpts from the comments:

Table 3. Expert group's comments to the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline of four provinces

<i>Expert group's comments</i>	
Province A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Too many institutions (29 institutions) will be established or upgraded, the scale is too large, – The policy of the central government, the State Council and the MOE which require the local governments to control the growth rate of enrollment and the number of new institutions, maintain the scale of higher education, and pay more attention to the quality are not implemented well;
Province B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is a big gap between the guideline and the policy of intensive development, scale control and quality improvement. Too many institutions will be established or upgraded. It seems that the higher education development is too fast in the guideline, – They aimed too high to achieve the goal of 30% gross enrollment rate at the end of the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline;
Province C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 15 institutions will be established or upgraded, the number is too large, – The fundamental spirit of growth control is not reflected in the plan;
Province D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Too many institutions will be established or upgraded, – The goal is too difficult to achieve.

By analyzing the process of setting up higher education goals during the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline in some provinces, the authors can conclude that the goals of higher education development set by provincial governments are beyond the expectations of the central government. From the perspective of game between the central government and the local governments regarding the goals during the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline period, competition among provincial governments under the regime of decentralization appears to be a driving force behind the expansion. Under the market mechanism where labour force enjoys free mobility, there is a significant change in the provincial governments' ideas and behaviors regarding higher education development in their jurisdictions. When satisfying human resource supply with needs of local economic growth is no longer a criterion for planning higher education development, the provincial legislatures started to use

the enrollment rate as an indicator for the purpose of evaluating performance of the provincial education administrations (Yan & Mao, 2013).

Will Competitions among Local Governments Widen Inter-Provincial Gap of Higher Education Development?

In 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, higher education institutions were not evenly distributed across the country. Most universities were located in coastal cities with only a few in inland cities. Under the policy of "considering the whole country as a single entity", this arrangement did not result in problems in supply of talents. Nevertheless, the central government made some adjustments on the geographic distribution of universities. Rules issued by the MOE between 1955 and 1957 stated: Universities in coastal cities were not allowed to expand except for those which had special programs; efforts should be made to reduce scale and improve quality. Universities in cities near the coast could grow reasonably, and those in inland cities are allowed to expand considerably (MOE, 1999, p. 364). Higher education in China remained small scale and elite, and very few university age populations had the opportunities to receive higher education. So there was no strong demand on the equity of higher education distribution.

Since the 1990s, equity gradually became an important criterion for evaluating the development of higher education. After decentralization of the higher education administrative system in the 1990s, the geographic distribution of higher education was adjusted. However, some universities which were once controlled by the central government were given over to local governments, and began enrolling more local students. Would this situation widen the gap in higher education resources and higher education access opportunities among different regions? During the expansion, did the higher education access opportunity gap among provinces grow or narrow? A lot of studies discussed the issue of equality extensively, and their findings have been inconsistent, but the focal point has always been placed on inter-provincial differences in higher education access opportunities.

These questions should also be discussed with an analysis of statistical data. By computing the dispersion of university enrollments in each province between 1998 and 2010, the authors list two parameters in [Table 4](#) – range and standard deviation coefficient – which could describe the magnitude of dispersion. These parameters will show directly the inter-provincial gaps of higher education aggregate size were widened or narrowed, which in turn answers the question whether or not the expansion under the decentralized system had positive effect on social equity. It should be noted that we can neither separate the number of enrollment of universities managed by central governments which enroll students across the country from the provincial data, nor consider the inter-provincial exchange arrangement of enrollment. So the parameters cannot reflect the actual differences among provinces exactly. However, we still can make some preliminary estimation on the dispersion of enrollment of each province. [Table 4](#) shows that the range increased year by year, but this index

is not the best one to reflect the dispersion. The authors then use standard deviation coefficient to replace range. The standard deviation coefficient increased from 0.615 in 1998 to 0.649 in 2006, which does not equate to a large change. During 1999–2003, this index declined from 0.625 to 0.616 as enrollment dispersion between provinces declined. That is to say the growth rates of provinces with smaller enrollment scales were higher than with larger enrollment scales. This shows that the gap in higher education access opportunities between provinces narrowed during this period.

Table 4. Dispersion of university enrollment in each province from 1998–2010

<i>Year</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Coefficient of standard deviation</i>
1998	1385	84946	83561	34955.71	21495.408	0.615
1999	1657	127013	125356	49953.35	31237.224	0.625
2000	2320	172491	170171	71163.61	44176.021	0.621
2001	2420	215734	213314	86541.61	53675.672	0.620
2002	3414	222880	219466	103386.32	63914.734	0.618
2003	4279	273894	269615	123280.68	75985.668	0.616
2004	6003	327452	321449	144303.94	91520.996	0.634
2005	7589	400573	392984	162728.42	105004.741	0.645
2006	8359	422220	413861	176146.13	114235.014	0.649
2007	8046	417544	409498	182554.65	114956.461	0.630
2008	8520	465593	457073	196019.74	124642.417	0.636
2009	9020	469097	460077	206288.13	130634.180	0.633
2010	9213	475212	465999	213469.39	134283.151	0.629

Date source: The data is calculated based on the data from the website of National Statistics Bureau. Retrieved March 15, 2013 from <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/>.

Note: Range = Maximum-Minimum. Standard deviation coefficient = Standard deviation/mean.

The gross enrollment rate is a common index to evaluate the level of higher education development; it reflects the level of higher education access opportunities in a region. As this rate is not listed in regular statistical yearbooks, the authors explored the Education Statistical Year Book of China and other sources in order to collect the data of 2002 and 2005 in 12 provinces (see Table 5). Next, such data will be used to show changes in the gross enrollment rates of higher education. Standard deviation coefficients are calculated using the method mentioned above (Standard deviation/mean). This shows that in 2002 the standard deviation coefficient of the gross enrollment rate of all provinces is 0.38, the value of 2005 is 0.31, smaller than

Table 5. The gross enrollment rate for higher education in 12 provinces in 2002 and 2005

Year	Neimenggu	Jilin	Jiangsu	Zhejiang	Anhui	Jiangxi	Shandong	Henan	Hubei	Guangdong	Sichuan	Guizhou
2002	12.3	18	20	20	12.5	13.5	15	13	18	15.3	14	9
2005	18.4	28.0	33.5	34.0	17.3	20.5	19.2	17.0	24.2	23.7	21.0	10.0

Data source: Educational Statistical Yearbook of China (2003). Beijing: People's Education Press. [中国教育年鉴. 北京: 人民教育出版社.]
 The data of 2005 is from materials on the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline of higher education of each province provided by the Planning Bureau of MOE in 2006. [教育部规划司提供的各省高等教育“十一五”发展规划论证材料]

that in 2002. It means that higher education access opportunities in 12 provinces got closer to each other in 4 years of expansion. It can be inferred that the expansion under the decentralized system has had positive effects on narrowing gaps of higher education access opportunities among the provinces.

According to our research in some provinces and universities, there is a trend that higher education access opportunities are distributed evenly along with the enrollment expansion. For example, some universities managed by the Beijing municipal government tend to enroll higher percentages of students from other regions in order to enhance their freshman's average score in the entrance exams. Another example is Jiangsu Province. The higher education enrollment rate reached 74% in Jiangsu Province in 2003, but the quota for out-of-province was controlled by the local government in order to ensure access opportunities to the local students (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2004, p. 508). However, in 2008 when Jiangsu was the site of fieldwork for this study, an officer of the Provincial Education Department told us that, with the decline of the school age population and the increase of the local enrollment rate, the potential to expand higher education enrollment in the province was limited. To ensure the quantity and quality of students, the local universities started to increase the ratio of students from other provinces. A similar trend was observed during fieldwork in Zhejiang Province in 2010.

Therefore, during the process of enrollment expansion, universities in well-developed regions would expand their space spontaneously and increase enrollment from poor regions when local demand has been met. This action may narrow the gap in higher education access opportunities among regions. There is certainly a significant difference between developed and less developed areas in opportunities for higher education access, especially high quality higher education opportunities. This difference can be reflected by indexes such as the gross enrollment rate of higher education, high school graduation rate and ratio of students who have entered top universities. Narrowing the gap among provinces is an important goal for higher education development in the future. Achieving this goal will take time because inequity in economic development has to be addressed first. However, under the mechanism of pursuing high quality, higher education equity issue is expected to be improved.

The Expansion of Higher Education and Institutional Change

According to the analysis above, it is clear that the decentralized administrative system not only helps to encourage the local governments to expand higher education and increase the opportunities of higher education access, but may also promote equity in higher education. Will the expansion influence the diversity of higher education system? The authors will discuss this question here by examining the actions of each province during the expansion from Educational Statistic Yearbook of China during 2000-2007 and other materials.

First, the expansion of higher education has positive effects on diversity in the higher education system. The further development of private higher education and

vocational higher education are two notable examples. Table 6 shows the increase of the number of private colleges and vocational colleges. The percentage of private colleges' enrollment in the total is calculated using the data from Educational Statistic Yearbook of China. Meanwhile, adult higher education has changed along with social demands, and some adult colleges have transformed into regular universities. The number of adult universities has decreased year by year. In 1999, in order to achieve the goal of expansion, Guangdong Province adopted several measures to develop potentials of expanding higher education within universities: set up vocational colleges in some universities as the main stream of the expansion; select adult universities with good resources to enroll students as regular universities; some technical secondary schools were allowed to set up higher vocational programs (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2000, p. 685). Sichuan Province adopted similar measures to Guangdong Province in order to achieve the goal of expansion: developed higher vocational education with great efforts, establishing eight new vocational colleges in 2001; making full use of the resources of private universities and private colleges in public universities, establishing 13 private universities in 2001; making full use of resources of some adult colleges and technical secondary schools; supporting online education in some universities (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2002, p. 661).

Table 6. Number of higher education institutions of different type in 1998-2010

Year	Regular			Adult	Private	
	Total	Undergraduate	Higher Vocational college		Private	Private college in public university
1998	1022			962		
1999	1071			871		
2000	1041			772		
2001	1225			686		
2002	1396			607		
2003	1552			558	173	
2004	1731	684	1047	505	228	
2005	1792	701	1091	481	252	295
2006	1867	720	1147	444	278	318
2007	1908	740	1168	413	297	318
2008	2263	1079	1184	400	318	322
2009	2305	1090	1215	384	336	322
2010	2358	1112	1246	365	353	323

Data source: http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_335/index.html. Retrieved March 2013.

Second, with the establishment and improvement of market mechanism, it starts to influence resource allocation in higher education. Besides that, it started to regulate the enrollment and employment of university graduates as a natural outcome. As mentioned above, universities in rich regions increased enrollment from underdeveloped regions under pressure to ensure the quantity and quality of their student body. At the same time, rich regions also encouraged local higher school graduates to apply to universities of higher quality in other regions. For example, Shanghai adopted such measures in 1999 when the enrollment expansion started (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2000, p. 510). Most high school graduates in rich cities such as Beijing and Shanghai are not willing to leave their hometowns and tend to choose universities in their own cities to avoid losing their residency. Therefore, students who apply to universities in other cities can enter universities of better quality with the same exam scores. In order to encourage high school graduates to apply to universities in other cities, cities such as Beijing have allowed high school graduates to keep their residency registration (*hukou*) in Beijing if they go to a university in another city. With the enrollment expansion, the employment of university graduates is becoming a problem. To solve this problem, some regions have had to remove regulations regarding employment. For example, in 2001, the employment rate of undergraduates of the whole country was 75% and the number of junior college graduates was 40%. Under the pressure of unemployment, restrictions on talent mobility were removed by the central government, and charges for leaving the province, leaving the system and joining in a local population were cancelled (Educational Statistical Year Book of China, 2002, pp. 217–218). More mobility between regions of university graduates occurred after removing such restrictions. In 2001, graduate students of regular universities who choose to work in other provinces accounted for 37.86% of total graduate students in Hunan Province, the number for undergraduates was 57.4%, and that of junior college students was 22.03% (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2002, p. 604). In 2003, Hunan Province removed all the regulations that go against the employment of university graduates, and broadened the channel of working in other provinces for graduates (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2004, p. 633). In 2004, the Education Department of Heilongjiang removed all the regulations, too. Charges for leaving the province was cancelled, as well for leaving the system for students of junior normal colleges or below (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2005, p. 618). Under the market mechanism, some talented students left underdeveloped regions while others returned. For example, in Guizhou Province, there were 5.7 thousand local students who graduated from universities in other provinces, and 2.5 thousand returned to Guizhou upon graduation, equating to 44%. The employment rate of these students was 79%, higher than the total employment rate of university graduates and junior college graduates (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2002, p. 677). In sum, a dynamic picture is observed for admitted and graduated students moving between provinces.

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Third, higher education expansion and the increase in higher education access opportunities has helped to remove unreasonable regulations, in turn having a positive effect on building a lifelong learning system. In the process of education expansion, Shanghai provided more higher education access opportunities to three groups: students of technical schools, junior colleges and higher vocational colleges, largely because there were not enough high school graduates. This action has had a positive effect on building connections between high schools and technical high schools (Educational Statistic Yearbook of China, 2000, p. 510). In the process of expansion, the central government removed the regulation on age and marriage status of college students as well.

A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION: LIMITATION OF THE DECENTRALIZED EXPANSION

The decentralized administrative system has had positive effects on expanding the scale of higher education, narrowing opportunity gaps between regions and improving the flexibility of educational system, but it still has some limitations, mainly in the following aspects: fiscal investment cannot keep a pace with higher education expansion; in only seven provinces and municipalities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Qinghai and Tibet, is the per student expenditure from the government budget above RMB 5,000 yuan, being less than that in all other provinces. The educational expenditure from the government has decreased while tuition fees have increased. Expenditure on facilities has mainly been raised by universities themselves or by way of loans. Debts have occurred because a lot of universities have had to borrow money from banks. For example, in 2005, educational expenditure per student from the government budget of Hebei Province was only RMB 2,757.33 yuan, whereas the expenditure in Inner Mongolia was RMB 3,600 yuan per student. The situation for Shandong Province was almost the same. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan period, the total number of students increased 2.9 times, while educational expenditure from government increased only 0.78 times, making per student expenditure dramatically lower. A lot of indexes on resources per student have decreased, and some of them to a figure even lower than the warning point. Meanwhile, there was a heavy burden for universities because the fast expansion of higher education mainly relied on the fund raised by university themselves and loans. In 2005, the educational expenditure per student in Jiangsu Province was RMB 14,084 yuan, while the expenditure from the government budget was only RMB 4,971 yuan, the accumulative debts for total universities reached RMB 30 billion yuan in the same year. In 2005, the educational expenditure per student for Anhui Province was RMB 8,445.1 yuan, while only about 3,000 yuan of them were from the government budget. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan period, the expenditure on facilities for Ningxia Autonomous Region totalled RMB 5.388 billion yuan, and the government allocated only 1.9379 billion yuan, while the universities had to raise 3.4501 billion yuan themselves.

Why have local governments and universities paid such great efforts to expand higher education enrollment without considering constraints of financial resources? Under the results-oriented mechanism, local governments have hoped for better political performance, encouraging universities to expand without providing the needed funds. Besides, some local governments have wanted to rely on the central government since the expansion policy was initiated at the center, but the central government has instead encouraged them to solve the problem of resource shortages via loans (Yan, 2012). On the other hand, the motivations and actions of universities themselves should not be ignored. Finance is an important consideration when universities make enrollment decisions. During 1986-2001, the method that the government used to allocate resources to universities was called “comprehensive fixed funds plus special subsidy” (Huang, 2010). In 2002, the method adopted was called “budget for basic expenditure plus project expenditure.” No matter what kinds of method adopted, the amount of expenditure is positively related to the number of students. That is to say, more students, more funds. Tuition is another factor that encouraged the universities to expand enrollment. Universities began to charge tuitions from all the students since 1997, and from then on, the percentage of tuition and incidental expenses in all revenues increased year by year. The number has been largely increasing: 15.71% (1997), 13.42% (1998), 21.30% (2000), 27.00% (2002), 32.38% (2004), 31.76% (2006), 40.39% (2008) (Chen, 2012, p. 168). Under this revenue and cost structure, universities and higher vocational colleges managed by local governments have greater motivations to expand than those managed by central government (Yi, 2009). Put explicitly, quality is relatively difficult to evaluate. When local universities expanded enrollment at the expense of quality, and they would not receive negative feedback. To the contrary, revenue is not a pressing issue for central universities due to abundant funds flowing in from central government. Therefore they concern quality more seriously.

How could the impulses of local governments and universities to expand without considering their resources and quality be better controlled? It is clear that a mechanism of self-discipline for governments and universities should be built, and intermediary organizations should be involved to supervise and evaluate them. Both visible and invisible indexes should take into consideration when evaluating the performance. All of above are important mechanisms which can guarantee the overall effects of decentralized system.

Development is a spontaneous behavior of social organizations. Under the stimulus of the environment, there will be different kinds of movement of organizations: acceleration, slowing down or regressing. In all kinds of development, expansion is a simple and clear one, but there is a complicated logic in it, as well as a paradox about “smaller is better” and “economies of scale.” In addition to questions about regional higher education expansion and the logic of governments we discussed in this paper, there is a phenomenon at a micro level which is worth deeper investigation. For example, why is there a competition for

enrollment between colleges and departments within a university? Administrative agencies such as provost office and graduate school which are responsible for the allocation of student quota among colleges and departments can feel the great demands for expansion of colleges and departments, so that we can find a significant difference on the enrollment scale between colleges and department. For example in Peking University, some large colleges have thousands of students, while small colleges have only hundreds of students. This behavior is not rational from the perspective of economics, because the larger the enrollment is, the greater the shortage of funds is. Most faculty members who have the workload of research worry about if the research be influenced due to too many students and too much workload on teaching. However, there still remains a trend of enrollment expansion. A hypothesis to be verified is that there is micro political logics within universities as well, and the competition for enrollment between colleges and departments is, in fact, a competition for power and status, which are also resources, and sometimes are as scarce and important as cash money.

NOTES

- ¹ Materials on the Eleventh Five-Year Guideline of higher education of each province provided by the planning bureau of MOE.
- ² Resource: www.moe.edu.cn
- ³ According to an officer of MOE, MOE's intention to make this rule is to provide a reason to local education authorities when applying education expenditure to local finance bureaus.

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INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND AGGREGATE EXPANSION

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13. MASSIFICATION OF CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION

Opportunities and Challenges in a Globalizing Context

INTRODUCTION

Following China's joining the WTO in 2001 and the subsequent actualization of its market opening pledges in 2006, China has formally entered the age of market economy (Huang, 2008). As part of this social and economic transformation, China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, mass migration, urbanization, and privatization – all familiar phenomena symptomatic of economic globalization. In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the United States in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). Indeed, over the past 30 years, China has experienced “an economic miracle” (Dutta 2006, p. xii), and a “massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge” (Brandt & Rawski 2008, p. 1). Coinciding with the rapid economic growth, China's higher education also experienced unprecedented massification as manifested in the number of higher education institutions as well as the size of student enrolments. However, just as the overall GDP may not stand for the wellbeing of all (Waring, 1988), massification in scale may not mean good fortune for the mass. In this paper, based on a review of policies, existing studies and some media reports, we revisit the history of higher education reform in China, and explore how well the current higher education system has really served the “mass”, giving attention to both the challenges and opportunities of Chinese higher education in an age of globalization.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section examines the context of globalization. The second section focuses on the movement of Chinese higher education from elite to mass education as well as the accompanying institutional changes and reform. The third section identifies some of the issues with higher education reform. The last section discusses the future of higher education in China and pinpoints some areas of research that warrant further attention.

GLOBALIZATION AND CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

China's economic reforms took place in the context where “globalization and neoliberal deregulation have taken place” (Pieke & Barabantseva, 2012, p. 4). They coincide with a new stage of globalization in which further integration of the

world economy required China's cheap labour, its abundant natural resources, and, increasingly, its gigantic consumer market. In this view, China's economic growth has fuelled and has been fuelled by forces of globalization (Davis & Wang, 2009). Hence, it is necessary to first examine the phenomenon of globalization and its relationships with China's market economy.

Globalization can be defined as "an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world's spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces" (Ritzer, 2007, p. 1). The genesis of contemporary globalization can be traced to the early 1970s and the development of sophisticated information technology, economic competition from Japan, demise of the Bretton Woods Agreement, and the oil crisis (Jarvis, 2002). One of the most contentious issues in the field of globalization studies pertains to the significance of the nation-state in the era of globalization (Ritzer, 2007). Bruff (2005) summarizes this debate into a "three waves" analysis. The first wave literature, characterized by a state constraint perspective, maintains that the state is severely restricted in what it can do as a result of unprecedented changes caused by globalization in the establishment of global markets, prices and production. The state has been pushed into a marketized corner, attracting, facilitating and supporting capital. The second wave, according to Bruff, argues that the change has not been overwhelming, and that the state's capacity to autonomously adapt to new circumstances is still considerable. It stresses the unexceptional characteristics of the present era of globalization while also pointing to state capacity in exercising controls over both capital and labour. The first wave is criticised by Bruff as overly structuralist, deterministic and narrowly focused, while the second wave neglects the extra-state factors that have pride of place in the social world. Bruff argues that the third wave represents an important step forward. It seeks to move beyond the empirical focus of the previous two by asking how globalization is perceived and acted upon across space and time. It problematizes not just the impact of globalization, but the term "globalization" itself. It posits that globalization is deeply political, contested, contingent and complex. It focuses on how agents interpret and act upon their circumstances. As Ritzer (2007) points out, what matter most from this perspective are those constructions and not globalization *per se*. Another important message this perspective conveys is that we should not reify globalization because it is "not a thing, not an 'it'" (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 64). Robertson and White go on to state that recognizing its conceptual status and understanding the global nature of the interest in, the discourse about and the analysis of globalization are more important than viewing it as an ontological matter. It is this conception of globalization, as a set of discourses that are consumed and reproduced as they are acted upon by particular actors in particular circumstances, that provides the theoretical framework for us to examine higher education reform in China.

What needs to be pointed out is that despite the extensive literature on globalization, the neglect of the social dimension in the literature is "rather glaring", particularly with regard to questions of social inequality, power and the global-local

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relationship (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 58). It is evident that globalization from above favours open markets, free trade, deregulation and privatization, all of which work for the benefit of wealthy nations and, moreover, and the economic elite across nations. Some scholars do draw attention to the ways in which markets and deregulation produce greater wealth at the price of increased inequality (Appadurai, 2002). We are experiencing widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” in global society, devastating environmental problems, declining civic participation and community, and increasing mistrust and alienation among citizenries (Welch, 2001). Global capitalism, it seems, has created a global society that is unequal and unjust (Jarvis, 2002). Another aspect deserving attention is the implications of globalization for education, manifested as homogenization, commodification and marketization of education, to the detriment of diversity, inclusivity and social equity (Welch, 2001). Furthermore, globalization creates “a fragmented and uneven distribution of just those resources for learning, teaching, and cultural criticism” (Appadurai, 2002, p. 273).

As one dimension of globalization, marketization has transformed China in many significant ways. Economically, China has become the second largest economy in the world and a development model. There have been increasing interconnectivity and integration of China with the rest of the world. It is important to note that China’s transformation has gone beyond the economics. Marketization has also led to fundamental realignments in the organization of society (Pieke & Barabantseva, 2012). On the one hand, we witness the rise of new entrepreneurial and middle classes, urbanization, and changes in people’s life styles. On the other hand, as Pieke and Barabantseva remind us, China has experienced environmental degradation, rural-urban migration, social unrest and contestation, and income inequality. In this chapter, we examine the impacts of marketization and massification of higher education in China.

In the last twenty years, higher education in China has received much attention from researchers. Yet, with few exceptions (e.g., Hayhoe & Zha, 2004; Zha, 2012a, 2012b; Yang, 2004), the literature remains largely descriptive. In this chapter, through a review of the key policies that steered higher education reform in China as well as the related literature and media reports, we delineate the history of higher education reform in China, highlight key issues facing higher education today and reflect on the future of Chinese higher education in the context of globalization. Throughout the paper, we give special attention to the roles that the nation states play in engendering the changes, and the discourses of globalization that get reinforced as deepening reforms took place in higher education.

RESTRUCTURING AND TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Internationally, higher education is classified into elite, mass and universal higher education based on university participation rates, which are under 15%, between 15% and 50%, and 50% and above respectively (Trow, 1974). After China opened

itself up to the world towards the end of the 1970s, it gradually moved away from an elite, social provisional mode of higher education. By 2004, it had sped into a market-based, mass higher education system. In this section, we first provide a sketch of China's journey towards massification and then expand on some of the major institutional reforms that have taken place over the years. Since education reform in China is mostly chaperoned by the state through a series of policies and practices, we give special attention to the policy discourses that shaped the changes.

From Elite to Mass Higher Education: A Brief History

Subsequent to the opening up policy announced by Deng, a comprehensive educational reform was initiated in 1985 with the release of *the Decision on Reforming Chinese Educational System* by the State Council (hence *the Decision*). Prior to the *Decision*, university participation rate was extremely low. It was estimated to be at 5% or lower nationally at the end of 1970s and the beginning of 1980s (Yu & Ertl, 2010). All students who made it into university were fully "taken care of" by the state. They were recruited and posted to jobs on the basis of state quota and central state plan. The *Decision* started loosening the paternalistic structure by allowing more latitude for local institutions to recruit students. Aside from students within state quota, higher institutions were allowed to admit students commissioned by specific working units (students bounded by future employment contracts), as well as self-support students although the total number of students recruited needed to be approved by the central state (Wang, 2008). Commissioned and self-supporting students are typically fee-paying students whose National College Examination outcome fell below the admission cut-off line set by different institutions. While students recruited within state quota were still posted to jobs, commissioned students were expected to go back to the employers who financially supported their undergraduate studies and fee-paying students were left on their own devices to look for jobs themselves. As a result, immediately after the *Decision*, there had been an upsurge in the number of commissioned and fee-paying students.

Prior to 1989, only commissioned and self-support students paid tuition. Students recruited within state quota were fully funded by the state. Not only did they not pay tuition, they were also provided with free accommodation and living allowances by the state. This situation started to change when three ministries (Ministry of Education, Central Price Bureau, and Ministry of Finance) jointly issued the *Regulation on Higher Education Institution Tuition and Accommodation Fee* in August 1989. This regulation proposed that higher education is beyond compulsory education, and that all university students should pay tuition fees (see also Sun & Barrientos, 2009). Institutions then started charging tuition fees. In 1997, all students became fee paying students.

Amid all the changes, massification of education itself however did not become an explicit goal until 1992 during China's Second National Working Conference in Education, after the Southern Tour speech of Deng. Compared with some western

countries, such as Japan, the United States, and Sweden, that have undergone the process of massification, China's movement into mass education distinguished itself with its "massive scale and rapid change" (Hölttä & Cai, 2012; p. 6). In 1993, the publication of *the Outline for Educational Reform and Development* (hence *the Outline*) officially geared up the country for all-out marketization and massification (Zha, 2012b). The Asian Economic crisis that hit in 1997 somehow sped up the process. In the middle of the crisis, expansion of higher education was used as an important means to stimulate the economy (Bai, 2006). Between 1999 and 2004, the number of students enrolled in higher education, as well as the number of higher education institutions increased by leaps and bounds (Zha, 2009). In 2004, China became the largest higher education provider in the world, with more than 20-million students enrolled (China Factfile, 2012), doubling the enrolment number in 1998 (Zha, 2009). With higher education participation rate reaching over 15%, 2004 also marked the year when China joined the league of mass higher education providers (ibid). By 2010, 31.05 million students were enrolled in universities and 26.5% of the university age cohort are admitted to higher education (Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, 2010).

Institutional Restructuring and Policy Discourses

Massification of higher education is highly driven by the policy imperative to serve the "socialist modernization project", which theoretically should distinguish itself with "Chinese characters" in the international arena. The *1985 Decision* for instance first raised the importance to "release the force of production" or to cultivate human resources to serve socialist modernization and "to prepare China for the world and the future" (Article 1). The 1993 *Outline*, posed that China has entered "a new stage of opening up and modernization" and that the tasks for educators are to "quicken educational reform and development, improve the quality of the labour force, cultivate large number of talents, and build an educational system that would support the economic, political, and scientific reforms in China, so as to better serve the socialist modernization process" (Article 1). Similar goals were stated in other major educational reform policies such as the 1999 *Higher Education Law* and *the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*. The discourse of socialist modernization however loses its socialist distinctions when translated into educational reform, which has largely been informed by normative modernization discourses such as decentralization, (de-facto) privatization, finance diversification, as well as an ever present pursuit of elitism and its accompanying institutional stratification.

Decentralization in educational reform has been largely encouraged by international funding organizations, such as the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank (Hanson, 2000). It is also an unambiguous goal of higher education reform in China. In the 1970s given fiscal constraints of the central government, the state started transferring responsibility of educational provision to

the local governments (Cheng, 1997; Hawkins, 2000). In 1985, *the Decision* made it an official imperative to decentralize educational administration. It specifies that the goal of Chinese education reform is to revitalize education after the fall of Gang of Four through “restructuring the administrative system”. While “strengthening the role of macro management”, the central government would “relax party control and devolve power, and expand the autonomy of educational institutions” (Article 1). For higher education, *the Decision* states that, “to mobilize all levels of governments to participate in educational provision, it is necessary to achieve a three-tier education management system shared by the central government, provincial and regional governments, and major municipal governments” (Article 4). *The Outline* in 1993, a cornerstone document in deepening education reform lays out the scope of reform for higher education in Article 18 this way:

To reform higher education is to realign the relationships between governments and higher institutions, between central and local governments, and between Ministry of Education and other operating ministries, and to allow, incrementally, autonomy for educational institutions to manage themselves according to the needs of the society, while the (central) government improves macro management. With regard to the relationship between the governments and higher education institutions, disassociate party power from administrative matters of schools. Through legislature, specify the responsibilities and obligations of higher institutes so as to make higher institutions autonomous legal entities. Expand institutions’ autonomy, depending on the circumstances, over the areas of student recruitment, program modification, structural setup, hiring and releasing of officials, use of funds, assessment of professional qualifications, salary allocation, and international collaborations (Article 18).

Clearly, through the *Outline*, China has shifted away from the mechanism of “command and control” to “negotiation and persuasion” (Yang, 2003). In other words, instead of directly interfering in how higher institutions should operate, the central government started resorting to measures such as legislature, funding allocation and macro management to encourage autonomy and entrepreneurship for universities.

With the series of policy preambles, the most drastic restructuring of educational institutions occurred in 1998 in the wake of Asian Economic Crisis. As part of a massive governmental restructuring, the central government transferred administrative control of more than 90% of higher education institutions to local authorities (Wu & Zheng, 2008). As a result of this round of restructuring, many central ministries were trimmed of their administrative responsibilities which were downloaded to provincial, municipal or regional governments with the view that local governments should be more responsive to local economic development needs (Zha, 2009).

While decentering administrative control of higher institutions, the central government has also made space for de facto private ownership of schools and

institutions. In the 1985 *Decision*, for vocational and basic education, it says, “local governments are expected to guide state-owned enterprises, community organizations and individuals to establish schools”. While *the Decision* opened the door to non-state ownership of schools for vocational and basic education only, *the Outline* in 1993 officially extended this schema to higher education. The vision the *Outline* proposed for higher education is that while the central government and provincial governments (autonomous municipalities and regions) remain as the major providers of higher education, all stakeholders should be involved in educational provision. In article 16 which is specifically about educational institutional reform, it states:

The state encourages and fully supports various communities and citizens to establish institutions in accordance with legal procedures, while providing appropriate guidance, and strengthening management mechanism. The state welcomes compatriots from Hongkong, Macao, and Taiwan, overseas Chinese as well as friends from abroad to support education through donation. State regulations and relevant legal procedures need to be followed when conducting international collaboration to set up educational institutions or institutions that issue degree and qualifications recognized by the state.

The Education Law in 1999 then spelled out the procedures that different entities need to follow in order to establish higher education institutions in China. What is interesting however is that while private sectors are encouraged to be involved in providing for education, in different state policy documents, such as *the Education Law*, it says that higher education institutions should not be set up for profit-making purposes (Article 24). To date, there however has not been an assessment of to what extent this not-for-profit orientation has been taken up in local practices.

In practice, the first private vocational university appeared in 1980 and by 1986 the number of non-state vocational universities had reached 128. By 2012, there were 1485 non-state/private higher education institutions running in China, including 371 higher education institutions providing degree-level programs (MOE, 2012). Among them, there have been some transnational higher education programs and institutions (TNHE). The first TNHE program was commonly recognized as the Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Centre for Chinese and American Studies established in 1986. The number of TNHE programs and institutions increased gradually in the next two decades, reaching 71 in 2001 and then the speed of growth suddenly picked up speed after China joined WTO, leading to the establishment of 579 programs and institutions in 2011 (Zha, 2012a).

Aside from allowing non-state sectors and other stakeholders to participate in running educational programs and institutions, the central state has also drastically transformed its financing structure for higher education. Prior to 1985, through a unitary state budget plan, the central government was largely the sole provider of education in China. For instance, government funding constituted 97.7% of all university spending in 1984 (World Bank, 1997). In the subsequent years, the governmental investment in educational funding has increased in absolute number,

but the percentage contribution of the state has decreased (Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, 2010). The ratio between governmental educational expenditure and GDP has also remained low. In the 1993 *Outline*, it was proposed in article 48 that the rate of increase in educational expenditure by both the central and local governments should be higher than the rate of increase in government revenue and that educational expenditure including funding allocation from different levels of governments, should reach 4% of GDP by the end of 2000. However, governmental expenditure in education reached only 2.46% of GDP in 1996, rising to 3.41% in 2002 (Li, L. 2004). OECD (2011) estimated that in 2008, China's direct public expenditure on educational institutions represented 3.3% of the country's GDP, compared with 5.9% on average across OECD countries. As a result, the 4% ratio was restated in the 2010 *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* as a goal to be reached by 2012. Although in 2012, educational expenditure of the governments has reached 4% of its GDP (MOE, 2013), it is still lower than most developed countries.

As the central government ceased to be the sole patron of higher educational institution, it has also encouraged diversification of education funding, through channels such as taxation, public donation, income from teaching, research and other auxiliary activity and student tuition. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, university-affiliated enterprises grew in the name of generating revenue for universities. While some of the enterprises were indeed engaged in transferring research and knowledge derived from research based in universities, some others were pure business (Chen, 2012). Taxation is another means of raising money for educational institutions. The *Outline* in 1993 for instance proposed that the state start collecting educational surcharge from industries and businesses. While educational surcharge is largely used for compulsory education, local governments, depending on their circumstances, are also allowed to charge other taxes to support other types of education. Aside from taxation, the *Outline* also started encouraging the use of credit systems for educational institutions, and entrepreneurship for schools and institutions. Meanwhile, student tuition has skyrocketed especially since 1997, which became a major source for higher education. According to Dong and Wan (2012), the contribution of student tuition to the total educational resources increased from 13.7% in 1996 to 33.7% in 2007. Realizing that not everyone could afford the hefty tuition fees, student loan programs were launched at the end of 1990s, such as the general commercial student loans scheme, and the government subsidized student loan (Shen & Li, 2003).

Of note, massification and marketization of higher education should not be taken to mean that elitism has become a passé in China. As a matter of fact, China has never deviated from its pursuit of national and educational excellence in the international arena (Luo, 2013). Yet, previously elitism was fostered based on meritocratic egalitarianism, i.e., individual students, regardless of their economic backgrounds, gained their entrance to university by excelling in National College Examinations; today, elitism is more encouraged through fuelling internal as well as international

competition at the institutional levels. In the 1990s, for instance, *the Outline* has raised the ideal that by the beginning of the 21st Century, “a number of higher institutions should have reached the academic level of world first-class universities.” The 211 project was subsequently announced. The mission of the project was that to be prepared for the 21 century, all stakeholders, from central to local governments, need to be mobilized in order to cultivate about 100 key universities and a number of key disciplines and specializations. The 211 project led to a frenzy movement of agglomeration among different colleges and universities. In May 1998, the then president Jiang Zemin once again reiterated the ideal that China should start establishing world class universities, which then led to a project 98/5. Thirty-nine universities were eventually included in this 98/5 project. The practical implication of the 21/1 and 98/5 projects is with regard to funding allocation from the central government. The 112 higher institutions that are included in the 211 project receive a higher funding support than other regular higher institutions. For instance, in 2003, 70.10% of research funding went to 21/1 universities and all key national laboratories were hosted on the campus of 21/1 universities (Zha, 2009). The 39 universities of the 98/5 projects are given extra funding support so that they should turn themselves into research intensive world class universities. A recent Thomson Reuters report, as cited in Luo (2013), shows that the top nine universities in the 98/5 project received about 10% of China’s R&D expenditures. In other words, funding allocation prioritizes key universities, which has played a part in creating stratification within educational institutions (Hayhoe & Zha, 2004; Zha, 2009).

ISSUES WITH MASSIFICATION AND MARKETIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

While massification of higher education in China is indeed a miracle – China now claims the largest higher education system in the world, the question that remains is how well higher education today has served the mass, especially the mass who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Drawing on existing literature and media reports, in this section, we identify a range of issues facing higher education today, including inequity in accessing higher education, gap in quality of education received, and unemployment. We then look into the institutional challenge facing the country in overcoming these issues, i.e., the compromised authority of the central government in reigning in marketization and commodification of education and the national and institutional search for identity in the international area.

While massification of higher education is intended to enhance students’ access to higher education, it has not brought the same kind of opportunity for all, especially not for students from impoverished rural areas (Sun & Barrientos, 2009). “When I went to university, 80% if not more of my classmates were from the rural area. Now things have changed. The percentage of rural students in universities has severely dropped. Where have they gone?” The question raised by Wen Jiabao, the last premier of China was widely cited in Chinese media (e.g., Pan, 2009). According

to Sun and Barrientos (2009), in the recent years, while one in six urban students will make it to higher education, only one in twenty rural students will have the chance to enter higher education. One salient problem, as some studies (e.g., Dong & Wan, 2012) have pointed out, is that the rising tuition has exceeded many families' abilities to pay. As a result, there has been no shortage of stories of students from impoverished families giving up their higher education opportunity even after they succeeded in National College Examinations (e.g., Li & Li, 2011). Even though student loan systems were introduced at the end of the 20th century, due to fear of future debt, and lack of information, students from the poorest backgrounds are the least likely group of people to make use of it (Sun & Barrientos, 2009).

If the chance for rural students to make it to higher education is low, the odd for them to make it to top universities is even lower. A research project on "*Equity Issues with Higher Education*" by Dongping Yang, shows that the percentage of rural students in key universities has been sliding since the 1990s. For Beijing University, for instance, 30% of students were from the rural areas between 1978 and 1998. But that number dropped to 10% in 2001 (Pan, 2011). In other words, if family status has always affected students' chance to get into universities, this phenomenon has certainly been aggravated as China moved into a market-based economy. Jun Ji, a lecturer in Qinghua University, conducted a survey of the sources of students in Qinghua and the study shows the following image of a typical Qinghua student: born in urban areas, with parents working as civil servants or teachers, having travelled with parents once a year, and some having studied abroad as high school students (Pan, 2011).

Another problem related to massification is that students in different educational institutions may as well expect to receive qualitatively different educational experiences. As part of the educational reform, as we have shown in the last section, local governments have been responsabilized with funding and administering the majority of higher institutions. However, the financial capacities of the local governments vary significantly, which bears on the financial support that higher institutions could acquire. To start with, funds allocated to central universities (universities affiliated with central ministries such as the Ministry of Education) are based on a per student standard set by the central government, which is rarely matched by provincial government when funding provincial universities (Ma, 2007). Further, given different financial capacities of local governments, local funding allocation per student for provincial universities and colleges can be drastically different (World bank, 1997). In other words, stratification of educational institutions, and regional economic differences are easily translated into differential institutional capacities. The 21/1 and 98/5 projects, further add to the stratification of educational institutions and the unevenness in the distribution of educational and research resources. The ability of the key universities to raise funds through alumni networks and auxiliary corporate activities supposedly further distinguishes these universities in terms of their abilities to attract quality teachers and researchers. Yet in reality, given the accelerated expansion of universities, students generally have

low levels of satisfaction with their schooling experiences (Li, 2012). While students in national universities reported better experiences than those in local institutions (see Zha, 2012b), paradoxically, students in top-level research intensive universities are particularly unsatisfied with their learning experiences (Zhang et al., 2011), a phenomenon that could be attributed to the mounting pressure for academic faculty to do research and publish so that these universities could be better ranked in the international arena (ibid).

Not only are students' educational experiences at school different, their fates in the labour market upon graduation can vary as well. To start with, despite all the fanfare around the labour market needs for educated workers, the labour market in China does not seem to be able to absorb the several million new graduates each year (Bai, 2006; Wu & Zheng, 2008). Between 2003 and 2004, it is reported that only 73% of university and college students found employment (Bai, 2006). Although the employment rate reached 82.1% in 2011, 570 thousands students were still unemployed upon graduation (Mycos institute, 2012). Students from poor areas who do not have strong social networks have found it even more difficult to land employment or well-paid employment (Li, 2012). Discrimination in the labour market against graduates from non-21/1 universities, which has been widely reported in the media (e.g., *Wuhan Evening*, 2013), may have affected rural students even more. The under- and un-employment situation of university graduate students, coupled with skyrocketing tuition fees, has created a phenomenon of higher education phobia among some farmers, who feared that should their children be admitted to universities and colleges, not only would they have problem paying for the tuition, their children might also become unemployed upon graduation (Li, 2003).

Of note, both scholars and policy makers have started noting issues such as regional disparity, quality of education, and have started addressing such issues through introducing various assessment mechanisms for both institutions and teachers (Yang, 2004). There are however, two issues that deserve special policy attention. The first is with regard to the use of market mechanisms and the second with the nation's search for identity for higher education in the international arena.

We tend to agree with Yang (2007) who observed that China has jumped on the bandwagon of neoliberalism without a comprehensive or systematic understanding of market-based ideologies. This is perhaps a lingering legacy of Deng who proposed that China, as a nation should "cross the river by feeling for the stones". In all the education reform documents, the central government has emphasized its role of macro management. In other words, although administrative control has been downloaded to the local, the central government still retains its absolute authority over education through policy and guideline making although not direct control (Mok, 2001). Marketization of education has always been treated as a means to the end of a prosperous society and modernized country. Yet, marketization, the means proactively chaperoned by the central government, has to a certain extent taken on a life of its own, and at times spiralled out of the macro management of the central government. As a consequence, the country or

the central government finds itself scurrying around at times, passively reacting to some of the unexpected consequences of marketization and commodification of education. The massive expansion of university enrolment between 1999 and 2004 for instance illustrates this tension between central authority and the market mechanisms that it has introduced. To stimulate the sluggish economy after the Asian Economic crisis, higher education was instructed to expand student enrolment. Such an expansion however was not accompanied by expansion of the teaching resources at the same pace. In 2002, the central government became aware of the problem of resources and decided to slow down the pace of growth from an annual rate of 49% to between 5 and 10%. Yet, local institutions could not quite slow down themselves, driven largely by their need to fund themselves through tuition fees (Zha, 2012b).

A second issue that educational institutions need to address is the search for identity or the search for the Chinese characters that are supposed to feature the development of the socialist market economy in China. So far, China has been looking abroad for market mechanisms to transform educational institutions in China. As this paper is being written, a culture of auditing is also being introduced with measures and means of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness to build world-class universities. Meanwhile, these neoliberal measures have been heavily criticized in the west for rendering invisible and irrelevant the experiences of groups of people who are traditionally disadvantaged (e.g., Davis 2007; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). Against this context, China may want to revisit some of the socialist legacy left behind in Chinese history such as the quota system for minority students and ensure that such system should grow at the same pace as the expansion of higher institutions.

DISCUSSION: FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this paper, we have discussed the movement of higher education in China towards massification and marketization under the influence of globalization. We started by introducing what we mean by globalization, highlighting the complex roles that the state may play in the process of globalization. We then delineated how higher education has entered the era of massification through resorting largely to decentralization and market-based mechanisms such as privatization, diversified funding, institutional competition and stratification. After that, we highlighted some of the issues that massification and marketization have brought about for students, particularly students who are economically disadvantaged. Like other scholars in the fields (Yang, 2004; Zha, 2012b), we argue that mass higher education has expanded educational opportunities for some but not for all. We then further highlighted the central tension between decentralization and marketization and macro management at the central government level. If we examine recent policy documents on educational reform, there has been attention paid to social equity. Yet, what gets filtered through to the local and translated into practice is often the dominant market-based ideology

that turns education as a commodity that needs to be consumed and that makes education solely a servant of the economy.

We also believe that studies on higher education, again with few exceptions (e.g., Yang, 2004; Zha, 2012a, 2012b) are largely descriptive while there are much depth and complexities to the transformation of higher education in China that needs to be explored in the future. To start with, the changing organization of higher education necessarily entails changing social relations. We however have little information on how marketization and commodification of education has changed the social relations of teaching, learning, administering and collaborating in different places. As well, in this paper, we discussed how pervasive ideologies and discourses of globalization has transformed the local, with little attention paid to local responses to these globalizing influences, which is also an underdeveloped area of studies that needs further attention from researchers (for exception, see Rhoads & Liang, 2006). Finally, echoing Zha (2011), we suggest that policymakers and practitioners in higher education should reconsider its success beyond the normative considerations of scale, and numbers, but in the light of social justice and social equity. Researchers may start exploring how a higher education system may look like if it is informed by an orientation towards social responsibility and social equity.

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14. WHAT DOES INNOVATION MEAN AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Innovation in Chinese Higher Education in a Global Era

Love it or hate it, welcome or fear it, innovation seems to be on everyone's agenda these days. But what does it really mean? (Carolyn Mooney, *Chronicle of Higher Education*)

INTRODUCTION

Carolyn Mooney's question, posed in a recent issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2014), aptly captures our motivation for writing this chapter. Why has "innovation" become a global buzzword in the discourse of educational philanthropists, policy makers, and pundits? What explains the saliency of innovation as the (disruptive or salutatory) silver bullet that should direct "the future of college" (Wood, 2014)? When educators and reformers advocate for innovation at both the institutional and individual level, to what social, economic, and political conditions are they responding? And what and whose purposes do their stated desires to nurture innovation serve? This chapter explores these questions primarily from the perspective of how innovation is employed in the national policies, academic discourses, and institutional contexts of higher education in China.

As comparativists, our understanding of "innovation" and our subsequent analysis of its meanings and prominence in Chinese educational discourse is intentionally inflected by our knowledge of a parallel discourse in the U.S., and we encourage readers to consider our findings regarding innovation as shaped both by a global discourse fueled by cooperation and competition, as well as by each country's particular educational history and structure, demography, socio-economic system, and perceptions of the relationship between higher education and national development. Similarities between China and the U.S. are striking in that they derive from shared challenges of increasing educational stratification in two massive educational systems and of pressures to align the aims and processes of higher education with an equally stratified local to global "market" for students, scholars, research funding, and prestige. Yet, each system's interaction with and contributions to global discourse are quite different. China is the relative newcomer, and at the top of its sprawling system a handful of institutions vie feverishly for global reputation and are explicitly tasked and generously funded to function as one of the Chinese

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state's chief engines for the creation of an "innovation nation." The U.S. hosts within its much more decentralized system the majority of the world's premiere institutions. But to the befuddlement of a number of commentators these top institutions fail to take seriously globally-ranked competitors, greeting their rising accomplishments with a "collective yawn" (Fischer, 2013).

Our approach to discourse analysis in this chapter reveals suggestive rather than definitive conclusions that can point the way to future research questions about the meaning and significance of innovation as a guiding focus and symbol of reform. For example, several themes emerged from our review as starting points for further research, including the common relationship assumed between innovation and entrepreneurialism, between innovation and technology, and the relationship between innovation and global university competition and rankings.

We first conducted an overview of relevant national policies in China and the U.S., which we followed with a content analysis of the academic papers published related to our questions in recognized journals in China and the U.S. For China, we searched for relevant papers and publications in the CNKI database over the past decade, while for the U.S. we searched a combination of journal databases including JSTOR, ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) and EBSCO. Being fully aware of the potential incompatibility of these databases and related possible validity-related flaws, we acknowledge that our approach cannot elicit precise comparison. It does, however, prompt reflection on and understanding about what innovation means in different educational contexts and encourages learning about how discourse is exchanged and might influence policy across contexts.

FROM NATIONAL POLICIES TO ACADEMIC DISCOURSES:
ENTREPRENEURIALISM, DISRUPTION AND INNOVATION IN THE CONTEXT
OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

In 2003, then President Hu Jintao stated in the Chinese national congress that the guiding spirit of both the Chinese Communist Party and national development in the next stage of China's economic transformation should be cultivation of a "scientific outlook of development" (Hu, 2003). This phrase was quickly adopted as a pivotal keyword in all state and local policy documents, and remained the central idea for nation-building during the ten years of Hu's leadership (2003–2013). In 2006, Hu further announced to delegates at a National Science and Technology Conference that China needed to pursue "autonomous innovation with Chinese characteristics" with the ultimate goal of building an "innovation nation." Reforming educational institutions at both the secondary and post-secondary levels was identified as crucial to this mission, and innovation as a concept came to capture the drive for change that home-grown as well as borrowed scientific development should embody. For example, new policies have been enacted that are designed to provide high schools the incentives and resources to nurture competent (and "entrepreneurial") 21st century vocational students capable of playing their part in realizing an

innovative nation (Qi, 2014). Vocational education's role in training students ready to apply "modern skills with Chinese characteristics" has become associated with youth entrepreneurship, with "innovation" (*chuang xin*) and "entrepreneurship" (*chuang ye*) partnered as two similar and interconnected advanced skills (Qi, 2014).

In contrast to much U.S. discourse on innovation, *Chuangxin* discourses and agendas in Chinese policy documents, especially those related to education, are associated with a strong, positive sense of problem-solving and institutional reform that is assumed (or portrayed) to lead to a more promising future for both the nation and institutions. In some cases, policies to promote innovation imply the importance of learning from best practices, whether they are identified at home or abroad. A prominent example is the oft-quoted saying used in the National Guidelines on the Medium- and Long-Term Program for Science and Technology Development (2006–2020) and its implementation plan, 引进、消化、吸收、再创新 "import (new technologies), digest, absorb and then re-innovate." The National Guidelines mention innovation 191 times, placing it among the most frequently-used words in the policy document. Innovation is promoted as a means of achieving the goals in each section of the document, and the preface states that, "China is an economic giant, but it is not an economic superpower—one of the fundamental reasons is the lack of innovative strength."

Analysis of China's most recent overarching reform document directed specifically at educational reform, the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020) (hereafter "2020 Blueprint"), indicates that *Chuangxin* is one of the most frequently-used terms to explain the purposes and strategies of education and talent development. For example, the term "innovative talent" appears 19 times in the context both of needs and of goals of talent development. A section called "Innovating the Modes of Talent Development" delineates strategies by which schools and universities can take proactive measures to reform their systems for the purpose of cultivating innovative talents.

Inspired by how consistently Chinese national policy documents prioritize innovating, i.e. reforming, the educational system for the purpose of nurturing innovative talents, we analyzed education policy documents and scholarship on U.S. higher education to discover how prominently innovation figured as an organizing concept for achieving higher quality teaching and learning, more effective institutions and/or more robust national development. Of course, the relatively decentralized educational system in the U.S. offers no state planning document that is equivalent to China's 2020 Blueprint. In a recently released White House vision and agenda for education, innovation is perceived as an important means by which to improve educational quality, but innovation is not as heavily emphasized as it is in similar Chinese documents. In the sections on higher education, four goals and agenda, reflective of recent media accounts of the challenges (access, equity, affordability, completion rates) facing U.S. higher education are highlighted, including "Helping Middle Class Families Afford College," "Keeping Costs Down," "Strengthening Community Colleges," and "Improving Transparency and Accountability."

In U.S. academic discourse (as expressed in our review of journal articles), however, we identified more similarities than differences in the ways and contexts in which the notion of innovation has been used in the context of higher education over the past decade. Drawing a word map of how “innovation” is used as a relational concept in U.S. and Chinese academia, we identified four broad shared themes.

First, more often than not innovation is used as a term for reform at the institutional level, such as in the phrase “innovation of the university” (*da xue chuang xin*) or “innovating the administrative system of the department/school.” In the Chinese context, an “innovative university” (*chuang xin sing da xue*) is used as a fixed categorical term, parallel to terms like “research university.” The mission statements of top-tier universities in China all reference the importance of being or becoming an innovative university, although the specific characteristics of innovation vary according to the geographical location and specializations of the university in question. What is significant is that “innovation” discourses used at the institutional level, regardless of whether in the U.S. or China, are closely related to overall reform agendas and strategic plans promoting more rigorous and effective learning, and scholarly and in some cases economic development outcomes.

Second, notions of innovation are often related to specific new strategies initiated within a university, such as innovations in the management of a university dorm, innovation in the design of a specific course or major, innovation in the design of the campus landscape or architecture. Two terms stood out in the Chinese literature, “innovative society” and “innovative culture,” perceived as pre-conditions for bringing into fruition an innovative university. Another particularly evocative Chinese term is 创新力 (*chuangxin li*, innovative force/strength), used 72 times in our sample of academic scholarship on higher education, and referring to a range of issues from innovating through curricular reform, administrative strategies, and new assessment/evaluation systems. This keyword implied, more so than others reported on here, that innovation is perceived as not only a means by which to achieve the goals of improving the quality of higher education, but also a force for nurturing new ideas and generating knowledge.

A third theme apparent across Chinese and U.S. scholarship is the role of globalization in shaping the perceptions, needs and strategies of innovation in a higher education. More than thirty percent of the articles in our sample explicitly conceptualizes innovation within a globalized higher education landscape. However, in the Chinese literature, globalization is more frequently perceived as a condition from which China must learn, or one in which China must collaborate with internationally recognized institutions at home and abroad. Our database of Chinese literature included more than 40 review articles on innovation strategies, ideas and practices in universities in the U.S., the U. K., Germany, Spain, and France. Meanwhile, in the related literature in the U.S., globalization is more frequently depicted as a condition that poses challenges to which universities must respond. These conditions include the ever-globalizing job market, competition and collaboration between and among universities worldwide, the drastically increasing

number of international students on U.S. campuses and the rapid growth in student mobility in general, and the incorporation of global knowledge in the design of courses and degrees in all disciplines.

Fourth, in both the U.S. and Chinese scholarship with innovation as a prominent theme, the market is perceived as a double-edged sword. In some cases, it is depicted as a driving force of innovation; in others it is perceived as a force that constrains students (and scholars) from thinking outside the box, thereby hindering innovation at the individual and institutional levels. This concern is particularly prominent in articles about graduate education, for which innovation is perceived as conditional on allowing scholars to work beyond the constraints and the “calling” of the market in order to create new knowledge and potentially to create new spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration and breakthrough.

China’s *2020 Blueprint*, for example, stresses the need for “scientific ways of nurturing innovative talents,” which are described as processes that should cultivate “innovative, practical and comprehensively trained students” with skills to meet the needs of society and the job market. Scholars in China have responded to this call by accepting the mandate to align education more closely to changing market needs but also critically reflecting on overly market-oriented perceptions of talent development and calling for a renewed focus on the humanities in higher education.

Entrepreneurialism and Entrepreneurship in Chinese and U.S. Universities

In our pool of articles, entrepreneurialism or entrepreneurship are terms that speak to the link between education and employment and universities and the job market. The Chinese literature indicates a conception of entrepreneurialism in the context of higher education that involves students or graduates running their own businesses, adding new ideas and elements to their respective professions, as well as proactively taking on new tasks and challenges in relation to innovation, broadly defined. Scholars also reflect on what universities can do to nurture innovative and entrepreneurial talents. This largely constructive tone reveals that innovative talents are perceived to be not only responding to the needs and challenges of the market and society, but also taking an active role in constructing both society and the job market. Thinking outside the box of traditional professional roles and responsibilities is perceived as part of this entrepreneurial spirit.

While we found traces of all of these ideas in the U.S. literature, entrepreneurialism as expressed there is more often related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, especially in scholarship published after 2006, when the National Academies expressed concern about the declining state of STEM education in the United States. George W. Bush announced an American Competitiveness Initiative designed to increase federal funding for advanced R&D programs and increase numbers of graduates from STEM disciplines. STEM education is not only depicted in related scholarship as closely tied to “the U.S.’s economic future” (U.S. News, 2012), but also perceived as a means to increase employment rates and related

equity issues (e.g., the idea that broadened access to quality STEM education is linked to efforts to increase the quantity and quality of STEM talent in response to market needs).

Related literatures in both the U.S. and China include the assumption that the future job market for graduates will be more often than not a “globalized job market,” requiring that higher education nurture talents with competitive skills and competencies benchmarked to a global or transnational scale. The America COMPETES Act of 2007 was designed to further increase the nation's investment in science and engineering research, as well as in STEM education from kindergarten to graduate school and postdoctoral education. The Act includes a warning “that *the United States may not be able to compete economically with other nations in the future* due to insufficient investment today in science and technology research and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and workforce development” (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network, 2007).

Innovation and Disruption in the U.S.

Well over two decades ago Howard Gardner observed that the Chinese character “Chuang 创” can mean to wound as well as create” (Gardner, 1989, p. 257). Despite this astute observation, it is the U.S. literature that highlights the role of painful disruption as a generator of innovation, a theme that is largely absent from Chinese education reform scholarship. Unlike their American counterparts, Chinese scholars and commentators in our data set do not talk about how the very DNA of higher education is under siege by potentially disruptive technologies (Christensen & Eyring, 2011), and they do not indicate great enthusiasm for online degrees, alternative certification for working adults, competency based education, tearing down disciplinary walls, or ridding the landscape of bricks and mortar universities. The “innovative university” in the U.S. is apparently pressed to be more anxious and agile, “more nimble, entrepreneurial, student-focused, and accountable” (Mintz, 2013) lest it be brought down by upstarts daring to break old traditions. The innovative university in China, ironically using those faltering or out-moded or detached U.S. institutions as the primary model for reform, rests on a set of assumptions that see change and tradition as compatible, and we find no evident concern about the slow pace of institutional change, in contrast to the discourse in the U.S. which criticizes change in higher education as “stuck somewhere between sluggish and glacial” (Kirschner, 2012). This is not to say that Chinese scholars do not articulate important barriers to innovation. These include recognized challenges to building a transparent and vibrant research culture, stultifying limitations on institutional and faculty autonomy and freedom, lack of institutional administrative transparency, and unequal and government-heavy research funding schemes (Rhoads et al., 2014).

WHAT DOES INNOVATION MEAN AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

NURTURING INNOVATION: INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Having broadly reviewed our findings regarding perceptions and assumptions about innovation, its sources and its possibilities, we turn to specific strategies discussed in the literature that are promoted to nurture innovation at the individual level in higher education institutions. In both the domains of teaching and research we found great similarities in the Chinese and U.S. scholarship on innovation, and focus on commonly used strategies and programs in China, reflecting specifically on their stated contributions and limitations.

Innovation in Research

“Innovation” is a keyword in research initiatives in Chinese universities, particularly those that are supported by state or institutional funding. Starting from the year 1984, the Chinese government has designated over 290 key state laboratories representing all disciplines, with the majority emphasizing research in science and engineering. “Innovation” is a key word in the mission statement of all of these key state laboratories. In fact, being “innovative” and “internationally competitive” are two core criteria that institutions must meet in order to be selected as a site for a key state laboratory.

Our review of mission statements of all first-tier (211) universities reveals the ubiquitous claim of “being innovative.” At the same time, we found that “innovation” only appeared in the dissertation and graduation requirements for masters and doctoral level students in twelve of over 110 universities. This contrast demonstrates that being innovative is not perceived as a requirement but rather a feature or characteristic that signifies an outstanding research project or program, and more often than not is associated with world-class university discourse. The assumption seems to be that innovation is hard to measure (and therefore not a requirement of a graduate student’s dissertation or thesis) but is nevertheless required of cutting edge research labs and projects that rely on significant state or institutional funding to conduct their work. A second type of research project that is marked as innovative include those projects that are engaged in translational enterprises and technology transfer, and these are also prominently flagged as projects that are “entrepreneurial.”

Innovation in Teaching and Pedagogy

While “innovation” is most frequently referenced in our data pool in the context of creating or advancing new knowledge in the research arena, innovation is also commonly associated with reform of teaching and curricular design. Our review of related strategies for achieving “innovation” in teaching and pedagogy—or in other words, strategies that are recognized as “innovative” in teaching—revealed four primary categories.

First is teaching with technology. While online courses and distance education have not been regarded highly within Chinese universities or by Chinese students, especially at first-tier universities, using technology in pedagogical design or blending some kind of online component with face-to-face teaching is encouraged and given legitimacy by being called “innovative.” For example, the past three winners of one university’s annual teaching innovation award all employed online teaching components that achieved either the goal of making teaching more interactive or of reaching a wider audience of students.

Second, innovation in teaching in many cases refers to interdisciplinary course design, or collaboration among faculty from different departments or schools. For example, in a university in Beijing, courses on topics such as “Translation and Law” were deemed “innovative,” because they represented a new design and a new mode of collaboration between two different schools.

Third, courses incorporating experiential or service learning, and courses that offer connected internship opportunities in industry are considered innovative. For instance, in a university in Xi’an students enrolled in social science courses are required to volunteer in a senior citizen’s home and prepare a report connecting what they learned through “on the ground” practice. This very common service-learning model is considered “innovative,” because not many faculty in Chinese universities have taken the step of collaborating with other institutions in terms of course design and pedagogical practices.

Fourth, courses that are taught in English, or courses that involve guest lectures delivered by faculty from English-speaking countries, are regarded as innovative. In Chinese universities courses that are taught solely or partially in English are called bilingual courses, and in many universities, some faculty who have experience studying in English-speaking countries are designated to teach these courses.

In sum, the term “innovation” is used much more broadly and loosely in relationship to pedagogical reform than it is in relationship to research and development. Innovation in teaching and learning connotes an array of practices including new techniques, collaborative teaching modes, and new initiatives in pedagogical design.

Innovation in Extracurricular Activities

Our review materials included descriptions of a number of contests, both at the institutional level and at the national level, that were labeled as innovation. These competitions ranged from engineering project design, science experiment design, architectural design, and business plan development to song composition, speech competitions, creative stage performance and fine arts contests. In one of China’s top tier universities, sixteen contests were organized by student organizations, schools and departments in 2012, and all included the term innovation in their titles. These contests included, among others, an automobile design contest, an English speech competition, a media design contest, a computer programming contest, and a mathematical modeling contest. In the description of each of these contests

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“innovation” was described as the criterion that carried paramount importance. For contests in STEM fields, “innovation” is regarded as a parallel criterion to concepts like “cutting-edge” research that have the capacity to advance knowledge in a particular field. In the arts and humanities, “innovation” is more vaguely defined in the descriptions of contests’ designs, writing or speeches with new ideas or concepts regarded as being innovative. Most contests are sponsored by local businesses, and competitions that are hosted by student organizations often include business representatives in the award ceremonies or the selection process. In these cases, “entrepreneurism” is considered a critical partner to innovation.

REFLECTIONS ON FIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT “INNOVATION” IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As we have noted, “innovation” as one of the most important missions of Chinese higher education is boldly proclaimed in national policy documents and prominent in the mission statements of universities and colleges, especially first-tier “985” and “211” institutions but also in second and third tier institutions that grapple with providing students opportunities to create connections between coursework and suitable post-graduation employment. Like their counterparts worldwide, Chinese educators and scholars reflect critically upon the role of innovation in relationship to the ends of postsecondary education, and more specifically its substance and impact on the reform of Chinese higher education.

In this context, is “innovation” considered a means or an end of higher education? Our examples above indicate that innovation is certainly regarded as a means for advancing a field’s knowledge. In fact, means discourse is most apparent in the selection criteria and mission statement of key national laboratories. In contrast, in the discourses of innovation most commonly used in the domains of teaching and extracurricular activities, innovation is regarded as a kind of hard criterion; that is, particular kinds of pedagogies and experiences are explicitly designed “for the purpose of innovation.” Equating innovation to the idea of “advanced” knowledge and talent development simplifies those processes, because innovation in the way it is interpreted is not the only way to advance knowledge.

Second, what does “innovation” connote for higher education? We have seen that in some contexts innovation is interpreted as being a “new” methodology or design of research or teaching, a point of view that misses out on the more important target of concentrating on innovation as an outcome-based concept. A president of a Chinese university wryly expressed this concern by remarking that, “If all new things are desired, it is like saying son-in-laws are better than sons because son-in-laws are the new ones” (Xinhua Net, 2012). China’s first-tier universities have a long history of developing teaching and research, and while the national policy advocates innovation, our review convinces us that carefully deliberated practices, deep experiences and accumulated knowledge should be explicitly recognized as critical foundations for innovation.

Third, where in China's innovation agenda is evaluation? None of the literature we reviewed raised the issue of evaluating innovation. This absence might be related to the supposition that innovation implies something new that is difficult to evaluate with existing measures. However, if innovation is a pre-requisite for receiving funding from state or university level agencies, or if it is a selection criteria for academic contests, then a scheme or formative evaluation framework through which innovation can be evaluated is essential. A related question is what is considered the outcome of "innovation", innovation as product or talent development? If talent development is an important aspect of innovation in the context of higher education, what are the short-term, mid-term and long-term goals of innovation in talent development? We see these questions as crucial in realizing the innovation agenda as it is stated in the mission statements of Chinese universities.

Fourth, what is the relationship between innovation and equity concerns in higher education? As we have noted, in the domains of teaching and pedagogical design, and in the domain of extracurricular activities, new, interdisciplinary and cutting-edge courses and contests are perfunctorily labeled innovative. How can all Chinese students, and not just those at elite institutions, experience truly innovative teaching and learning, and how can this goal be incorporated into the development of holistic course reform in the Chinese education system? An experimental model to enhance inclusion that has been designed by some universities is represented by "innovation credits", which basically means that if students participate in "innovative" activities recognized by the university, they will earn "innovation credits" which can be counted as course credits (Zhao, 2009). This practice has been adopted by a number of first- and second-tier universities. Some universities enacted this practice as a requirement for students to graduate, but some universities made it optional. Both practices may provide more students access to innovative activities and serve as a means to motivate students to participate in them. But because of the challenges in evaluating innovation, some institutions have been criticized by the media as "going too far for the criteria." For example, some higher education institutions recognized passing a driver's training test as a way to obtain "innovation credits" (Xinlang Net, 2014). The explanation of this practice provided by university leaders was that students can actually use what they have learned in a driving course, which in turn will provide them with a skill desired in the job market (Xinlang Net, 2014). These explanations, of course, reinforce the questionable conclusion that what is "marketable" and "practical" is automatically "innovative."

Finally, although innovation discourse stresses the importance of innovation to all higher education, we have found that innovation is more frequently considered a characteristic of the STEM disciplines, rather than the arts, humanities and social sciences disciplines. This perception, underscored by the materials we reviewed, strikes us as contradictory. Even if we were to define innovation narrowly to mean the creation of a tangible product or outcome, that result is surely also common in the arts and humanities. Perhaps it is the market exchange value of scientific

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innovation that shapes the dominant assumption that the sciences are the primary domain of innovation.

CONCLUSION: QUESTIONS BEHIND THE QUESTION OF INNOVATION—THERE IS NO APP FOR THAT

It was only as we began to engage in content analysis that we realized an unstated normative assumption in our own views on innovation, that is, in the educational sector innovation must be fundamentally a means to improved learning and scholarship and their practical application in the service of individuals, institutions, and societies. A focus on learning might involve creating new kinds of classrooms that are wired and arranged for radically open communication. But the latter is a means, not an end. In this sense, borrowing from Robert Talbert (2014), innovation in education “is not largely a business or engineering problem, to be solved with design and technology, when it really is a problem with people and the cultures they create.”

During a trip to Hangzhou to present findings related to this project, we received two gifts, lovely celadon replicas of a “pot of justice,” a wedding gift to a Tang Dynasty (618–906) emperor and his bride. The ingenious and decidedly “innovative” vessel is filled from its base. When tipped over with deliberation and sincerity, no water spills from the bottom. The moral of the story, of course, is hardly disruptive. In fact, the key to holding water (and to innovation) is achieving balance: “just enough – not grasping for more.” We have viewed these timely gifts as both lesson and cautionary tale. Successful innovation does not just come from pushing the envelope or breaking the mold or keeping one step ahead of the global market. Achieving innovation that serves valuable ends (for particular individuals and institutions) requires understanding where the envelope comes from, understanding what local strengths and constraints will affect change, creating what Jeffrey Selingo (2014) has described as “positive integration.” Borrowing from Selingo’s conclusion that the result of recent thinking about innovation (and the discourse on disruption) may in fact be evolution, our proposal is to see the reforms associated with or equated to innovation in China and globally as a set of experiments to be evaluated and built upon.

As we have seen from this discussion of discourses on innovation both in national policy documents and in reform policies at the institutional level, innovation has been identified as one of the most important priorities of higher education reform in China. In its various interpretations, innovation has been and continues to serve as a critical but undefined criterion for gauging (and rewarding) “successful” and “forward-thinking” university-to-university and university-to-business partnerships, research, and course design, delivery and extracurricular activities in higher education institutions. Our review of the literature also indicates that the definition of innovation is at best vague and at its most confusing completely taken-for-granted as an unqualified good and therefore unquestioned aim. As in the U.S. discourse,

innovation as a concept is applied differently depending upon the function of the university it is to improve and/or measure. Innovation can mean the development of offices of technological transfer. Innovation can be equated with active learning in the classroom or courses and experiences that help students become “entrepreneurs.” Innovation and its perceived importance as a process and defining characteristic of an institution is most certainly linked to the reality that higher education is a global phenomenon, enterprise, and market and by extension involves international collaboration and competition. For scholars and administrators—and policy makers—truly interested in reform that improves the conditions and incentives for learning and knowledge creation, dissemination, and its application, just what innovation is and does—an end, a means, both??—needs to be a point of deep analysis. And there’s no APP for that!

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SECTION IV
TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO WORK

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15. EDUCATION AND CAREER MOBILITY UNDER CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

A Pre- and Post-Reform Comparative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we examine two related issues. First, to what extent has the pattern of educational attainment changed from the pre-reform to post-reform periods? Second, has education played an increasing role on work careers during the reform periods? To seek an empirical answer to these questions, we analyse a recent large-scale household survey in which relevant information was collected.

China has attached great importance to education since 1978 when the country redesigned its developmental strategies through the reform and opening-up policy (Guo et al., 2013). Deng Xiaoping, then the country's top policymaker and paramount leader, initiated and developed the strategy of modernizing China through science and education.¹ By 2012, more than three decades after the introduction of reforms, China had made a dramatic progress in education: a nine-year compulsory education system was in firm ground, with nearly perfect school enrolment rates up to the ninth grade. In addition, rate of admissions to high school increased from 10% of the relevant ages in 1978 to 85% in 2012, and that to college jumped from a merely 1% in 1978 to a remarkable 30% in 2012.² This impressive progress, combined with a population of 1.36 billion and a fast growing economy, has put China up front as one of the most competitive countries in education and human capital around the world.³

Despite the great accomplishments in education, at the same time educational inequality has become a serious issue in China. For instance, while the 9-year compulsory education looks good in official statistics, public schools at all levels have become increasingly stratified as the central and local governments identified key schools to which human and financial resources disproportionately flew. Subsequently, there has been a heated competition for attending the key schools, and children faced a severely unequal school system from the very start of educational attainment (Yang, 2006). Inequality in access to high school and college education is even worse, since admissions are regionally and nationally competitive. To be sure, the expansion of higher education since 1999 has significantly increased college enrolments, but studies show that those from rural areas or low-income families continued to be underrepresented (Li, 2006), especially among students admitted to nationally leading universities (Li, 2010; Liu, 2006). Under the pressure of highly

competitive job market of college graduates, increasing numbers of high school graduates begin abandoning college entrance examination, and a Cultural Revolution slogan “*Education is Useless*” has made a surprising comeback.⁴

Educational inequality has drawn great attention from China’s top officials. Most recently, Premier Li Keqiang pointed out that “educational equality is the cornerstone of social equality, and it is a key mechanism of social mobility and social justice.” Li recognizes the most obvious forms of educational inequality, namely, the regional variation and the rural-urban divide in educational opportunities. He has put forward a plan to allocate significantly more resources to boost education in western regions and rural areas.⁵ However, it is too early to assess the extent to which this plan may or may not make an expected difference.

Chinese scholars share two views about educational equality and inequality. On the one hand, equalizing educational opportunities is a social ideal, one that must continue to guide governmental policies to equally and fairly allocate educational resources. On the other hand, education is considered as a justifiable mechanism for labour market inequalities. That is, unequal career outcomes are justified so far as they are positively associated with education. Accordingly, empirical studies have been organized to answer two interrelated questions: Has the degree of inequality in access to education increased or decreased over the years of market reforms? Has the effect of education on career outcomes increased or decreased as market reforms deepened across the years? By focusing on these two questions, in the next two sections we review relevant studies and propose research hypotheses to guide our data analysis.

HAS INEQUALITY OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION INCREASED OR DECREASED?

To Chinese intellectuals, equality in access to education is to be achieved through three interrelated aspects of an integral process: equality in school enrolment, equality in within-school treatment, and equality in quality of education provided to children of diverse backgrounds (Yang, 2006). Analytic attention has, however, been given only to the first of these aspects, with a focus on changing variation in attainment of college education by gender, rural-vs.-urban *hukou* (i.e., place of residence with an officially recognized household registration), and family backgrounds before and after the reforms.

An early study sent a depressing message that the reforms did not alter the ascriptive processes of educational inequality. Researchers found that sons of officials and professionals from large cities continued to have higher levels of education than sons of workers from the pre-reform to post-reform periods (Zhou et al., 1998). A later study confirmed this finding but also reported worse [news: inequality in](#) educational attainment by family backgrounds and rural-vs.-urban *hukou* was significantly greater in the post-reform era than the pre-reform era (Li, 2003). While both of these studies stressed the role of family backgrounds in educational attainment, a third study (Li, 2006) shows that the reforms have shifted the pattern of family

influence from educational inheritance to resource investment: while children of higher educated parents got better education in the early reform years, children of parents with higher positions of power and greater cultural capital received higher levels of education than their counterparts when the reforms deepened after 1992. The continuity and change in patterns of educational inequality by ascriptive factors have, one scholar argued and showed in his analysis of Chinese General Social Survey (Hao, 2007), resulted from the political logic that vested interests are an important cause to the launch and success of gradual reforms. This is also a strong message learned from the “market transition debate” (Bian & Logan, 1996; Nee, 1989, 1996; Parish & Michelson, 1996; Zhou, 2000).

One important event in China's educational development is the 1999 expansion of higher education. To what extent did the expansion policy increase or decrease inequality in access to higher education? Empirical inquiries have been guided by two hypotheses originated in the West. The first is the Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) hypothesis (Raftery & Hout, 1993), which predicts that children of advantageous classes will maximize their educational demands before children of disadvantageous classes can benefit from the expansion of higher education. The second is the Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI) hypothesis (Lucas, 2001), which predicts that even if children of disadvantageous classes can attain higher education after the expansion satisfies the demands of children of advantageous classes, the quality of education received by children of the two class backgrounds will differ. China's post-1999 trends support these hypotheses: While children of upper class backgrounds attained 4-year colleges, those of lower class backgrounds most likely went to community colleges for 2 or 3 years of higher education (Liu, 2006). The same kind of inequality was found between children of urban and rural origins, and between children of the *Han* origin and those of other ethnic origins (Li, 2010). And these patterns got worse in later reform periods than in early reform periods (Li, 2006).

Built upon these previous studies, in this chapter we will exam two issues about the effect of family background on educational attainment. First, does the family impact on educational attainment at all levels of education? With this issue, we differ from the previous researchers by focusing not just on higher education but on all levels of secondary and post-secondary education. Second, has the effect of family background on educational attainment increased, stabilized, or decreased across different periods of market reforms? Here, our focus is not just on whether or not the reforms matter for educational attainment, but more on the intended and unintended consequences of reform policies across the different reform periods. To guide our data analysis, we state the following hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1: Family backgrounds affect children's educational attainment in all levels of secondary and post-secondary education.*
- *Hypothesis 2: The effect of family background on children's educational attainment will increase from early to later periods of the reform era.*

HAS THE EFFECT OF EDUCATION ON CAREER OUTCOMES
INCREASED OR DECREASED?

To this question, Nee (1989, 1996) has offered a bold statement in support of a positive answer. His point of departure is that the previous system of state redistribution provided no power, incentives, or opportunities to peasants, workers, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs. The emergence of a market system will liberate these “direct producers” from the control by bureaucratic “redistributors.” Since markets will value the education, skill, experience, and entrepreneurship of direct producers, and relatively devalue the political capital of redistributors, transition to a market economy will increase the positive effect of education, along with other forms of human capital, on career outcomes. In the same process, the positive effect of political capital on career outcomes will be on the relative decline. Details aside, the above is the core of Nee’s market transition theory.

Nee’s market transition theory has inspired a great interest in China’s changing system of social stratification, with a focus on relative efficacies of education and political capital in career outcomes. Facing a complex political economy like China’s, researchers raised two concerns. One is about the implausibility of the assumption that the increasing significance of education implies the decreasing significance of political capital. This assumption is implausible because China’s market system grew under the shadow of a durable Communist party-state (Bian & Logan, 1996; Parish & Michelson, 1996; Walder, 1996, 2003; Zhao & Zhou, 2002; Zhou, 2000, 2002). In this circumstance, political power needs not decline while educational credentialism is on the rise. A related concern is about the unrealism that markets will unconditionally increase the value of education; instead, returns to education may not be high in undeveloped labour markets (Xie & Hannum, 1996), and a reformed state sector may value education nearly as much as the private sectors (Zhou, 2000; Wu & Xie, 2003).

Many of the above-cited studies were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, when marketization and especially privatization did not develop fully before China entered the WTO in 2001 (Naughton, 2007). In this chapter, we analyze a 2009 household survey, which not only gives us retrospective data that cover sufficient long periods of pre- and post-WTO observations, but also provides a good set of variables on survey respondents’ career placements at the entry of labour markets and their career outcomes by the year of the survey. With these data, we will be able to test the following hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 3: One’s education will affect one’s career placements at labour market entry, and such effect will be getting stronger in later than earlier reform periods.*
- *Hypothesis 4: One’s education will affect one’s mobility into an elite position, and such effect will be getting stronger in later than earlier reform periods.*

DATA AND VARIABLES

Our data come from the “Job-Search Networks Project” (JSNet, 2009). Under the leadership of Yanjie Bian, this household survey was designed to examine the roles of social networks in employment processes. It was conducted in 2009 in eight large Chinese cities (Changchun, Guangzhou, Jinan, Lanzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin, Xiamen, and Xi'an), and through a multi-stage stratified probability design the total sample size was 7102 adults aged 18 and older. Although we had datasets from other surveys in our possession, this JSNet 2009 dataset best satisfies our requirements for kinds of variables needed to test our research hypotheses. Table 1 describes the chosen variables for our analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive information of variables ($N = 7074$)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Respondent's attribute</i>		<i>Respondent's career</i>		<i>Respondent's father</i>	
Gender		First Job Occupation		Education	
Female	53.1	Managerial	12.0	Elementary or lower	36.5
Male	46.9	Professional	16.8	Middle	19.4
Age		Working	71.2	High or equivalent	18.3
18–29	21.1	First Job Sector		College or above	10.4
30–39	20.6	State	70.2	Political Identity	
40–49	22.6	Non-state	29.8	Non-CCP member	60.9
50–59	23.3	Year of Job Entry		CCP member	25.7
60–69	12.2	1956–1979	33.3	Work Sector	
70–77	0.2	1980–1992	27.7	State	58.5
Hukou		1993–2001	20.1	Non-state	9.3
Rural	10.3	2002–2009	18.9	Work Unit Rank	
Urban	89.7	Job Mobility		Central	9.2
Location of residence		No	54.2	Provincial	17.1

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Respondent's attribute</i>		<i>Respondent's career</i>		<i>Respondent's father</i>	
Inland area	48.2	Yes	45.8	Municipal	25.7
Coastal area	51.8	Mode of Mobility		County or lower	12.7
Education		Working to Working	26.2	Not ranked	8.3
Middle or lower	28.3	Working to Elite	7.4	Father's Occupation	
High or equivalent	34.8	Elite to Elite	1.8	Managerial	4.3
2- or 3-year college	17.0	Elite to Working	4.9	Professional	4.5
4-year college or above	19.9	Missing values	5.5	Other	78.9

Note: Percentages are not added to 100% for the father's variables because a good proportion of the respondents' fathers had deceased or the respondents chose not to report the information about their fathers.

Respondent's Attribute Variables

The JSNet 2009 dataset gives us a valid sample of 7047 adult respondents, with an age range of 18-77. Females are more than males, and which a higher female proportion is characteristic of all household surveys around the world. Since this survey was conducted in the cities, it is not surprising to have a small proportion (slightly more than 10%) of the respondents with a rural *hukou* at the time of the survey. These people were rural migrants working in the cities, but the government still had their home villages as the registered place of home. Of the total respondents, slightly more than 48% resided in inland cities, and nearly 52% in coastal cities. This geographic balance results from the sampling design intended to make a reliable analysis of inland-coastal comparison.

Education is one of the key variables for analysis. For our purpose, we measure education in four levels. The first level is middle school or lower, at 28.3%. This level marks the completion of a 9-year compulsory education, which is least influenced by family backgrounds. This is a baseline reference for educational attainment. The next higher level is high school or equivalent, at 34.8%. This includes regular high schools and various vocational schools, all of which ran 3-year programs. Attainment of this level of education is influenced by family backgrounds. The third level is 2- or 3-year college, at 17.0%, most of which emerged during the

post-1999 expansion of higher education. This is a level of education attained by those who, for one reason or another, could not get admissions to regular four-year colleges. We will pay close attention to the extent to which family backgrounds affect the attainment of this level of education. Finally, the highest level of education is regular 4-year college or above, at 19.9%. We could have isolated postgraduate education if enough respondents had earned that level of education. The current, merged category will satisfy our analytic need to examine the extent to which family backgrounds affect an individual's opportunity for access to the highest level of education in China.

Respondent's Career Variables

Table 1 (second column) presents a number of variables measuring respondents' career placements at job entry and the direction of mobility if they had changed jobs over their job careers up to the year of the survey. For career placements made at job entry, our main variable is first-job occupation, measured in three major class categories: managerial elite (12.0%), professional elite (16.8%), and the working class (71.2%). Please note that "elite" might be confusing for any entry level jobs; we use this term for a terminal consistency between first-job and current-job occupations. We want to recognize someone's entry into an elite class-category, even if it took time for him/her to move into elite status on the job. This distinguishes from others whose first jobs were a working class job. Although the three categories are broad, they make theoretical distinctions in terms of the power and skills that are embedded in different occupations: managerial elite has both power and skill, professional elite has skill but not power, and members of the working class have neither and must engage in manual work in a paid job.

For career placements at job entry, we also measure whether one's first job was in the state sector (70.2%) or the non-state sector (29.8%). Please note that this is about the respondent's past history, and the data clearly show that most of the respondents started their first jobs in the state sector. Since working conditions, fringe benefits, and career trajectories were significantly unequal between the state and non-state sectors in the pre-reform period (Walder, 1986), this sector distinction had a strong status-attainment implication before the reforms (Bian, 1994; Lin & Bian, 1991; Walder, 1992).

This sector distinction has partly continued and partly changed during the reforms (Bian & Logan, 1996; Nee, 1989, 1996; Wu, 2003; Zhou et al., 1996). To examine how career placements are affected by the reforms, we recognize four different periods of job entry: (1) the pre-reform period, 1956–1979, at 33.3%; (2) the early reform period, 1980–1992, at 27.7%; (3) the later reform period, 1993–2001, at 20.1%; and (4) the post-WTO period, 2002–2009, at 18.9%. In each period, we have a sufficient number of respondents, which will allow for a reliable statistical analysis across the periods.

For career mobility, we measure whether or not a respondent had ever changed his/her job by the year of the survey, and, if so, what direction one's job change took for career mobility. As shown in [Table 1](#), 54.2% of the respondents had never changed jobs and 45.8% had. For job changers, we consider five modes of career mobility: mobility within the working class, 26.2%; upward mobility from a working-class position to a managerial or professional elite position, 7.4%; mobility between the two elite categories, 1.8%; and downward mobility from an elite position to a working-class position, 4.9%. We also found a proportion of people who had changed jobs but did not report specific occupational types in the first or the current job, causing a 5.5% "missing values" in the career mobility variable. The percentages given above are of the total respondents.

Respondent's Father Variables

What family backgrounds matter for one's career placements and career mobility into elite positions? In theory, there are many. Ideally, the more family background variables there are in a dataset, the more rigorous empirical tests we are allowed to offer. This understanding has driven us to extend our search for the best available dataset. One serious constraint is that we cannot combine different datasets if they contain different kinds of variables however they are relevant. Of a few datasets we have obtained, all of them fall into this unfortunate situation. We decided to use the JSNet 2009 dataset primarily because it provides most variables on family backgrounds. Although the family background variables are about father's attributes and careers and not about mother's, the five father variables are all measured at the respondent's job entry which satisfies our analysis.

These father's variables are: education (4 levels), political identity (whether or not a Communist Party member), work sector (state vs. non-state), employer's governmental affiliation (central, provincial, municipal, county or lower, and not affiliated), and occupation (managerial elite, professional elite, and working class). Because some of the respondents did not report their father's information (that father had deceased was a likely reason), we had a fairly large number of "missing values" for some of the father variables. Nonetheless, these father's attribute and career variables will allow us to quantitatively assess the effects of family backgrounds on educational attainment, career placement at job entry, and career mobility outcomes.

RESULTS OF STATISTICAL MODELS

We have obtained four sets of statistical results in testing our hypotheses. We present and interpret these results in turn. A methodological note surfaces here. For a dichotomous dependent variable, we estimated binary logistic regression models. For a multi-category variable, we estimated multinomial logistic regression models. The tables that follow shortly present regression coefficients, whose directions, magnitudes, and levels of statistical significance are used to test our hypotheses.

Educational Attainment

Results in Table 2 provide a consistently strong support for Hypothesis 1. The dependent variable measures four levels of education. The coefficients indicate the effects of father's variables on children's attainments of a specific level of education in contrast to a common level of middle school education, which is the completion of compulsory education in China. We note three impressive sets of father's effects.

Table 2. Family background and educational attainment

<i>Covariates</i>	<i>High school</i>	<i>3-year college</i>	<i>4-year college</i>
<i>Father's Variables</i>			
Middle school education	0.538***	0.848***	0.693***
High school education	0.825***	1.573***	1.677***
College or above education	1.254***	2.077***	2.651***
CCP Member	0.232**	0.528***	0.589***
Professional Elite	-0.375	-0.617	-0.720*
Working Class	-0.502*	-0.990***	-1.326***
State sector	-0.163	-0.094	-0.177
Provincial work unit	-0.261	-0.523**	-0.297
Municipal work unit	-0.279*	-0.493**	-0.348*
County-lower work unit	-0.413**	-0.597**	-0.380
Not affiliated work unit	-0.601**	-0.872***	-0.428
Other work units	-0.675**	-0.821**	-0.793**
<i>Respondent's Variables</i>			
Gender (male = 1)	0.123	0.277***	0.648***
Job entry 1980-1992	0.709***	0.958***	1.116***
Job entry 1993-2001	0.743***	1.912***	2.437***
Job entry 2002-2009	1.112***	2.663***	3.566***
<i>Hukou</i> (urban = 1)	1.204***	1.913***	3.332***
Region (coastal = 1)	0.042	0.216**	0.489***
Intercept	-0.742*	-2.700***	-4.802***
<i>N</i>		7047	
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²		0.149	
Likelihood		-8075.6	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

First, father's educational status strongly affects children's attainment of education. As compared to children whose fathers had elementary school, those whose fathers' education was higher had much greater opportunity of attaining high school, community college, or regular college beyond compulsory education. Family influence on one's attainment of college is to everyone's attention, for which Table 1 presents eye-opening results: a child's opportunity to attain regular college is 100% higher ($e^{0.693}-1$) if father's education is at middle school level, 4.3 times higher ($e^{1.677}-1$) if father's education is at high school level, and 12.2 times higher ($e^{2.651}-1$) if father's education is at college level. Among fathers, those who have college education have the greatest effect on their children's educational attainment (magnitude of coefficient for college-educated father is largest in each column), and this effect is the most important for children's access to regular college (magnitude of the coefficient for college-educated father is largest in third column). There is no doubt that the higher the level of father's education, the greater the opportunity one has in attaining a higher level of education.

Second, father's political status also strongly affects children's educational attainment. This can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, compared to fathers who were not CCP members, those who are CCP members have the positive effect on the opportunity to attain a higher level of education beyond compulsory education: the opportunity will increase by 26% ($e^{0.232}-1$) for attaining high school, by 70% ($e^{0.528}-1$) for attaining community college, and by 80% ($e^{0.589}-1$) for attaining regular college. On the other hand, compared to children whose fathers were managerial elite, those whose fathers were professional elite or working class had fewer opportunities to attain a higher level of education beyond compulsory education, and this impact is greatest and most significant for attaining college education. Assume that a youth is given the opportunity of attaining college education by the value of 1 if the father is a managerial elite, then an otherwise comparable youth will have 49% of the opportunity if the father is a professional ($e^{-0.720}-1$), or 27% of the opportunity if the father is a working class ($e^{-1.326}-1$).

Third, father's work unit status has a significant effect on children's educational attainment. Although father's work sector makes no difference, the impact of father's work unit hierarchical level is evident. Compared to children whose fathers' work units were under the jurisdiction of the central government, those whose fathers' work units were under a lower level of government had fewer opportunities of attaining a higher level of education beyond compulsory education: this negative impact is getting bigger and bigger when the level of governmental jurisdiction is getting lower and lower, and the greatest negative impact comes to the work units which were not affiliated with any level of government.

Respondent's variables are also significant predictors of educational attainment. Male advantage is not existent in access to higher school, but it is significant in access to community college, and it is the most obvious and tremendous in access to regular college. Thus, gender inequality in access to higher education is evident. Compared to older cohorts who began working before 1980, younger cohorts increasingly enjoyed greater opportunities of attaining higher levels of education, and the large magnitudes

of the coefficients make it explicit that China's educational development was rather rapid from 1980 onward. Unfortunately, however, this progress was clearly unevenly distributed. Compared to respondents with rural *hukou*, those with urban *hukou* had 2.33 times ($e^{1.204}-1$) the chances of attaining high school, 5.77 times ($e^{1.913}-1$) the chances of attaining community college, and 27 times ($e^{3.332}-1$) the chances of attaining regular college. Moreover, compared to inland residents, coastal residents had significantly higher opportunities of attaining community or regular college.

Educational Attainment by Historical Periods

Were the effects of father's variables on educational attainment stable or changing across the periods of the reform era? Results in [Table 3](#) bring evidence in partial support of Hypothesis 2: father's education had significantly increasing effects on access to a higher level of education beyond compulsory education, and father's CCP membership had a general impact on educational attainment, but that impact was statistically insignificant in the most recent period. We describe the increasing effects of father's education in greater detail.

As shown in [Table 3](#) (first section), for attainment of high school education, the effect of father's education is all significant in all periods, and it is increasing in magnitude from the earlier period to the most recent period. This pattern of increasing father's educational effect is repeated in attainment of 3-year college (second section) and that of 4-year college (third section). The results in the third section are sharply impressive: compared to a youth whose father had an elementary school education, an otherwise comparable youth whose father had a college education will increase his/her opportunity of attaining a 4-year college by more than 12 times ($13.474-1$) in the pre-1979 period, by more than 9 times in the 1980–1992 period, by more than 13 times in the 1993–2001 period, and by more than 17 times in the post-2002 period. Inequality in access to higher education by family background was, by and large, significantly increasing from the pre-reform era to the post-WTO era.

[Table 3](#) also presents results about changing degrees of inequality in educational attainment by three ascriptive variables (gender, *hukou*, and region of residence). Gender inequality in access to high school education was not an issue until the post-2002 period, in which males had a 62% ($1.616-1$) advantage over females. In terms of attaining of community college education, gender inequality was significant in the pre-reform period, it was substantially reduced in the first two periods of reforms, but it made a huge comeback in the post-2002 period. We know that the policy of higher education expansion was implemented in 1999. This means that the first cohort of post-expansion graduates from 2- or 3-year community colleges started their job careers in the post-2002 period. Our results show that in this period females had significantly fewer opportunities to attend community college than males. Did the expansion policy help females to attend 4-year college programs? No. The last section of [Table 3](#) shows that from the pre-reform period to the post-2002 period, females had been consistently likely to receive 4-year college education than males, and the greatest gender gap

emerged in the most recent period, in which the post-expansion policy was in effect. It is safe to conclude that the post-1999 expansion of higher education increased, rather than decreased, gender inequality in access to college education.

Table 3. Exponential estimates of father's effects on education by period

Covariates	Pre-1979	1980–1992	1993–2001	Post-2002
High School				
Father Middle school	1.276	1.498*	2.091***	2.958***
Father High school	2.405***	1.456	2.369***	4.912***
Father College	3.973***	3.070**	2.277*	5.053*
Father CCP member	1.302	1.334	1.377	0.951
Gender (male = 1)	1.043	1.108	1.072	1.616*
Hukou (urban = 1)	3.420**	3.163***	4.242***	2.837***
Region (coastal = 1)	0.879	1.190	1.137	1.707*
3-year College				
Father Middle school	2.238***	1.923**	2.516***	3.648***
Father High school	3.434***	3.680***	3.776***	11.585***
Father College	7.945***	7.779***	5.899***	13.938***
Father CCP member	2.237***	1.637**	1.864**	1.107
Gender (male = 1)	1.748***	1.280	0.997	1.547*
Hukou (urban = 1)	—	5.513***	7.588***	5.361***
Region (coastal = 1)	1.279	1.625**	1.078*	1.773**
4-year College				
Father Middle school	1.646	2.308***	2.217**	2.361**
Father High school	6.109***	4.421***	5.244***	7.996***
Father College	13.474***	10.062***	14.240***	18.338***
Father CCP member	1.178	2.567***	1.729*	1.345
Gender (male = 1)	2.340***	1.960***	1.289*	2.538***
Hukou (urban = 1)	—	36.276***	88.145***	16.452***
Region (coastal = 1)	0.981	1.804***	2.046***	2.656***
N	2344	1955	1413	1335
Pseudo R ²	0.060	0.087	0.157	0.151
Likelihood	–2533	–2276	–1644	–1483

Include all control variables as in Table 2.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

—: There are too few respondents with rural hukou to estimate a reliable coefficient.

Educational inequality by *hukou* status has been persistent and rather severe. Starting in the pre-reform period, as compared to those with urban *hukou*, people with rural *hukou* were significantly likely to attend a higher level of education beyond the 9-year compulsory education in all period (there too few people with rural *hukou* to attend community or regular college education in the pre-reform period, a reliable estimate for inequality by *hukou* status was impossible). However, the expansion of higher education policy had significantly reduced the inequality by *hukou* status, as evidenced by the decreasing magnitudes of the *hukou* coefficients from the 1993–2001 period to the post-2002 period: the male advantage in access to community college education decreased from 7.588 to 5.361, and that for regular college education decreased from 88.145 to 16.452. The expansion policy opened up new channels for youths with a rural birthplace to receive college education.

But the inequality in access to college education by region of residence had steadily increased across all reform periods, and this is especially consistent for attainment of regular college education. Compared to those from inland areas, although the youths from coastal areas had an equal opportunity of attending regular colleges in the pre-reform period (the exponential coefficient = 0.981, close to an equal opportunity value of 1), but their opportunities increased by 80% ($[1.804-1] \times 100\%$) in the early-reform period, by 100% ($[2.046-1] \times 100\%$) in the later reform period, and by 165% ($[2.656-1] \times 100\%$) in the most recent reform period. Clearly, the expansion of higher education policy, which was implemented in 1999, disproportionately helped residents in coastal areas rather than inland areas. In this regard, the expansion policy increased, rather than decreased, an already huge gap between inland and coastal areas in educational opportunity.

Educational Effect on Career Placement and Mobility

Table 4 presents binary and multinomial regression coefficients about the effects of one's own education on one's career placement and mobility outcomes. Results are consistently supporting Hypothesis 3.

On occupational placement at job entry, one's education increases one's opportunity to be placed in a managerial elite category or a professional elite category, rather than in a working-class category. The general pattern is that the higher one's level of education, the greater opportunity one is to be placed in an elite category. On sector placement, the higher one's education, the greater the opportunity one is to be placed in a state sector than in a non-state sector. We will see if this was changing across periods shortly.

On career mobility, although one's education did not have a consistent impact on whether or not a person changed a position from the first job to the current job, among job changers their level of education clearly made a significant difference. Compared to someone with compulsory education, those with high school will increase their opportunity to move from a work-class position to a managerial or professional position by nearly 2 times ($2.709-1$), and this margin will increase

Table 4. Educational effect on career placement and mobility

	High school	3-year college	4-year college	Model information
Occupational Placement				N = 7029;
M-elite/working class	1.058***	1.999***	2.702***	Pseudo R^2 = 0.103;
P-elite/working class	0.891***	1.713***	2.626***	Likelihood = -5015.2
Sector Placement				N = 6840; pseudo
Non-state sector/state sector	0.499***	0.404***	0.286***	R^2 = 0.389;
				Likelihood = -2470.1
Occupational Mobility				N = 7020; Pseudo
Job change/no change	1.128	1.213*	0.967	R^2 = 0.034;
				Likelihood = -4673.9
Mode of Mobility				N = 3198;
Working Class to Elite	2.709***	9.740***	14.612***	Pseudo R^2 = 0.112;
Elite to Elite	4.907***	21.027***	72.526***	Likelihood = -3761.8
Elite to Working Class	2.601***	5.566***	8.499***	

Include all controlled variables as in Table 2.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

several times for those with a level of college education. Given the large magnitudes of the coefficients for elite to elite mobility, one's education is exceedingly important for one's mobility between managerial and professional elite categories. One's education is also a significant factor of one's mobility from an elite position to a working-class position; during the reform era this type of mobility has been directed by a desire to move into a high-salary position in the non-state sector.

Educational Effect on Career Mobility Outcomes by Period

In testing Hypothesis 4 about the increasing effects of education on career mobility across the years, we obtained the results of Table 5. Here, our interest is in the changing educational effects during the three reform periods, and we pay special attention to the increasing effects of college education across the three periods.

The first section of Table 5 shows that in each reform period, the higher one's education, the higher the probability one moves from a working-class position to an elite position (hereafter "upward mobility"). This confirms the general pattern revealed by the results presented in the previous section. Comparing the magnitudes of the coefficients of three levels of education, one can see that the impact of high school education on upward mobility did not change across the three reform periods, the impact of community college education fluctuates across the three periods, and the impact of

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Table 5. Educational effects on mobility outcomes by period

<i>Education categories</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Pre-1979</i>	<i>1980–92</i>	<i>1993–2001</i>	<i>Post-2002</i>
<i>Working-to-Elite vs. Working-to-Working</i>					
High school	2.484***	6.348***	2.211*	2.292*	2.694***
2- or 3-year college	8.976***	16.625**	11.041***	7.987***	9.375***
4-year college	13.310***	26.529**	6.912***	11.036***	14.879***
<i>Elite-to-Elite vs. Working-to-Working</i>					
High school	4.980***	7.466***	5.180***	5.013**	6.905***
2- or 3-year college	22.400***	21.117**	41.381***	21.616***	31.380***
4-year college	82.005***	117.155***	50.890***	103.810***	120.529***
<i>N</i>	3151	202	510	682	1757
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.114	0.135	0.125	0.116	0.110
L1	-3181	-196	-531	-682	-1752

Include all control variables as in Table 2. **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001

college education was steadily increasing from the early reform period to the most recent, post-2002 period. The last result is strong evidence in support of Hypothesis 4.

Elite-to-elite mobility is an important form of career change and career advancement. Expectedly, a move from a professional position to a managerial position entails an increase in power or authority over the labour of others, and a move from a managerial position to a professional position implies an increase in skill appreciation during market reforms. The “market transition debate” literature makes it explicit that income returns to education and professional skill steadily increased across the years of reforms (Bian, 2002; Lister & Borelli, 2012). The second section of Table 5 shows an impressive set of results about the increasing effects of 4-year college education on elite-to-elite mobility from the early reform period to the most recent period. This adds another strong support of Hypothesis 4.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

On the two issues we examined in this chapter, we have obtained strong empirical findings from the 2009 JSNet survey, which lead to the following conclusions and discussions.

Decreasing or Increasing Inequality in Educational Attainment?

On this issue, we have focused on the extent to which family background affects access to post-compulsory education. Among a number of variables we used to

measure family background, father's education turns out to be the most important: Not only did it significantly affect children's attainment of all levels of post-compulsory education in all periods, its effects also steadily increased across the periods, and this effect was the greatest after the expansion of higher education policy was implemented in 1999. With these findings in mind, we draw our first conclusion: Market reforms have not reduced educational inequality by family background, and the expansion of higher education policy may indeed have increased, rather than decreased, the inequality by family background.

This conclusion is supported by findings about the persistent, and in most instances increasing, inequalities in access to regular college education by gender, *hukou*, and region of residence across all periods under study. Regular college education draws the attention of a great majority of Chinese families; for most youths, as well as their devoted parents and grandparents, attending a nationally prestigious university is a dream to come true. But unfortunately, our study did not bring us positive results. Gender gap in access to regular college education was significant in the pre-reform period, it narrowed in the early reform and later reform periods, but it substantially enlarged in the post-expansion of higher education era. *Hukou* gap in access to regular college education has been tremendously sizable across all three reform periods, although it substantially reduced after the expansion policy was implemented. But regional gap in access to regular college education has steadily enlarged, and it was the largest in the post-expansion era. Altogether, the ascriptive dimensions of inequality in educational opportunity have become increasingly significant along the market reforms, and they were a more serious problem after the 1999 expansion of higher education.

This is depressing news and raises alarm to educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. For a long time, many of these people have thought that inequality in educational attainment would be gradually reduced in an expanding economy, in which the steady growth of economic resources and the resulting expansion of post-compulsory education at all levels would benefit the poor or otherwise disadvantageous classes (Nee, 1989). This assumption has made a few researchers excited when they found signals of reduced inequality in the early reform periods (see a review by Bian [2002]). Our study has made it explicitly clear that market reforms and the expansion of higher education policy would not by themselves meet the goal of equalizing educational opportunity. It requires both a deliberate design and forceful implementation for any educational policy to be effective in reducing ascription-based inequalities in educational attainment. Such a design seems to be outlined in a 2012 Central Government's initiative "Special Admission Program for Children in Poverty Regions."⁶ This initiative is aimed at increasing admissions to prestigious universities for children from the poor regions in middle and western China. While we wait and see how this initiative is implemented, we remind policy makers and practitioners to look into social mechanisms that maintain and perpetuate educational inequalities at all levels. Understanding and reconfiguring these mechanisms is an important task to be carried out before any policy can help change social realities.

Increasing or Decreasing Educational Impact on Careers?

On this second issue, we can draw a more positive conclusion. While education increased an individual's opportunity to get a good placement at job entry even before market reforms, this positive impact of education became much stronger after the reforms. Moreover, higher education has been a significant promoting factor of career mobility: one's opportunity for upward mobility from a working class position to a professional or managerial elite position is increasingly boosted by one's college education from the early reform period to the most recent period, and the same is true for elite-to-elite mobility. From these findings, we conclude that China's market reforms and the expansion of higher education policy have enriched and increased the values of education, especially college education, in the increasingly marketized Chinese economy.

The implication of this conclusion must be carefully evaluated. On the one hand, it is good news for all of us when education becomes increasingly valuable as highly educated individuals are increasingly placed at positions of skill and power. This is a signal that China finally is on the road toward modernization: increasing the education of all citizens is a central mechanism through which human resources can be allocated efficiently, individuals can become modern, and societies can transform away from anti-democracy forces. On the other hand, however, the increasing value of education in China has been coupled with a parallel process in which educational inequalities by ascriptive criteria, such as gender, *hukou*, region of residence, and family class background, all have increased for the past 35 years. This means that the increasing labour market values of college education, for example, has actually legitimized and perpetuated the ascription-generated inequalities embedded in educational processes. This implies that the economic ideal for labour market efficiency would work reversely against the social ideal for educational equality. Thus, the ultimate message from this study is that China must necessarily work hard to reduce and eliminate the social forces that cause inequality in educational opportunity.

NOTES

- ¹ This strategy originated from an important speech made by Xiaoping Deng at "Forum on National Science and Education Work" in 1977, which brought about the restoration of the college entrance examination system that fundamentally changed thousands of people's destinies. Therefore, it might be said that the success of education reform was a landmark in China's reform history.
- ² Data source: *Statistical Communiqué on Education Development in 2012*, from official website of the Ministry of Education of China, 2013-8-10, http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_633/201308/155798.html.
- ³ Su Wang: "Report on China's Education Competitiveness: The Fastest Increasing Speed in the World", *China Education Daily*, 2009-11-27.
- ⁴ Yongping Zhao: "Why Rural Students are Unwilling to Enter College", *People Daily*, 2013-5-26; Xinhua Agency: "The Back Tide of 'Education is Useless' Stirs up the Reflection of Higher Education Equality", 2013-9-5, http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2013-09/05/c_117245240.htm?

- ⁵ Li Keqiang: "Focus on Education Equality, Promoting Science and Technology Innovation", 2013-8-31, from Xinhua Agency, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-08/31/c_117173898.htm
- ⁶ For more detailed information about this project, please see: http://www.gov.cn/zwqk/2012-04/23/content_2119933.htm

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YIXI LU AND LI ZONG

16. SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE TRANSITION

A Case Study of University Students in Western China

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1970s, China's society has undergone major transformation processes. The economic reforms have brought spectacular economic growth, as well as dramatic changes in social stratification and social structure, including increasing disparities between rural and urban regions and between the rich and poor. The dramatic social and economic transformation during the past 35 years has resulted in a profound restructuration in China's higher education system and job market, which has brought tremendous impacts on university students' transition process from school to work.

There has been a growing public concern about the declining postgraduate employment of university graduates for about a decade (Bai, 2006; H. Wang, 2009). Although the authoritative statistics on the employment rate of college graduates are not sufficiently available in China¹, several related issues, including declining employment rate, decreasing average wage for their first employment, and increasing difficulty in finding jobs or satisfactory jobs, have been recognized as social problems in recent years (Hui, 2010; Xinhuanet, 2009). The employment rate in July declined from 80% in 2001 to 68% in 2009 (Education Online, 2006; Xinhuanet, 2009).

There has been extensive discussion and debate on the reasons for intensive postgraduate employment pressure on college graduates since the early 2000s (Bai, 2006; China Post, 2011; H. Wang, 2009; W. Wang & Moffatt, 2008). The expansion of higher education enrolment along with the decreasing standards of higher education, and labour market capacity have been widely recognized as the most important reasons. Since the late 1990s, the policy drive to make higher education more widely available has led to a dramatic growth in graduate numbers. The number of college graduates has increased more than 6 times in recent years, from 1.15 million in 2001 to 7.27 million in 2014, and this number was 6.11 million in 2009. This dramatic and constant increase of college graduates for more than a decade results in tremendous pressure on the capacity of labour markets to absorb such large number of college graduates into the workforce.

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Increasing educational opportunities for all Chinese youth is one of the main incentives of higher education expansion, however, the expansion of higher education may not necessarily lead to more equal access to higher education among different social classes (Mare, 1980), and more access to higher education does not guarantee equal educational outcomes. Essentially, how current higher education system and educational outcomes affecting the situation of social inequality in China deserves academic and public attention. In this study, we aim to explore the social inequalities underlying the Chinese university students' postgraduate transition processes, with a special focus on the social and economic barriers faced by the students with low socioeconomic status (SES). Theoretically, this study adopts Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital as a conceptual and analytical framework. Empirically, by using a questionnaire survey and interviews conducted in two universities, Xi'an Jiaotong University and Lanzhou University, this study is able to present some general patterns of the interactions between students' SES, university experiences, postgraduate achievements, and to explore the strategies used by university graduates from different socioeconomic backgrounds when facing structural difficulties in their post-university transitions. The interviews in this research were conducted in 2009; it was the worst period of time during a global economic recession which started at the end of 2007 in the United States, becoming globalized and exacerbated in 2008 and 2009. This economic recession worsened the postgraduate employment situation for college graduates which had not been very optimistic for years.

CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Main Changes in Higher Education in China

Since the beginning of the reform and open-up policies implemented in China in the 1980s, higher education expansion has been one of the most significant changes in China's higher education system. After the policy of "The Enrolment Expansion" began to be implemented throughout mainland China in 1999, the gross rate of higher education enrolment grew from 9.8% in 1996 to 26.5% in 2010 (Bai, 2006; H. Dong & Wan, 2012). According to the report of the Ministry of Education of China, between 1999 and 2009 the total number of higher education institutions doubled from 1071 to 2305 (Ministry of Education of China, 2010). In the 1990s, the government started to charge tuition and fees from all university and college students (State Council of PRC, 1993). [Table 1](#) shows that average annual tuition rate increased significantly from 800RMB in 1995 to 5,000RMB in 2009. By using data from the China Statistical Yearbooks from 1996 to 2010, Dong and Wan (2012) noticed significant decreases in the proportion of higher education funds from government appropriations and remarkable increases in the proportion of tuition and fees. The increasing proportion of individual responsibility causes some students to face more severe economic constraints in pursuing higher education, and this

also means that lower SES families would benefit less from the expansion policy in higher education.

Another major reform was to abolish the planning system for allocating college graduates to work positions. Before the 1990s, all the college graduates would be assigned a tenured position by the government, and this job assignment system was purposefully designed to support a planned economy. Along with the establishment of a market economy and liberal labour market in China, a desire for self-seeking employment was growing. The constraints of the job assignment system loosened in the 1990s, and it was abolished in 2000. Presently, the vast majority of the college graduates find jobs based on mutual agreements between them and employers, with little intervention from the government. Consequently, on the one hand, college graduates have much more freedom in searching for jobs based on their aspirations and capacities; on the other hand, with the expansion of higher education, they face more and more severe competition, putting great pressure on the graduate. These changes in higher education and postgraduate employment are the social settings of the school-work transition processes experienced by Chinese college graduates, in which they compete for better socioeconomic status and face inequalities.

Inequalities: Rural-Urban Division, Income Gap, and Gender Inequality

Among all types of social inequalities in China, rural-urban division has been the most restrictive institutional barrier in social mobility. In 1958, a rigid household registration institution or *Hukou* system was promulgated to control the movement of people between regions and between urban and rural areas. After more than five decades, this *Hukou* distinction between urban and rural residents was finally called to end by the Chinese government in August, 2014, but it will take years to have an observable effect on the gap between rural and urban areas. Compared to rural residents, urban residents benefit more in economic growth, public education, public healthcare, and public housing (Parish & Whyte, 1978; Unger, 1984, 1994). Among all the pathways through which a rural resident can change her/his status to urban resident, higher education is the most widely adopted one, especially for young people. However, the enrolment rate² of rural students has always been much lower than that of urban students (X. Yang, 2010). Also, partially due to their lower paying ability, the proportion of rural students among the college population is decreasing remarkably. In the 1980s, this proportion was about 30% (S. Wu, 2004). By 2004 it had declined to 19.2%, even though the rural population accounted for 58.2% of China's total population (S. Wu, 2004). Over the period of rapid higher education expansion from 1998 to 2006, [Table 1](#) shows that the income gap between average urban resident and average rural resident has widened. From 1995 to 2009, the urban-rural income ratio has increased from 2.72 to 3.63, meanwhile the tuition-income ratio for urban residents has increased from approximately 18% to more than 26% and this ratio for rural residents increased even more dramatically, from roughly 50% to more than 90%. In general, the inability to afford higher education becomes a tremendous

barrier for young people living in poor rural areas as well as those from working poor families in urban areas. Also, studies found that students from high SES families tend to enroll in higher ranked institutions and are more likely to major in more “popular” disciplines in job market, such as foreign languages, business, economics, law and the medical sciences (Chung & Lu, 1999). This indicates that students from low-income families may be disadvantaged in the labour market when they graduate.

Table 1. Annual income level of rural and urban households and university tuition fees in China, 1995–2009

	<i>Per Capita Annual Income of Rural Households¹ (RMB yuan)</i>	<i>Per Capita Annual Income of Urban Household² (RMB yuan)</i>	<i>Annual Tuition and Fees in Average³</i>
1995	1577	4288	800
1996	1920	4844	<2000
1997	2090	5188	2500–3000
1998	2161	5458	2500–3000
1999	2210	5888	2500–3000
2000	2253	6316	4000
2001	2366	6907	4000
2002	2475	8177	4500
2003	2622	9061	4500
2004	2936	10128	4500
2005	3254	11320	4000–5000
2006	3587	12719	4000–5000
2007	4140	14908	4000–5000
2008	4760	17067	4000–5000
2009	5153	18858	>5000

Data Sources:

1 and 2 Comprehensive statistical data, National Bureau of Statistics of China, available at <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/>.

3 No authoritative statistical data can be found regarding nationwide average annual tuition and fees, so rough numbers were collected from various news reports and research articles discussing the dramatic increase of tuition fees of postsecondary institutions (Hong, 2004; D. Yang, 2006). The tuition and fees vary in terms of disciplines and type of postsecondary institutions.

Besides urban-rural disparity and income gap, this study also takes into account gender inequality in educational and employment opportunity. It has been pointed out that Chinese women have become more educated after the founding of the PRC.

The development of the market economy since 1978 opened up more opportunities to Chinese women for their professional development (Parish & Busse, 2000; *Women of China English Monthly*, 2001). However, gender income and promotion gaps have widened (Gao, 2001; *Women of China English Monthly*, 2001), and labour market discrimination against female workers has increased in terms of hiring and layoffs, job placement, promotion and wage determination, especially in private sectors (Bian, 1994; Tang & Parish, 2000).

Accessibility to education has long been a focus of gender inequality. Since the 1980s, researchers have constantly observed fewer gender differences in enrollment or in other dimensions of basic education especially in urban China (Tsui & Rich, 2002). By the 1990s, gender disparities in China were concentrated in poor rural areas. In poor rural households having more than one child, children have to compete with siblings for educational resources (Connelly & Zheng, 2007). Many researchers believe that the traditional attitudes and values of gender roles often put girls in a disadvantaged position in such competition (Honig & Hershatter, 1988; Wolf, 1985). Parents in rural areas still largely expect old-age support from sons, so when the resources are scarce, they would rather invest more to their sons' education than their daughters' (Jacka, 1997). Thus, girls in rural areas are often allocated with fewer educational resources than boys, and when family resources can only support one child's education, the boy is often privileged (Q. Dong, Li, Yang, & Zhang, 2008; Hannum, Kong, & Zhang, 2009).

APPLICATION OF BOURDIEU'S CONCEPTS OF HABITUS AND CAPITAL

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). For Bourdieu, habitus is a generator of behaviours. The trajectory of young people at school depends on the social constraints of the habitus or the internalized self-regulation it entails, as well as the ability of that person to use different forms of capital in his/her capacity. Cultural capital is a concept closely related to habitus. To understand cultural capital, it is also important to learn about Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), capital is the set of usable resources and powers an individual possesses, and it is effective in a given social space that enables one to obtain specific profits through participation and contest in it. Capital comes in four principal types: economic capital (material and financial resources at one's disposal), social capital (resources accrued by virtue of membership in a group, representing one's social networks), cultural capital (cultural resources rooted in social origin, such as language ability, knowledge, information and tastes, which are linked to educational and occupational aspiration) and symbolic capital (resources based on honour, prestige or recognition, as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value) (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Bourdieu's emphasis of habitus and cultural capital is often picked on by critics, especially due to the extent to which Bourdieu claims that action based on

habitus is seemingly undertaken without any consciousness or intention (Reay, 2004). However, we do find that besides emphasizing the domination of habitus in people's everyday life in his cultural reproduction theory, Bourdieu also explored the role of agency as actors undertaking conscious strategic action. Essentially, for Bourdieu, certain problematic circumstances are the precondition of developing and practicing rational strategic agency. In order to look into the possibility of rational agency, it is important to identify what the problematic circumstances are. Bourdieu identifies those circumstances as the situation of crisis, which disrupts the immediate adjustment of habitus to the context. Bourdieu's strategic agency may be enabled in these transformation and transition processes, which can be considered as problematic circumstances with features of uncertainty, tensions, risks, and alternatives. This study is especially concerned with such a situation that is university students' postgraduate transition in the transformation of education and the labour market in China. Thus, Bourdieu's conceptions of habitus and forms of capital provide an effective analytical framework for explaining the processes and patterns of Chinese university students' postgraduate decisions and experiences.

SOURCES OF DATA AND METHOD

The major interest of this research was to investigate university students from low SES families, who are supposed to gain upward mobility through higher education. In order to access this population, Xi'an Jiaotong University in Shaanxi province and Lanzhou University in Gansu province were chosen as the research sites. Both universities are located in the less developed western region of China which has long been characterized as less developed with harsh weather and environment, and many students reported that low education and living costs was one of the main reasons for them to choose one of the two universities. Also, both universities are nationally well-known and prestigious despite being located in relatively remote provinces. The features of these two research sites helped us gain greater access to the student population of interest.

This study adopts a mixed method by including both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Two sets of quantitative data are used, the first one is secondary data. In 2006, a research team³ consisting of researchers from the University of Saskatchewan, Xi'an Jiaotong University, and Lanzhou University conducted a survey to investigate Chinese university students' post-graduation plans. This was a general survey targeted all the students from Xi'an Jiaotong University and Lanzhou University. To be consistent with the interview sample, only the fourth year undergraduate students were selected as the quantitative sample for this study. The second set of quantitative data was collected through a brief survey upon completion of interview.

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted from May, 2009 to July, 2009. Forty undergraduate students from Xi'an Jiaotong University and Lanzhou University were interviewed. All the participants were in

their fourth year of an undergraduate program, and they were scheduled to graduate in July, 2009. At the initial stage of recruitment, the undergraduate students who 1) were planning to graduate in 2009; and 2) were recipients of student loans or subsidies were interviewed. In the data collection process, 29 participants who met these two criteria were interviewed. At later stage, the family background was made diversified for analytical comparisons between low SES students and their more privileged counterparts in order to understand the dynamic processes of social mobility and reproduction of social inequality, so another 11 students were recruited whose family backgrounds were not limited by the second criterion.

Table 2 presents a profile of two research samples in terms of their demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status. We found that there were no significant distributional discrepancy between these two samples in most of the variables, except for those interfered with by sampling procedure such as gender, residential area, and major. Female and male students were equally selected in interview sample, but the general survey sample shows a dramatically imbalanced gender ratio (male:female = 73:27). In the general survey sample, the proportions of students from urban and rural areas are relatively equal, but in the interview sample, because we intentionally focus more on students with low SES, we ended up with larger proportion of participants from rural area (62.5% vs. 27.5%). All the interview participants majored in social sciences or humanities, however, social sciences and humanities only made up 12% of the general survey sample. Because the general survey sample is a random sample, except for the characteristics interfered by sampling procedure, we may conclude that the interview sample can provide some findings representative of the social science and humanities students in these two universities.

Table 2. Distribution of interview sample and general sample in demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status (SES)

	<i>Interview sample 2009</i>		<i>General survey sample 2006</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
University				
Xi'an Jiaotong University	17	42.50%	772	58.9%
Lanzhou University	23	57.50%	538	41.1%
Total	40	100%	1310	100.0%
Gender				
Male	20	50%	953	72.7%
Female	20	50%	357	27.3%
Total	40	100%	1310	100%

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

	Interview sample 2009		General survey sample 2006	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Residential Area				
Urban area	15	37.5%	638	49.0%
Rural area	25	62.5%	665	51.0%
Total	40	100%	5295	99.4%
Annual Family Income				
Low (below 10,000 <i>yuan</i>)	21	52.5%	563	46.8%
Medium (10,001–50,000 <i>yuan</i>)	17	42.5%	533	44.3%
High (Above 50,001 <i>yuan</i>)	2	5.0%	108	9.0%
Total	40	100%	1204	100%
Father's occupation				
Owner and white-collar worker ⁴	9	22.5%	316	24.6%
Worker and staff	11	27.5%	431	33.5%
Peasant and unemployed	20	50.0%	538	41.9%
Total	40	100%	1285	100%
Mother's occupation				
Owner and white-collar worker	6	15.0%	175	13.7%
Worker and staff	4	10.0%	396	30.9%
Peasant and unemployed	30	75.0%	710	55.4%
Total	40	100%	1281	100%
The highest education level of two parents				
Elementary education or less	4	10.0%	149	11.4%
Secondary education	27	67.5%	836	64.2%
Postsecondary	9	22.5	317	24.3%
Total	40	100%	1302	100%
Major				
Sciences and Engineering	0	0.0%	974	74.9%
Business and Finance	0	0.0%	171	13.1%
Social Sciences and Humanities	40	100.0%	156	12.0%
Total	40	100%	1301	100%

REPRODUCING INEQUALITY

Tables 3 and 4 were produced based on bivariate analysis to examine whether or not SES and university experiences are significantly associated with participants' postgraduate status based on the general survey. The results showed that their postgraduate status was clearly related to university experiences, but not directly related to most of the indicators of SES. In this study, SES was measured by family annual income, parents' highest level of education, father's occupation, residential area (rural-urban) before university; the variables used to define important university experiences include English skill (overall English proficiency, CET-6 certificate⁵), certificate of occupational qualification, social positions in university (e.g., student cadre, Communist Party of China (CPC) membership), important social network and work experience.

Table 3 shows that university experiences are widely associated with a student's postgraduate status, but it seems that SES has little direct impact on their postgraduate status except for family annual income, which indicates that students from high income families are more likely to pursue postgraduate education, while those from low income families are most likely to enter the job market but have the highest percentage in unemployment status after graduation. Gender difference is also very significant. The result finds that male students are most likely to find a job, while female students are less likely to be employed upon completing postsecondary education, which might be a reason of their stronger inclination of pursuing postgraduate education. The associations between university experiences and postgraduate status share some common trends. Top academic standing, obtaining certificate to demonstrate English skill (CET 6), and being a CPC member are more likely to be associated with the status of "have found a job" or "pursue graduate study" and least associated with the status of "haven't found a job", while low academic standing, never obtained CET 6 and not being a CPC member are most likely to be in the category of "haven't found a job". In other words, academic achievement, English skill and CPC membership provide university graduates options to either fulfil school-work transition or pursue further education. Besides, obtaining certificate of occupational qualification and work experience during university can increase their chance of finding a job.

Based on the results in Tables 4 and 5, we find that SES is more likely to associate with university experiences. Firstly, low family income level, elementary level of parents' education, as well as having a peasant or unemployed father are most likely to associate with a low level of English skill (e.g., level of overall English proficiency, whether or not obtained CET-6 certificate). Secondly, the students who report no useful social network for job hunting were most likely from a low SES family, e.g., low income family, parent's highest education at elementary level, and father as a peasant or jobless. Thirdly, the students who have parents with postsecondary education and/or had a father who is a business owner or white-collar worker were most likely to join the CPC, while the students whose parents

Table 3. Significant bivariate associations between postgraduate status and characteristics including SES, university experiences, gender

	Postgraduate status			χ^2
	Have found job (%)	Haven't found job (%)	Graduate Studies (%)	
<i>Gender</i>				9.935*
Male	56.9	24.4	18.7	
Female	45.0	30.6	24.5	
<i>Family annual income</i>				13.708*
Low (below 10,000)	56.3	27.2	16.5	
Medium (10,001–50,000)	55.3	22.6	22.1	
High (more than 50,001)	40.6	26.9	32.5	
<i>Major</i>				33.694*
Sciences and Engineering	56.3	20.9	22.8	
Commerce	53.9	32.6	13.5	
Social Sciences and Humanities	44.1	41.9	14.0	
<i>Academic standing</i>				65.495*
Top	41.4	21.7	36.9	
Middle	59.8	22.9	17.3	
Bottom	52.9	37.0	10.1	
<i>CET-6</i>				44.792*
Obtained	47.7	20.9	31.4	
Not obtained	58.3	28.4	13.3	
<i>Certificate of occupational qualification</i>				15.810*
Obtained	61.3	18.7	19.9	
Not obtained	49.7	30.0	20.4	
<i>Work experiences</i>				12.120*
Obtained	59.6	20.7	19.7	
Not obtained	49.8	30.2	20.0	
<i>CPC member</i>				27.863*
Yes	53.2	17.3	29.5	
No	55.0	28.9	16.1	

*Significant level < 0.01

only received elementary education were more likely to obtain a certificate of occupational qualification.

Table 4 shows that rural-urban differences are also significant in terms of students' university experience. Students from rural areas are more likely to have a low level of English proficiency, but are less likely to obtain important social positions in university, such as student cadre status or CPC membership, and they are more likely to report having no social network useful for job searching. Gender differences are shown in even more aspects of university experience. It is not surprising to see that male students were significantly more likely to study Natural Sciences and Engineering, while female students were much more likely to major in Commerce, the Social Sciences and Humanities. Combining the result in Table 3, that social sciences and humanities students were most likely to report "have not found a job" and had a relatively low percentage in pursuing graduate study, we argue that the underrepresentation of female students in the Natural Sciences and Engineering majors increases the disadvantage of female students in the labour market. Compared with male students, female students were more likely to be among the highest in academic standing, to obtain the CET-6, double-degrees, or a certificate of occupational qualification; they are also more likely to join the CPC and report having social networks useful for job searching. Despite all these advantages obtained by female students, Table 3 still shows that female students are more likely to report "have not found a job" than male students. In other words, female students' efforts in improving themselves academically and socially through university experiences cannot compensate their disadvantageous situation in the labour market.

To provide a theoretical summary and discussion of the foregoing quantitative findings, we adopt Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can exist in three forms: the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, such as habitus, aptitudes, tastes, and competencies; the objectified state in the form of cultural goods, i.e. pictures, books, or instruments; and the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which can be seen in the case of educational qualification, the academic certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Based on Bourdieu's definition, two states of cultural capital can be identified among university experience variables: 1) the institutionalized state of cultural capital – double-degree, the CET 6 certificate, and certificate of occupational qualification, are officially recognized as the proofs of English skills, academic qualification, and occupational skills; 2) the embodied state of cultural capital – overall English proficiency and work experience, can be considered as a form of competency. Among other university experiences, joining the CPC and being a student cadre are privileged social positions in university helping acquire cultural capital and social capital. Social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less

Table 4. Significant bivariate associations between university experiences and SES (residential area before university, family annual income) and gender

University Experiences	Residential area (%)		Gender (%)		Family annual income (%)		
	Urban area	Rural area	Male	Female	Low	Medium	High
<i>Major</i>							
Sciences and Engineering			80.0	61.1			
Commerce			10.3	20.8			
Social Sciences and Humanities			9.7	18.0			
Subtotals			946	355			
			$\chi^2 = 49.181^{**}$				
<i>Academic standing</i>							
Top			19.8	34.3	24.8	21.3	27.4
Middle			52.6	55.8	56.2	56.8	38.7
Bottom			27.6	9.9	18.9	21.9	34.0
subtotals			941	353	560	526	106
			$\chi^2 = 58.615^{**}$		$\chi^2 = 17.185^{**}$		
<i>English proficiency</i>							
Poor	39.8	49.9			51.2	41.5	36.2
Fair	30.7	25.0			24.5	31.6	29.5
Good	29.4	25.1			24.3	26.9	34.3
Subtotals	635	661			560	532	105
	$\chi^2 = 13.403^{**}$				$\chi^2 = 16.360^{**}$		
<i>CET-6</i>							
Obtained			39.5	51.5	39.4	41.7	63.8
Not obtained			60.5	48.5	60.6	58.3	36.2
Subtotals			932	338	548	516	105
			$\chi^2 = 14.587^{**}$		$\chi^2 = 21.722^{**}$		
<i>Double Degree holder</i>							
Yes			5.3	12.6			
No			94.7	87.4			
Subtotals			951	356			
			$\chi^2 = 20.947^{**}$				

(Continued)

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE TRANSITION

Table 4. (Continued)

University Experiences	Residential area (%)		Gender (%)		Family annual income (%)		
	Urban area	Rural area	Male	Female	Low	Medium	High
<i>Certificate of occupational qualification</i>							
Obtained			32.8	39.5			
Not obtained			67.2	60.5			
Subtotals			940	354			
			$\chi^2 = 5.226^*$				
<i>Student cadre</i>							
Yes	52.4	43.9					
No	47.6	56.1					
Subtotals	618	651					
	$\chi^2 = 9.165^{**}$						
<i>CPC member</i>							
Yes	33.9	28.8	28.9	37.6			
No	66.1	71.2	71.1	62.4			
Subtotals	625	652	927	356			
	$\chi^2 = 3.837^*$		$\chi^2 = 9.111^{**}$				
<i>Useful social network</i>							
No social network	51.9	60.1	58.7	49.8	60.2	53.9	48.8
Friend and classmate	15.3	15.7	15.6	15.2	18.2	12.4	15.9
Family and relative	32.8	24.2	25.7	35.0	21.6	33.7	35.4
subtotals	424	466	653	243	384	362	82
	$\chi^2 = 8.383^*$		$\chi^2 = 7.857^*$		$\chi^2 = 17.539^{**}$		

* Significant level < 0.05; ** Significant level < 0.01

institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance of recognition, or in other words, to membership in a group” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). In China’s universities, the CPC membership is rewarded to the elite students mainly based on their academic achievements, services to other students, and loyalty to the Party (Bian, 1994; Bian, Shu, & Logan, 2001; Szelenyi, 1987). Student cadres are usually in

Table 5. Significant bivariate associations between university experiences and SES (parents' highest level of education and father's occupation)

University experiences	The highest level of education of two parents			Father's occupation		
	Elementary education or less	Secondary education	Post-Sec education	Owner, white-collar worker	Worker & staff	Peasant & unemployed
English proficiency						
Poor	59.2	44.2	39.6	36.4	44.5	50.1
Fair	19.0	29.2	28.2	26.6	31.1	26.2
Good	21.8	26.6	32.3	37.0	24.4	23.7
Subtotals	147	832	316	316	427	535
	$\chi^2 = 18.105^{**}$			$\chi^2 = 25.542^{**}$		
CET-6						
Obtained				48.7	42.1	40.1
Not obtained				51.3	57.9	59.9
Subtotals				308	416	524
				$\chi^2 = 6.056^*$		
Certificate of occupational qualification						
Obtained	23.5	35.0	39.2			
Not obtained	76.5	65.0	60.8			
Subtotals	149	826	311			
	$\chi^2 = 11.111^{**}$					
CPC member						
Yes	24.3	30.6	36.9	38.5	29.8	28.8
No	75.7	69.4	63.1	61.5	70.2	71.2
Subtotals	148	819	309	309	420	532
	$\chi^2 = 7.980^*$			$\chi^2 = 9.482^{**}$		
Important social network						
No social network	67.3	56.4	49.7	49.5	53.1	62.6
Friend and classmate	16.4	17.3	9.4	16.0	15.8	15.0
Family and relative	16.4	26.3	40.8	34.5	31.0	22.4
subtotals	110	590	191	200	303	380
	$\chi^2 = 26.714^{**}$			$\chi^2 = 13.277^{**}$		

* Significant level < 0.05; ** Significant level < 0.01

better position to become a CPC member. Being in these two positions, students would have the opportunities to improve their communication, leadership, and organization skills, as well as to develop important social networks with other elite students, professors, university administrations, and so on.

In general, we can conclude that on the one hand, SES has considerable impact on the acquisition of social capital and cultural capital which are heavily embedded in university experiences and important for successful school-work transition and other postgraduate achievements. In other words, social inequality has been reproduced through the interactions between student's SES and university experiences. On the other hand, even though female students have tried to compensate for their disadvantage in the labour market through collecting social capital and cultural capital in university, the employment gap between female and male students still persists.

STRATEGIES AND AGENCY

More in-depth analysis of the indirect influence of SES on students' postgraduate achievements and the importance of social and cultural capitals is conducted based on interview data. This section focuses on interviewees' narratives regarding their strategies and actions in pursuing their postgraduate goals.

Privileged Family Background and Internalized Capitals

Jing's father was a senior manager in a public-owned enterprise. All of her grandparents are senior CPC members and government officials. Her grandma on her mother's side was the first dean of the College of Preschool Education in her province. For her, university education was a "natural process" in her "personal development", and she had a very clear postgraduate goal as to "be a public servant" and knew how to achieve it.

Both her attitude toward university education and postgraduate goal reflect a habitus of a high SES family with high levels of education and government official background. Meanwhile, she intended to practice her individual agency to achieve her goal without direct help from her family. Her NCEE score did not allow her get into her dream university, with her parents' "special arrangement", she could get in, but she refused. However, rejecting such resources does not deny its availability for her. Based on her narratives, she might be able to take an even faster track to achieve her career goals if she utilized these social capitals. Her parents empowered her with availability of more and better alternatives. Jing also recognized that her dispositions have been considerably influenced by her privileged family background. As she said,

All my parents and grandparents were either government officials or working in public-owned enterprises, I think my ideal of becoming a public servant was

influenced by them... I've been a CPC member since high school. Because all my grandparents are senior CPC members. (Jing)

In addition, her grandma possessed the knowledge to provide her with the best preschool education. Her parents invested money and time to cultivate diversified cultural capital (e.g., painting, dancing, playing piano, etc.) for her future development. Their high expectation motivated her to excel in all aspects.

When I was a kid...I stayed with my grandma...she really knows preschool education...but my mother spent lots of money to cultivate me...they forced me to learn almost everything...learning painting since I was 3 years old, then piano, gymnastics, dancing, so on and so forth. (Jing)

I'm a very competitive student, I always want to do my best...that's why I am a student cadre since elementary school. ...The University knows that, so they asked me to report to the school earlier...to join a student cadre training program. I got to know many other student cadres...After experiencing lots of things in student organization, I think I've learnt a lot...., so I can be ready for being a good public servant. (Jing)

By internalizing the cultural capital provided by her families including diversified artistic talents, motivation to excel, and leadership skills, Jing was able to gain a privileged social position once being admitted in university. Furthermore, she was able to take advantage of such a position to improve her social and cultural capital through university experiences. Essentially, benefiting from her privileged family background, embedded habitus and internalized cultural capital, she has been in a privileged position to develop in university.

Conversion between Cultural Capital and Social Capital

When students do not have a privileged family background which provides her/him with adequate economic, social and cultural capitals to achieve their postgraduate goal, some students decided to invest considerable amount of time and energy to convert whatever they have into the capital they need.

Rui described her family background as "poor". She depended on student loans and scholarships to continue her education, but she still inherited good study habits and important cultural assets through her parents and grandparents. With a college education, her father taught her how to prepare herself for post-graduation in university. Her grandpa's interest in Chinese traditional literature brought her a value system of Confucianism. Even though such a value system has been weakened in modern China, it is still representing righteous values and favourable merits. From a young age to university, she has made this value system embedded in her mind and practices, becoming cultural capital. Most importantly, she was able to convert the cultural capital she possessed into other forms of capital, especially social capital.

For example, learning from Confucius' teachings, Rui carefully chose her friends, and made efforts to maintain and improve interactions with them. The time and energy she invested in such interactions converted strangers to her social capital. One of her friends helped her get an internship position in a division of the Chinese Central Television (CCTV). The internship experience again provided her with more cultural capital important for her job searching.

Making friends is important, as Confucius said, 'whenever I walk with two other men, I can find a teacher among them'⁶. ...I like to search the students who are kind and have merits on university networking forum...I would add them as my friends. I would read their posts, comment on them, learn from them. Gradually, they might start to know me. (Rui)

In addition to friend networks, Rui's CPC membership as a privileged social position provides her access to the job sector which is not accessible for non-CPC members.

I think they hired me mainly because of my attitude and personality...yes, my internship and CPC membership helped...they only recruit CPC member for this position...I am not afraid of 'eating bitterness' and difficulties, I can handle hardships, I am determined to achieve my goal...as a communist party member, when something happens, you need to step out first, no excuse for not doing so, that's your duty...I think that's why they picked me. (Rui)

In general, Rui inherited, internalized and accumulated the cultural capital which is consistent with the dominant social values and ideology. Such cultural capital motivated her to invest time and energy on acquiring effective social capitals. She furthermore converted the social capital into other types of cultural capital which are important for her successful postgraduate transition. Rui's strategy is not uncommon for students who are motivated to climb up the social ladders, but not all of them can be successful. Her father as a secondary school teacher gave her a critical guidance in developing such a strategy. Actually among all the interviews, more than ten of low SES students failed to accumulate adequate social and cultural capitals, their failure in job searching forced them to use graduate studies to postpone their postgraduate transition and invest more time and energy into collecting adequate capitals.

The Hope for Upward Mobility and Incompatible Habitus

For students from low SES families, university can be a pathway to upward mobility. Some of them realized that more social and cultural capitals were needed to achieve upward mobility than merely a university degree, so they need to acquire more cultural and social capitals, but some others decided that higher education was incompatible with their dispositions and habitus.

A common theme among their narratives is that they were either convinced that “university education can change many things” before getting into university, or forced to go to university by their parents who expect their children “to be respected”, “to be an urban resident”, or “become rich one day”. However, after almost 4 years of university life, they came to the realization that university is not a pathway simply leading to higher job position, and they feel regret for getting into university and planned to betray their parents’ expectation and return to their original class lifestyle. For example, they found university is “useless”, rather “go to vocational school and learn a skill”, “start a small business”, or “go back to village and find a job”. Their dispositions, including motivations and ways of thinking are very different from the students from the middle-class or a more privileged background, but also unlike other low SES students who strived for upward mobility, they paid little effort to transform their dispositions and habitus by investing the time and energy to accumulate suitable cultural and social capitals. In other words, their persistent class habitus clashes with the culture and expectations of university. Nevertheless, none of them wanted to be a peasant working on their farmland as their parents did.

Double Disadvantage: Female Student from Poor Rural Family

Besides capitals and habitus, Bourdieu’s concept of class also takes into account other stratifying factors. As Bourdieu (1984) specifies, “the volume and composition of capital give specific form and value to the determinations which the other factors (age, sex, place of residence, etc.) impose on practices” (p. 107). Thus, Bourdieu’s concepts of capitals and habitus can also be used to understand the gender inequality emerging from the interview data.

Ping’s story tells us that she had to overcome tremendous barriers preventing her from pursuing higher education as she was born in a peasant family with two younger brothers and one older sister. Ping was a top student in her junior high school, but her parents still tried to stop her from getting into senior high school⁷ and university afterward. They could not afford sending all their kids for higher education, rather than provide the limited resource to the kid with the best academic performance, they gave such preference to their sons. Ping fought for her education right with a threat of committing suicide, and she was finally able to continue mainly because her brothers’ academic performances were not good enough for senior high school. Despite her victory in this battle, she started feeling guilty, “not filial” to her parents, because she did not “comply with” her “fate” to “relieve financial burden on her parents” by “going to a vocational school” and “making money for my family”, just like her brothers and sister.

In rural China, boys are still highly privileged in resource distribution, especially when such resource is in short supply. The gendered structure in Ping’s community determines that her brothers had the privilege to receive more

resources from their family, and Ping had to fight for an equal opportunity for education from her parents. Because of her disobedience of the gender role assigned to her by her parents and community, she felt additional guilt for not being able to provide financial support for her parents, even though her parents' original plan of supporting their sons' education might impose a similar amount of "financial burden" on her family. Ping's low SES and guilt for her family pushed her study hard to get student loans and scholarships, work part-time jobs to support her own education and her family financially, and set a goal of "making lots of money" after finishing her education.

However, her disadvantaged family background brought her some difficulties in accumulating social and cultural capitals in university. On the one hand, she had extreme difficulties in studying computers and English, as she never saw a computer before university and the English education she received in her rural area failed to match the university standard. On the other hand, she had problems in building important social networks, because she only felt "comfortable to talk to students from similar family background" as herself and she "was not good at developing good relationships with professors." Because of her quietness in her department, she lost her opportunity of continuing graduate study in her university. Even though she was able to get into another university for graduate study, she realized her inability of accumulating social capitals, which would be important for her future school-to-work transition.

In general, Ping's experiences in her family and university reveal a double-disadvantaged situation: female students from disadvantaged family background, especially in rural areas, have less opportunities to receive a higher education and to obtain a satisfactory position in the labour market; at the same time, their disadvantaged family background prevented them from acquiring the composition and volume of capitals required for upward mobility.

CONCLUSION

For the vast majority of Chinese university students, especially those from low SES, university education is a necessary condition for upward mobility. However, in the process of social transformation, they have to face obstacles: the dramatic expansion of higher education, a persistently high unemployment rate, and an increasingly competitive labour market. When these young people start looking for jobs, they realize that there is a considerable gap between their expected return on university education and the actual job searching experience. A university degree may be important or even necessary, but it is definitely not sufficient for upward mobility. By using Bourdieu's conceptual framework of capitals and habitus, this study provides general patterns and in-depth analysis on how SES affect university graduates' postgraduate transition processes and how social inequality is reproduced through university experiences.

The quantitative analysis presents us a significant pattern that family background seems to indirectly influence students' postgraduate achievement through university experiences which are related to students' accumulation of adequate social and cultural capital for postgraduate transition (e.g., English skill, CPC membership, certificate of occupational qualification, etc.). This indirect connection between SES and educational outcome implies a rather hidden social inequality. The interpretative analysis of interviewees' experiences and narratives demonstrates that students' awareness and ability in acquiring adequate forms of capital is highly influenced by their class habitus. The internalized cultural capital through family cultivation can largely facilitate students' acquisition of social and cultural capitals which are important to their postgraduate goals. Lack of social capital from family can be compensated by converting cultural capital (e.g., communication skill, personality, values, etc.) into social capitals. However, many low SES students still would rather return to their original class lifestyle, as they found their aspiration is incompatible with university teaching and they felt dislocation due to the clash between their class habitus and university culture.

The statistical findings also reveal that the employment gap between female and male students persisted, even though female students have tried to compensate for their disadvantage by collecting more social and cultural capital while in university. It seems that female students were more likely to get into graduate studies, and this might be a result of failing to find a satisfactory job. The qualitative analysis also shows that many of female students used graduate studies as a strategy to postpone their school-work transition or as a backup plan after they failed to find a job. In addition, female students coming from poor rural families may face a doubly-disadvantaged situation in which they have less educational and employment opportunities than men, and they suffer from lacking important capitals, which inhibit them from integrating into a constructive university life and succeeding academically.

In general, this study has demonstrated that social inequality can be reproduced in higher education in China. Even though low SES students may have access to higher education, their chance of obtaining a higher socioeconomic position is highly constrained due to their lack of economic, social, and cultural capitals. The qualitative analysis in this study shows that the gap between a students' expectation on the outcome of university education and the harsh reality may be compensated for through accumulating different forms of capitals which, however, are mainly provided or/and reproduced through family and family cultivation. Coming from low SES family background, students' abilities are limited in acknowledging the structural obstacles and making strategic plans to deal with them, so they would be in a much more vulnerable position when facing school-to-work transition in transforming China.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE TRANSITION

NOTES

- ¹ Most of the employment rates were obtained through mass media. Researchers questioned the accuracy of these numbers due to three major concerns, firstly, they might be self-report information provided by individual postsecondary institutions which are likely to report higher employment rate than it actually was, secondly the criteria used by different research agencies or levels of government to define employment rate might not be consistent (Hu, 2005; Hui, 2010; X. Wang & Lan, 2010).
- ² The enrolment rate of rural students is the ratio between rural students who were admitted into colleges and all the rural students who completed high school; the enrolment rate of urban students is the ratio between urban students who were admitted into colleges and all the urban students who completed high school.
- ³ The conduction of this research project was led by Dr. Peter Li, Dr. Liming Li, and Dr. Li Zong.
- ⁴ White-collar worker here refers to a person who performs professional, managerial, or administrative work.
- ⁵ The College English Test (CET) is a national test of English as a foreign language in mainland China. The CET 6 is one level higher than the mandatory standard of English ability requirement for vast majority of university students in China.
- ⁶ A verse from the Analects of Confucius.
- ⁷ Senior high school provides educational preparation for the National College Entrance Exam (NCEE) and university. The student who get into senior high school is expected to receive postsecondary education.

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SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE TRANSITION

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17. TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO WORK

Dilemmas and Challenges of Graduate Un/employment

In 2013 Chinese graduate students face “the hardest job hunting season in history”, as their number reaches 6,990,000. This is almost equivalent to the population of Hong Kong (MOE, 2013). However, such pressure from the graduate job market has existed every year since 2002 when the first students who enrolled after China’s expansion of higher education in 1999 graduated. [Table 1](#) shows that university enrolment numbers increased from 1.16 million in 1998 to 6.86 million in 2012. This six-fold increase allows the Chinese government to announce proudly that China has achieved its national goal, set up in 1998, of achieving 15% enrolment in higher education by 2010.¹ While this goal was set in accordance with Martin Trow’s definition of mass higher education (Trow, 1973, p. 63), China’s move was incredibly swift and on such a large scale. By the end of 2004 the number of students in higher education institutions reached 20 million, and China had the largest higher education sector in the world (Zhou, 2005, p. 4). By 2012 the figure arose to 30 million, about 27% of the age grade had opportunities to study at higher educational institutions. According to the government’s plan, by 2015 the participation rate will rise to 35%, and to 40% by 2020 (MOE, 2012; Yang, Chai & Huang, 2013, p. 59). However, this achievement and the ambitious plan for the further development have been dogged by an increasing rate of graduate unemployment. As [Table 2](#) shows, over the years of continuous expansion the number of university graduates is now also six-times greater than that in 2001. Consequently, the problem of graduate unemployment and underemployment appears to have become more severe each year.

While China is not the only country that has faced the challenges of graduate unemployment, China’s upsurge in graduate unemployment since the 1999 expansion of higher education sector has specific causes relating not only to economic development but to education policy-making, and economic reforms as well as in higher education. With a focus on graduate unemployment, this study adopts Martin Trow’s theory as a theoretical framework within which the dilemmas and challenges of China’s mass higher education movement are analyzed. It also applies Ronald Dore’s concept of the role of education and his insights on the diploma disease to a further examination of the relationship between the development of higher education and economic growth. This paper argues that the simplistic use or even abuse of human capital theory by employing market rules exclusively to regulate and govern education is a practice that may be responsible for dire consequences when graduates are faced with an unemployment crisis.

Table 1. The enrolment number of HEI, 1998–2012

<i>Year</i>	<i>Enrolment number (10,000)</i>
1998	116
1999	167.8
2000	220.6
2001	268.3
2002	320.5
2003	381.83
2004	447.34
2005	504
2006	546
2007	566
2008	599
2009	629
2010	657 (657.459)
2011	675 (674.559)
2012	685 (685.25)

Sources: *Zhongguo jiaoyu shiye tongji nianjian*, 2000–2011; MOE, 2004; Yin & Lin, 2013.

Table 2. The graduate student number, 2001–2013

<i>Year</i>	<i>Graduate number (10,000)</i>
2001	115
2002	145
2003	212
2004	280
2005	340
2006	413
2007	495
2008	559
2009	611
2010	630
2011	660
2012	680
2013	699

Sources: *Zhongguo jiaoyu shiye tongji nianjian*, 2000–2011; MOE, 2004; MOE, 2013.

GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT: AN UNAVOIDABLE OUTCOME OF
MASS HIGHER EDUCATION?

Why did the central government in 1999 decide to increase enrolment in higher education by over 40%? Several factors may account for the rationale behind this decision. First of all, with the end of the Cultural Revolution of 1966 – 1976 China restored its higher education system and started educational reforms along with the move to a market-oriented socialist economy. Meanwhile, human capital theory and the instrumentalist view of education for economic development have permeated China since 1978. In 1985 the central government announced its reform plan, and embarked upon a decentralization process which gave the local government and higher education institutions more autonomy. A university system was then required to have multiple functions: teaching, research, business and social services. In 1993 the government launched further reform measures to increase accessibility to higher education, and a “user-pays” system was implemented along with fundamental changes in the job assignment system (Bai, 1998a). The expansion decision was officially acknowledged as “a natural outcome of the growing market economy,” and a “logical follow-up” to the implementation of the “user-pays” system (Xi, 1999, p. 21). The government further justified this decision by saying that there was a growing demand for highly qualified manpower which, in the context of economic globalization, had become a decisive factor that would affect China’s capacity to compete with developed countries (State Department, 1999, opening paragraph).

The more immediate motivation for this expansion, however, was to boost domestic consumption which had been sluggish since the 1997 Asian economic crisis. This large scale expansion of higher education was partly based on the assumption that it would be an effective stimulant to China’s economy. Also, it was a measure to cope with China’s urban unemployment rate which had risen steadily. In 1999 about 3,000,000 high school graduates would enter the labor market which could make the unemployment rate even higher if most of them were unable to enter universities. The government was clearly aware of the consequence of the critical situation and was worried that it would stir up political and social unrest. Therefore, it needed to find a trigger to stimulate domestic spending. Tang Min, the then chief economist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Mission in China, proposed the use of higher education to stimulate domestic consumption.² Prior to this proposal, Hu Angang, Director of the Centre for China Study, Tsinghua University, and his colleague Shi Zulin, had already urged policy-makers to treat the expansion of higher education as a priority in the government’s efforts to stimulate domestic consumption.³ Tang’s proposal echoed their views.⁴ Clearly, it was economists, rather than educational experts who made the expansion recommendation. Before this decision was made, scholars who opposed such a large scale expansion urged policy makers to gather sufficient information to estimate manpower needs and the capacity of the graduate job market to absorb higher numbers. Ji Baocheng, who was in charge of the higher education sector in the Ministry of Education, recalled in 2008 that he made it clear

to Chen Zhili, the then minister of MOE, that the expansion of higher education should not be based on the need to stimulate domestic consumption. Also, the Institute for Educational Research at Beijing University conducted specific research on the extent to which the expansion could contribute to economic stimulation, and concluded that the impact would be insignificant. Unfortunately, the concerns expressed by the experts in education were not considered seriously by the top leaders of the central government (Ji, 2008). With a focus on immediate economic growth, the policy-makers appear to have made the 1999 expansion decision with a disregard for the future structure of China's market-oriented economy, and without knowing the economic sectors in which manpower needs would increase (Kang, 2000, p. 34). As they were unable or unwilling to foresee the future problems in graduate employment, the 1999 expansion only released the job market pressure temporarily, and created more profound long term problems.

More than a decade later the government, in the face of almost seven million graduates seeking for employment, still listed the same old causes for the critical situation: a slow-down in the economy in China and the world, the high rate of urban unemployment and structural mismatches. According to Du Yubo (2013), the deputy minister of MOE, the slowdown in the world economy affected China's export, investment and labor market, which all made the situation of graduate employment in 2013 more severe than ever. Secondly, during the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011–2015), the unemployed *labor force* in cities stands at about 25 million. This means that China's job market has already been oversupplied, in addition to a decreased demand for university graduates compared to previous years. The problems associated with the mismatch between the needs of the labor market and graduates produced by universities, as well as imperfect services for helping graduates to find jobs, have also seriously affected students' employability.

Those who are responsible for 2013 graduate employment at universities and tertiary institutions shared Du's views. It has been widely acknowledged that the gloomy economic environment as a whole has caused aggregate demand for positions at hiring companies to drop compared to two years ago, and this has taken its toll on graduates looking for work. Traditional manufacturing industries are in the midst of a transformation and business with foreign trade is in a widespread recession. The ability of small and medium enterprises, along with foreign enterprises, to hire new recruits is on the decline, which spells an end to the lucrative nature of university majors like management, foreign trade and manufacturing, although the demand for graduates with majors related to computer technology, information and finance still remain (Wu, 2013). Although macro-economic conditions may be the key factor affecting graduate employment in 2013, China's continuous expansion of higher education sector may have also contributed significantly to the depressing job market picture for the class of 2013. Within the unsound foundation and structure of the existing higher education system, the Chinese government in 1999 centrally implanted the move to a system of mass higher education, hoping to reform higher education curriculum through expansion. However, the old system

was not flexible enough to cope with such a dramatic expansion, which resulted in the inevitable mismatches between the curriculum of higher education and the market demands, and between graduates' aspirations and their employability. Under these circumstances, the faster higher education developed, the higher the rate of unemployed graduates rose. The critical situation of graduate employment in 2013 appears to be the inevitable consequence of this top-down political decision-making process.

“CAPITAL TALENT” OR VICTIMS OF INFLATION OF EDUCATION DIPLOMA?

While the overall economic environment has always been blamed for the critical graduate unemployment situation, students' job expectations are often listed as the other key factor behind the gloomy picture. Graduates' job expectations, however, should be understood from a historical perspective and in the context of changes resulting from the reforms in the 1990s. Since the late 1970s, the notion of “human capital” (Kiker, 1971; Schultz, 1971) has been well received in China.

Education is seen as a type of investment at both national and individual levels; and it is believed that by spending more money on education economic development can be accelerated. This seemingly new idea has its roots in Chinese tradition. Historically, education as a type of investment, both in practice and theory, has never been foreign to the Chinese people. In traditional China, power, social status and wealth were inseparable. Within the civil service examination system in the late imperial period, degrees were the only channel through which people could change their social status, and obtain wealth as well as power.

Before 1949, China's school system was a combination of traditional and modern elements; by and large only a small portion of children – those from a wealthy family background – had the opportunity to receive higher education. From 1949 to 1966 wealth ceased to play a significant role in people's access to higher education; political background and academic merit were the two vital factors determining whether a person could enter university. Within the planned economy, students received free higher education, but had no choice as to their career destinations. Under these circumstances there were no job markets, and graduates had no concept of job-hunting.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), all intellectuals were denounced, and the notion that “study was useless” prevailed in the society. In this period, China actually faced educated youth unemployment, but the then government sent them to the countryside and effectively hid the problem. In the late 1970s when the Cultural Revolution ended, the importance of education was expressed in the national goal: “strengthening the country through the promotion of science, technology and education.” During a thirty-year period of reform, this national goal has laid the foundation for the Chinese interpretation of the concept of “human capital.”

The Chinese people's passion for higher education is also associated with an extremely close connection between higher degrees and income since the reform

in higher education in 1992. After that time the higher education institutes changed from “social institutes” to enterprises; students then became clients and had to pay their own fees. The government’s justification for this change was that graduates would benefit most through high returns upon graduation, so they should pay. The idea of paying fees as a type of investment was then accepted; to many families this investment appeared very attractive, and economic gains were indeed quite high. In order to realize this kind of high return, most graduates, taking advantage of the changes in the job assignment system, hunted for jobs in developed areas and coastal cities (Bai, 1998b). Therefore, since 1992 graduates have packed in big cities (such as Shanghai and Beijing). As two reporters found in their interviews with graduates, many insisted that they “won’t go anywhere except for the capital cities of provinces”, and they “are not prepared to work at the grass-roots level enterprises” (Xu & Wu, 2002). Students born in these big cities naturally do not want to work in regions ranked as third or fourth tier; those from the less developed regions would like to use higher elements; by and large only a small part (Li et al., 2002, p. 21).

Over a decade the government agencies, educational institutes and various organizations have all been trying hard to lower students’ job expectations, but most of these campaigns appeared ineffective. For example, in the face of the 2013 graduate employment market, university teachers, especially those who are in student career and employment fields, feel very anxious about the situation, in contrast to some students who are steadfast to the end with their demands, waiting on a job that will be both “lucrative and leisurely”. For example, some time ago a large communications firm went to Shanghai Dianji University to recruit an operator, offering a monthly salary of around ¥4000. However, many students disliked the fact that the job involved a three-shift system, so no one bothered to apply for it (Wu, 2013). Throwing away a job opportunity like this suggests that students have no idea of the gravity of their employment prospects.

Nevertheless, simply blaming students’ unrealistic job expectation does not help address the key issue of graduate unemployment and underemployment. Many students actually have now become more realistic than ever, but their changed attitudes do not appear to have made a major impact on the overall situation of graduate unemployment in China (Morrman, 2011). According to Martin Trow, there are three components of the dilemma of growth in the transition towards mass higher education: the egalitarian sentiment “that all provision in higher education ought to be substantially of equal quality (and thus of cost)”; “the criteria against which new forms of mass higher education are assessed are typically older, costlier forms of elite higher education”; and “a rapid and potentially almost unlimited growth of higher education at the per capita cost levels of the former small elite higher education places intolerable burdens on national and state budgets” (Trow, 1973, p. 85). Within this framework, we now need to examine the dilemma and problems which occurred in the large-scale expansion of higher education.

One of Trow's notions is that "the movement of the system from elite to mass higher education... does not necessarily mean that the forms and patterns of the prior phase disappear or are transformed." On the contrary the functions of the elite universities would still be performed or even flourish (Trow, 1973, pp. 73–74). In the context of a global "knowledge economy," research has become even more important than in the 1970s when Trow's point was first made. However, China's situation is different from that in the United States "where many of the elite and research-intensive universities are private and have emerged out of a long process of competition and natural selection" (Hayhoe & Zha, 2005, p. 21). In China, parallel with the move to mass higher education, Project 211 and Project 985 were launched respectively to enable the top national universities to become world-class universities in the 21st century. The elite universities within this project draw a large portion of their funding from the central government, while local universities and colleges are mainly funded and supported by local governments, and smaller and non-elite institutions receive little public money and have to survive by their own financial means. This hierarchical approach has been accepted without raising egalitarian concerns; however, excessively high tuition fees have become a serious problem in China's expansion of the higher education system. For instance, some institutes raised tuition fees in the name of expansion, and some "lowered admission scores in order to collect more money from students who would otherwise not have qualified." Such students had to pay as much as "an extra 100,000 yuan... up from the 3,000 yuan... paid by normally admitted students" (Xi, 1999, p. 21). Many institutions either exceeded the price ceiling set by provincial authorities or raised the fees of students already studying.

At all levels government has forbidden the practice of increasing tuition fees over the limit set by government policy, but in reality it continues. There are many reasons for this. First, the institutions which obtain little funding from central and local governments have to raise funds to ensure their survival, and student fees have become the main channel for this (Jiang, 2004). Secondly, the tuition fee hike is largely based on the assumption that students can afford more as Chinese parents are willing to pay for their children's future (Xi, 1999, pp. 21–2). Thirdly, it also relates to the emerging theory that higher education in the context of a market-oriented economy is no longer a "public good"; in order to attract more social capital "through the market mechanism," it should adopt more elements of market or quasi-market models into its system (*Beijing Review*, 1999, pp. 42, 26, 24).

The price rise definitely deprived poor students of the opportunity to receive higher education. Although there are no statistics available to show the negative impact on rural education, reports about increased drop-outs in some rural junior high schools, and of students who passed the university entrance examinations but did not enrol, indicate that the tuition fee hike and the gloomy graduate employment opportunities have caused concern among rural families and students (Bi & Hu, 2000, pp. 297–300; Kang, 2000, p. 34; Li, 2003, pp. 1–6). In 2009 the news that over ten thousand senior high school graduates in Chongqing did not sit for the university

entrance examinations brought the nation's attention to the fate of rural students. It was reported that the main reason behind this collective action was the employment difficulties faced by graduates from vocational schools and 3-year colleges (Yang, Chai, & Huang, 2013, pp. 164–166). Although mass higher education is supposed to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their family background, in reality students from rural areas and from families without social networks and financial means could hardly be in the same position to compete at the job market or to start their own business. While the government and educational organizations kept urging students to lower their job expectations, graduates from the prestigious universities, according to a 2009 report, could still enjoy the privileges in the job market; but by and large postgraduates had to accept jobs which previously were for 4-year university graduates, who then had to apply for the positions traditionally for graduates from vocational or 3-year colleges. Therefore, for rural students or those from less privileged families, they opted to enter the job market earlier when they calculated their chance of entering the key universities was zero (“*Chongqing 2009 nian you shangwan ming gaozhong biyesheng fangqi gaokao*,” 2009). It has also been reported that today fewer students from under-privileged family backgrounds attend first-rate universities. Even Wen Jiabao, the then prime minister, publicly expressed his concern over this trend (“*Guanzhu fangqi gaokao*,” 2009).

The concern over less privileged students suggests that the expansion of higher education has failed to close the gap between the elite and under-privileged social groups. Because of inflated educational degrees, the current educational practice has reduced the possibility for children in lower social stratus to realize the traditional Chinese dream: to change their fate through education.

Meanwhile, the expansion has also failed to address the issues relating to the mismatch between labor market demand and graduates produced through the higher education system. On the surface, national, regional and local institutions in the aftermath of the 1999 expansion have all accepted “the differential levels of resources and differential functions” given to them (Hayhoe & Zha, 2005, p. 22), a diversity Trow advocated in his theory. However, in the name of expansion many three-year institutes demanded up-grading to four-year regular university status, although their teaching and research quality did not warrant it. Some local government officials encouraged this practice, as they saw business opportunities and financial gains therein. So, whilst the central government was encouraging mergers among universities, new local universities emerged. Some institutes did not have laboratory equipment, so they expanded their enrolment in humanities. This kind of expansion resulted in an unbalanced curriculum structure, and became a hidden obstacle for later graduate employment (Kang, 2000, p. 35; Pang & Xu, 2001, pp. 72–75; Wang, 2001, pp. 145–153).

China's move towards mass higher education took place mainly by enlarging the size of institutions which was an efficient way of maximizing limited resources. However, many institutes were overloaded with students, and their teaching, research and students' living conditions were substandard. The resulting dilemma

was that “the rapid expansion of the system has made it difficult to sustain quality inputs such as the number of qualified faculty and staff, curriculum development and program upgrading, laboratory facilities, and library books” (Min, 2004, p. 39).

The hierarchical structure of the higher education sector also caused a wave of competition for entrance to key universities, which had a negative impact on the development of vocational education. The 1999 decision aimed to promote vocational education through expansion, and allowed vocational institutes at tertiary level to enroll an extra 200,000 students in 1999. Forty five new vocational institutes were established to accommodate these extra students. However, many students refused to register in such institutes. In some provinces about a third of the students who gained a place refused to enroll (Chen, 1999, p. 53; Kang, 2000, p. 35). This behavior reflected the concern of students and their parents about employability after graduation from vocational institutions.

About a decade later, the situation has changed very little. As Ji Baocheng (2013) observed, “These days almost no child of a municipal party secretary, mayor, county level party secretary or county’s head commissioner attends a vocational school. Even children of those who emphasized the importance of vocational education generally don’t attend vocational schools.” Students at vocational schools are primarily from poor and under-privileged families, or those from rural areas.

This observation is confirmed by a survey produced by the Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences and the MyCOS Institute. According to their findings, 88% of higher vocational college graduates over the past three years are the first generation of their families to attend university. In 2012, students with rural household registrations accounted for 82% of the total number of students attending middle vocational schools across the country. Middle and western region students accounted for 70% of the total number currently attending. The number of students with parents who were either farmers or workers accounted for 80% of the total (Ji, 2013).

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION: AN EFFECTIVE MEANS TO EASE GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT PRESSURE?

As discussed earlier, graduates from key national universities were more in demand than those from three-year colleges and universities ranked in second tier or even lower; there were more job opportunities for those with postgraduate degrees. Therefore, a belief has spread across all sectors of society that only graduates from key universities count. While “mass higher education institutes” have become more accessible, the university entrance examinations have become a battlefield for entrance to the elite universities, which is viewed as the only way to secure a future career.

Furthermore, because of the high rate of graduate unemployment, the rate of postgraduate enrolments has also been increasing. As [Table 3](#) shows, the 1999 expansion also triggered an increase in the number of postgraduate students. Prior to 1999, the increasing rate was kept steadily at about 10% per year; but the 1999

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expansion saw the rate jump to 27% in 1999, and afterwards 40% (2000), 29% (2001), 23% (2002), 33% (2003) and 21% (2004). By 2005 China proudly announced that it had become one of the countries with the largest number of postgraduates (Xie & Du 2006).

Meanwhile, criticism of China's postgraduate education surfaced, cautioning against the over-expansion and over-industrialization of China's higher education system. In 2006 Kai-fu Lee, a high-technology executive at Apple, SGI, Microsoft, and Google, wrote in his most followed micro-blog that the current universities produced excessive numbers of postgraduates with masters and doctoral degrees, exceeding the demand of the labor market. Furthermore, he continued, these postgraduates were not necessarily qualified as the talent for the 21st century. He argued that the ratio of research universities, teaching universities and vocational institutes should be 1:20:40. In his view, the current higher education sector blindly increased the number of postgraduates; consequently, the quality of university research and teaching had declined. He suggested that Chinese higher education institutions should focus on the training of qualified workers after their undergraduate studies rather than producing a large number of poor quality master or Ph. D. degree holders lacking real skills (Lee, 2006).

However, Lee's views were challenged by Ding Gang, a Professor at the Higher Education Research Institute, East China Normal University. In Ding's opinion, given China's population of 1.3 billion, the number of postgraduates produced to date at Chinese universities was still too small compared with many countries in the world. He also stated that China's postgraduate education had a "social adjustment" function which, he believed, could help ease increasingly severe employment pressure. From this perspective, Ding argues that China needs to produce more postgraduates (Lee, 2006).

Ding's view is in line with the government stance that the expansion of higher education is to serve political-economic needs. In 2009, a decade after the 1999 expansion, the Chinese government used the expansion of postgraduate education to ease the pressure of graduate unemployment, which was set to further increase 5 per cent of postgraduate enrolment from the previously planned figure. This increase was specifically designated for university graduates of 2009 who were expected to be enrolled as full-time postgraduate students instead of entering the job market (MOE, 2009).

Under such circumstances, over the years student motivation for undertaking postgraduate studies has changed little. As indicated in [Table 4](#), faced with the gloomy graduate job market in 2002–2003, many 4-year university graduates chose to pursue higher degrees in the hope that this would help them find better jobs. According to a survey published in January 2012 (See [Figure 1](#)), the majority of students held the same hope that postgraduate studies would help improve their competitiveness in the job market. Only 8 per cent of respondents indicated their interest in research.

Table 3. Number of postgraduates (Ph. D. + MA), 1998–2011

Year	Total Number of new recruitment (10,000)	Number of Ph.D students (10,000)	% increase	Number of Master students (10,000)	% Increase	The total number of Ph.D students enrolled (10,000)	Total number of MA students enrolled (10,000)
1998	7.2508	1.4962	15.83	5.7546	13.21	4.5246	15.3639
1999	9.22	1.99	33.00	7.23	25.64	5.4	17.95
2000	12.85	2.51	26.13	10.34	43.02	6.73	23.39
2001	16.52	3.21	27.89	13.31	28.72	8.59	30.74
2002	20.26	3.83	19.31	16.43	23.44	10.87	39.23
2003	26.89	4.87	27.15	22.02	34.02	13.67	51.46
2004	32.63	5.33	9.45	27.30	23.98	16.56	65.43
2005	36.48	5.48	2.81	31	13.55	19.13	78.73
2006	39.79	5.6	2.19	34.2	10.32	20.8	89.66
2007	41.86	5.80	3.57	36.06	5.44	22.25	97.25
2008	44.64	5.98	3.10	38.67	7.24	23.66	106.64
2009	51.09	6.19	3.51	44.9	16.11	24.63	115.86
2010	53.82	6.38	3.07	47.44	5.66	25.89	127.95
2011	56.0482	6.5263	2.29	49.5219	4.39	–	–

Sources: 2011nian quanguo yanjiusheng zhaosheng shuju diaocha baogao, 2012; MOE, 2004.

Clearly, postgraduate education has become an instrument to address graduate unemployment pressure by both the government and individuals. The key universities now have more postgraduate students than undergraduate students. For example, at Qinghua University the ratio between undergraduates and postgraduates is 0.61:1. The expansion of postgraduate education within such a short period and at such a large scale inevitably caused concerns regarding its quality. The most obvious indicator is the staff-student ratio. In 2008 a study indicated that about 15.7% of postgraduate supervisors had more than 10 postgraduates under their supervision concurrently; about 1% had more than 20 or even 30. As a result it is hardly surprising that some students complained that they did not receive adequate supervision as they rarely met their supervisors (Qu & Niu, 2012).

Most critically, the expansion of postgraduate education has failed to achieve its intended purpose: improving employability. The previous discussion points out that the driving force behind postgraduate studies is to acquire a better job and better income through better employability. This was certainly the case for

Table 4. Motivations for post-graduate studies, 2003

Motivations	Number (person)	Per cent
For research	884	8.08
For better job opportunities	6162	56.28
For self-improvement	3360	30.69
Just following the trends	244	2.23
Other	300	2.74

Sources: China Education and Research Network, 2003.



Figure 1. Motivations for postgraduate studies. Sources: 2011nian quanguo yanjiusheng zhaosheng shuju diaocha baogao. 2012

postgraduates in 2003–2004, as indicated in Table 5. However, with the rapid expansion of postgraduate education, the percentage of ‘the gold’ (*han jin liang* 含金量) in a postgraduate degree is once again reduced significantly thanks to the inflated university degrees. The policy may have been successful in “seeking temporary release” of job market pressure, but it has also enlarged the gap between postgraduate job expectations, the needs of the job market, the skills the postgraduates have learned through their education and what the employers desire. A report on the graduate employment situation shows that from 2005 to 2009 the employment number of graduates with an MA degree continuously decreased; in 2009–2010 the employability of some of MA degree holders was even worse than graduates with only a bachelor degree. A 2011 report from the job market in Jiangsu Province shows that the first-employment rate for postgraduates was 86.62%,

90.30% for 4-year university graduates and 94.10% for 3-year tertiary graduates (Qu & Niu, 2012).

This is also confirmed by a study of graduate employment from six “Project 985” universities. One explanation for this is that “postgraduates are relatively more specialized in their study field. They face a narrower employment market, have higher expectations for work, and are more unwilling to settle for unsatisfactory jobs” (Yang, Chai & Huang, 2013, p. 322). Such figures, along with the possible reason for this, may only be used as indicators, but it clearly suggests a different picture of postgraduate employability compared to what indicated in Table 5. However, many disagreed with such views, expressing the opinion that using the expansion of postgraduate education to ease the pressure of 4-year graduate unemployment situation was a desperate practice similar to quenching a thirst with poison (*yin zhen zhi ke* 饮鸩止渴), a temporary relief that results in a disaster. Therefore, the lower figure for postgraduate employment was actually a reflection of the lower employment rate of 4-year university graduates (Chen, 2009).

Table 5. The tertiary graduates and the first employment rate, 2003–2004

Category	Number of Graduates 2003	First employment rate (%)	Number of Graduates 2004	First employment rate (%)
Postgraduates	120,000	93	160,000	93
4-year university	900,000	83	1,240,000	84
Vocational colleges and 3-year colleges	1,080,000	55	1,400,000	61
Total/Average	2,120,000	70	2,800,000	73

Sources: Mo, 2004; 2003–2004nian jiuye xingshi he zhengce, 2004.

As discussed earlier, faith in education and its positive impact on economic growth is at the core of the Chinese acceptance of human capital theory as it was first proposed in the early 1960s. However, in the 1970s unemployment became widespread among school graduates in many parts of the world, and it hit the developing nations particularly hard as these nations expanded their education under the influence of human capital theory. Doubts about the positive impact of education on economic growth therefore arose. Ronald Dore critically described the escalation of academic diplomas as the “diploma disease,” arguing that “not all schooling is education. Much of it is mere qualification-earning” (Dore, 1976, p. ix). He distinguished education from schooling, saying that education is “a process of learning” for pleasure and with the mastery in a particular area of learning as its object, whereas schooling is only “a process of certificating” with job attainment or career advancement as its primary goal (Dore, 1976, p. 8). In his view, modern education systems in the mid-1970s constituted schooling without education as they

merely focused on job attainment. This type of schooling served to fuel the spread of the diploma disease. In his discussion of the relationship between education and economic growth, he clearly points out that “there was no spurt in educational provision preceding or accompanying the acceleration of economic growth known as the industrial revolution” (Dore, 1976, p. 15).

More significantly, how far can the development of higher education exceed the rate of economic growth? In 1969 a study of the causes of graduate unemployment in India questioned the notion that education as a type of investment would contribute to the economic growth of rich and poor alike, cautioning that “poor countries can have too much education, and the manpower shortage of yesterday can become the manpower surpluses of tomorrow” (Blaug, Layard & Woodhall, 1969, p. 1). Such surpluses “are common in poor countries,” “particularly in countries with long histories of formal education” (Blaug, Layard & Woodhall, 1969, p. 5). Although China’s current economic situation differs significantly from India and other Asian countries in the 1960s, China’s expansion in higher education has greatly exceeded the rate of economic growth, and this could result in a similar dilemma to that faced by India and other Asian countries a few decades earlier. Chinese policy-makers repeated use of the expansion of higher education to address the issues in economic development and the pressure in the job market would only get China deeper into the “diploma disease” trap.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION: THE DIPLOMA DISEASE AND TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO WORK

This study finds that China’s socio-economic conditions and the structure of the higher education system were unprepared for such a rapid growth in tertiary institution enrolments. While China’s labor market was unable to absorb this large number of university graduates, the old framework of China’s higher education system could not produce the talented graduates that the market demands for. Then the rapid and continuous expansion could only contribute to what Ronald Dore called “the diploma disease.” Although nowadays the important role of higher education in economic growth and well-being has been well acknowledged and accepted by many nations, the inflation of qualifications led to an increasing rate of unemployed graduates, whilst the higher education system failed to serve the national needs.

One of the goals for China’s expansion of higher education was to reduce the intense pressure students experienced in the university entrance examinations, and promote *suzhi jiaoyu* 素质教育 (all-round education) in schools. But this move to mass higher education has not resolved the existing problems in China’s “examination oriented” education, and the promotion of *suzhi jiaoyu* has so far proven futile. China’s expansion of higher education combined the powerful educational tradition with the concept of human capital and even intensified the competition for entrance to key universities. In the early stage of China’s reforms, the theory of “human capital” stimulated the entire nation’s enthusiasm for education with a firm belief

that education would make China strong and wealthy while providing individuals better career pathways and income. “Schooling-modernity-economic growth,” as the core formula in the Chinese concept of human capital, was well accepted on both national and individual levels. On the national level, this concept was elaborated in the policy of *keji xingguo* 科技兴国, meaning employing science and technology to make the country prosperous. Science and technology require education, so education was at the forefront of a new campaign to strengthen China. Human capital theory in relation to the individual investment in education is translated into a desire for greater capital gain. Extrinsic factors tend to dominate individuals’ motivation to pursue higher education, and the formula “university degree = good jobs = better income = social prestige” appears to have provided common people with a clear understanding as to why they need to invest in education. In short, monetary reward as the main aspiration for education fuels the Chinese enthusiasm for education, and so every year millions of students cram for the university entrance examinations. While China’s swift move to mass higher education as a political, social and economic means to overcome the pressure from the labor market has not created the planned benefits, it has shifted the competition for entrance to first rate universities and placements in postgraduate studies.

The continuous expansion of higher education has not successfully addressed the issues relating to the mismatch between the talents produced by the current higher education system and the demands of the labor market. While the elite universities in the “211” projects or “Project 985” universities are enjoying the greatest portion of the government funding, non-elite universities, especially vocational institutions, have found it hard to survive by their own means. Consequently, tuition fee hikes, lower teaching quality and poor conditions for teaching and learning have all become serious problems that affect the quality of higher education which, in turn, affects the employability of graduates.

In the face of such dilemmas and challenges, one might ask whether the net enrolment rate in higher education institutes alone can signal the establishment of a mass higher education system. China’s move to mass higher education has been orchestrated directly by the government, and higher education has been used repeatedly as an instrument to release unemployment pressure. Such practices have so far failed to address the issues in China’s higher education; instead it has become trapped in a malicious cycle where expansion is used to release unemployment pressure; but more graduates produced through the university production line brings more pressure to a labor market which is unable to “digest” these numbers. The existence of such a surplus does not necessarily signify an improvement in the quality of the Chinese population; rather it may simply reflect the escalation of academic qualifications.

The current severe pressure of graduate unemployment clearly indicates that the narrow interpretation of human capital theory can inevitably lead to dire consequences when graduates are faced with an unemployment crisis and their parents cannot capitalize on the investment they have made in their children’s

education. The surplus of over-educated graduates is certainly a matter of grave concern for government and for the whole of Chinese society. Therefore, the Chinese government has no choice but to change its focus in the development of higher education, i.e., to shift emphasis away from participation rates to a focus on building an excellent, broad higher education system. This requires an increased diversity in the roles and functions of different tertiary institutes, and a reform to the curriculum to address current and future workforce needs and skills shortages, and to place emphasis on research relevant to economic and social priorities. This change in emphasis may help prepare graduates for a smooth transition from the academic world to the world of work, and for the rapid changes of technology and the unpredictable economic environment.

NOTES

- ¹ It was a goal initially set by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in *Mianxiang 21shiji jiaoyu zhenxing xingdong jihua* (Action Plan for Revitalizing Education in the 21st Century), 1998. After the 1999 expansion, the MOE in 2001 planned to reach 15% enrolment in higher education by the end of the 10th Five-Year (2001-2005) Plan period. See Ji, 2003, p. 371.
- ² In November 1998, Tang Min and his wife Zuo Xiaolei submitted a letter to the State Department, advocating the use of education to stimulate the economy. In early 1999, a plan for expanding enrolment in the higher education sector was formed. At the time, the planned rate of increase was about 20% more than the enrolment in 1998. After a few months, the policy makers felt the rate was insufficient, so the planned rate of increase was changed to 47%. See Ji Baocheng's recollection in 2008 (Ji, 2008).
- ³ Hu Angang and Shi Zilin's proposal was first published in *Liaowang* (Outlook), No.7-8 (February 15, 1999), then in *Kexue shibao* (Scientific News) on March 26, 1999, with different titles. This chapter uses the version in Yuan, 2000, pp. 180–184.
- ⁴ Tang and Zuo's proposal was initially reported in the newspaper *Jingjixue xiaoxibao* (Newsletter of Economics) on February 9, 1999. This chapter uses the version in Yuan, 2000, pp.185-187.

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SECTION V
MARKET ECONOMY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

HILLARY PARKHOUSE AND XUE LAN RONG

18. INEQUALITIES IN CHINA'S COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Progress, Inadequacies, and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, China has experienced massive economic development, with its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) increasing almost 42 times from 1,206 billion yuan in 1987 to 50,532 billion yuan in 2012. Like many developing countries, the rapid economic progress in China since the 1980s has had contradictory effects. While economic development has generated strong public pressure for improving children's education, unequal economic development has increased regional differences in the educational attainment of different groups. In response to the growing gap in education and in income distribution between the haves and have-nots, more pressure is being put on Chinese leaders and intellectuals to develop long-term investment planning strategies to improve the living standards of the disadvantaged and make nine-year schooling opportunities available to all children.

A monumental piece of legislation on education, the Compulsory Education Law of 1986, is the most powerful legislation by far for achieving this goal. This law, along with the 15 other related laws passed in the same year, aimed to make literacy universal and mandate 9 years of compulsory schooling throughout China for the younger generation. Since then, China has rapidly expanded its educational system, with the government recently announcing its successful implementation in two major policy areas: mobilizing the entire population to achieve universal literacy and implementing nine-year compulsory education for the youth population, based on information from the Sixth National Population Census of 2010 (*China Education Daily*, 2012).

The two central questions that this article is intended to answer are: Have the inequality-related inadequacies in compulsory education in China been alleviated in the last two decades? In what areas, for whom, and to what extent have the inadequacies been alleviated? To answer these two questions, the article investigates the status of educational equality in China today, including persistent inadequacies regarding the educational attainment of disadvantaged groups in the context of the educational progress of the population as a whole. This paper compares more recent data with census data in 1990 and 2000. Due to paper length restrictions and data availability limitations, the scope of this paper is confined to analyses of

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inequality in educational attainment related to compulsory education, i.e., literacy rates and completion of nine years of schooling. Using mainly aggregated Chinese Fourth Census data (1990) and Sixth Census data (2010), this paper reveals the extent of the variance in various educational attainment levels for different groups in terms of gender, rural/urban residence, and ethnic minority status (where data is available) over a period of two decades. The authors have also made attempts to explain progress and areas for improvement as suggested by the research literature and analyse the impact of some specific government policies since 1990 that are responsible for reducing the discrepancies in educational achievement. To address our enduring concerns about existing inequalities in Chinese compulsory education, the article concludes with a number of policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was formed in 1949, the population was largely illiterate. Today, among the population of young people ages 15–24, the literacy rate is at least 95% according to 2010 Census data. Reforms such as compulsory nine-year education, recentralization of rural education financing, and teacher recruitment improvements, have dramatically altered educational opportunities for children throughout China.

Yet, inequalities for ethnic minorities, females, and rural residents persist. In August of 2012, the State Council announced measures to address the urban-rural divide in education, for instance ensuring no student had to travel more than 40 minutes to and from school (China Daily, 2012). The following section is an overview of the studies conducted over the past five years on various educational reforms in China, as well as consequent changes in educational opportunities for various groups.

Rural-Urban Divide

Beginning in 2000, China initiated rural taxation reforms to address the opaque and excessive fees levied on farmers to fund newly decentralized government roles in the absence of sufficient local capacity to tax. Wang and Z. J. Zhao's (2012) study analysed the impacts of this 'to the county reform' (*yi xian wei zhu*), which transferred educational funding from a township to a county responsibility, with more money and therefore control coming from the central government. The authors found that it succeeded in increasing recurrent spending, particularly in personnel spending; however it was less successful in improving capital spending, such as renovation of buildings. Overall however, they found no significant reduction in inequality between rural and urban educational spending. They conjectured that oversight by higher-level government might primarily reward short-term indicators of economic development, rather than long-term reforms like education. The authors proposed a better balance of local governing responsibilities with local authority to tax, as well

as a greater priority on financing and administering compulsory education at both the national and provincial levels.

Liu, Murphy, Tao, and An (2009) analysed the effects of fiscal recentralization of rural education specifically on the distribution of management responsibilities across different levels of government. Through survey data in Gansu (Western China), the authors found that 'to the county reform' resulted in three directions of power shifts: (a) a reduction in "the power sharing arrangements whereby the governor and the township government or the county education bureau and the township government jointly manage the school district"; (b) a shift "from township government to the county education bureau or the county government"; (c) a shift "from the township government to the governor" (p. 472). Each case impacted education differently. The authors contended that in the first case, the ambiguous delineations of authority led to power struggles and poor coordination of administrative responsibilities. In the second case, decision-making power was excessively situated at the county level, far from the daily activities and concerns of educators and school administrators. The final form, they concluded, is the most promising of the three.

Like Wang and Z. Zhao (2012), Litao Zhao (2009) reported that the central and provincial governments need to better enforce minimum spending requirements at the county level, particularly in poor areas. Zhao found that, since 2003, inequalities in per-student spending have declined. The rural-urban gap also narrowed more quickly than did gaps between regions. This is due to shift in funding to the county level, which allowed poorer rural areas to receive the same level of financial support as urban areas in the same county. However, across county spending has not been equalized, which has left regional disparities intact. Finally, Zhao found that inequalities in spending on primary education declined much more rapidly than did inequalities in spending on junior secondary education. China's overall spending was much more weighted toward primary education in this time period. In fact, for junior secondary education, the share of government expenditures actually declined between 1997 and 2005.

A divide still exists between rural and urban areas in enforcing the Compulsory Education Act for older students. Whereas all children are required to attend school through age 16 or 17, in rural areas this law has been more enforced for children under 7 than for those ages 8–16 (Song, 2012). Song also found that returns on education are typically higher in urban than rural areas, which may demotivate rural children from completing the compulsory nine years of schooling. The author conjectured this variation in returns might be attributable to poorer quality of schools and travel distances to schools in rural areas.

Gender Equality and the One-Child Policy

Recent research on gender gaps in education has focused on rural China because, since the 1990s, disparities have been greater in poor, rural areas (Connelly & Zheng, 2003). Song, Appleton, and Knight (2006) investigated gender inequality in rural

China and found no enrolment differences or educational spending until after age 14. At this point, the opportunity cost of sending daughters to school seemed to be perceived as higher than that of sending sons. The authors also investigated the links between parental educational attainment and investment in schooling. They found that maternal education had a stronger association with household spending on schooling, and specifically on schooling of daughters, than did paternal education. The authors recommended increasing female enrolment through subsidy policies, such as making schooling free for girls.

To better understand how parental perceptions of gender and schooling affect gender disparities, Hannum, Kong, and Zhang (2009) conducted a study in rural northwest China that used surveys and follow-up data on educational attainment seven years later. They found that although one in five mothers expressed a belief that “sending girls to school was useless since they will get married and leave home,” no significant gap existed in educational investments between sexes. This is surprising considering their findings that about half of mothers reported believing that schooling influences daughters’ earnings less than sons’ and the majority believed old-age support would come more from their sons than from their daughters. Also surprising was that, although girls had lower educational aspirations, they nevertheless had higher language achievement and academic confidence than boys.

Lee’s (2012) study suggested that China’s one-child policy has actually contributed to gender equality in education. He found that females in only-child households did not have to compete with male siblings and thus received more educational opportunities than did females in multiple-child households. Males in only-child households also had more educational opportunities than males in multiple-child homes because they are not competing for resources. They also found no difference in the number of years of schooling for only-child boys and only-child girls, whereas girls in multiple child-households tended to have fewer years of schooling than boys in multiple-child homes. The authors argued that these findings reflect growing gender equality in education. However, gender equality remains a problem in China, as evinced by the son preference that was also revealed in their analysis.

Ethnic Minority Groups

According to data from the Fifth National Population Census, ethnic minorities make up about 8.4 per cent of the national population (Zhang & Wang, 2010). In a special issue of *Chinese Education and Society* devoted to ethnic minority education, several issues emerged regarding how minority students negotiate preservation of ethnic identities versus assimilation to the Han majority. Several studies found that curriculum designed specifically for ethnic groups tended to focus primarily on language, neglecting the many other dimensions of their cultures (Z. Zhao, 2010). Although government-sponsored bilingual programs have shown promise in reducing the educational gap between Han and ethnic Chinese students, these interventions are stronger in some regions than others, and pressure often exists

to abandon ethnic languages in pursuit of higher material quality of life (Zhang & Wang, 2010). Furthermore, proficiency in the dominant language alone cannot overcome structural barriers to equality.

Zhao (2010) termed this the “China ethnic dilemma” and defined it thusly:

Chinese authorities establish, essentialize, and staticize cultural differences between groups, and at the same time also facilitate individuals to deny differences for social solidarity and national unity. That combines communitarian and liberal models of ethnic minority citizenship, informed by an ideology of state multiculturalism. (p. 8)

As an example, Zhao pointed to boarding schools that attempt to nationalize Tibetan and Uighur children, while at the same time instructing them in homogenous groups to maintain their ethnic identities.

In their analysis of educational returns in ethnic regions, Zhang and Wang (2010) found that, despite a constant increase in state investment in ethnic region education, a disparity persists between such regions as Yunnan, Guizhou, and Tibet, and the national average. They attributed this to several main causes. One is that, although ethnic regions have received grants and subsidies from the central government, their relative lack of financial support from individual and social donations has resulted in poorer facilities and relatively lower pay for teachers. Furthermore, the distance many students must travel to school has spurred the construction of boarding schools; however costs of room and board often prove prohibitive for rural households. Another problem is that, under a market economy, the talent flow (including teachers) has been largely out of ethnic minority regions because in cases such as Tibet and Xinjiang, where the investments in economics from government and private sources tend to be lower due to the relatively lower science and technology develop level and slower economic growth.

Zhang and Wang (2010) offered several specific recommendations to Chinese leaders for addressing these inequalities. In terms of funding, they called for all levels of government to “strengthen management over educational funds and assets and realistically improve the returns on fund usage and the efficiency of educational resources utilization” (p. 25). They added that private financing could be encouraged by raising popular awareness of ethnic education injustices, and perhaps even sponsoring rewards to incentivize donations. To attract talent to or back to ethnic minority regions, Zhang and Wang (2010) recommended subsidies for housing and nonmaterial incentives such as, “concurrent postings, short-term service, project cooperation, technology shareholding, and mandatory management” (p. 29).

Inequality on Local Scales

In “Intraprovincial Inequalities in Basic Education in Mainland China,” Lin (2009) observed that comparisons of education across provinces of China mask the large variation in educational attainment within each province. Various studies have found that intra-provincial disparities account for between 70 to 90 per cent of the total

inequality. A large portion of these are explained by intra-county and interschool disparities. These trends are seen not only in poorer rural provinces, but in wealthy urban areas as well. Inequalities have been found in education financing as well as quality of education. Thus local and provincial level governments are in need of policies to redress these issues.

One growing issue in urban areas has been the education of migrant children. It is estimated that only about one-half of school-aged migrant children in Beijing attend public schools, despite policies requiring local governments to educate this group (Wang, 2008). In his qualitative study of a migrant village in northwest Beijing, Koo (2012) pointed out that migrant children are rarely provided information about secondary schools and have trouble getting accepted because they cannot take the final open examinations at these schools. This is due to a requirement that students to take open examinations in their places of origin, rather than their new city schools. Since the 1990s, some informal private schools for migrant children have opened, but they often provide sub-par education and employ inexperienced teachers (Montgomery, 2012). Additionally, these schools are frequently demolished “in the name of urban development, lack of accreditation, or health or safety violations” (p. 601), resulting in interrupted education for the enrolled students.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Since the focus of the chapter is on studying changes in educational attainment related to equality factors over the last two decades at the national level, the only suitable data for this kind of research is census data. However, the 2010 Census educational attainment data that is directly related to ethnic minorities by gender, province, level of education, etc. will not be made available to the public until 2014. Therefore, the data presented in this paper is somewhat fragmented and discontinuous – the authors would like to acknowledge this limitation beforehand. Furthermore, the published aggregated data may also have some reliability concerns due to a lack of rigor and clarity in the definition of some categories, which leads to occasional inconsistency in numbers across various government publications based on the same data source. Hence, we advise readers to be cautious when they evaluate research centred on cross-group and cross-sectional comparisons. In addition, since most published data provided by the Chinese government is aggregate data, rather than individual-level data, it leaves little space for researchers to re-categorize variables and reorganize data analyses beyond the format of the data that was presented in government publications. Finally, we present the results in table form and did not conduct statistical tests regarding the significance of the differences between population segments. Since we are dealing with data at this magnitude level (e.g., the 1990 Census data was from a sample of 10% of China’s population), we expect that even tiny differences within samples of such a large size could be significant.

FINDINGS

Tables 1–4 present the results from data analyses of the educational attainment of the Chinese population based on the census data from 1990, 2000 and 2010 with one exception (1996 sample data was used in Table 2). We have organized our syntheses of these findings under three headings: a) Progress Made in the Last Two Decades, b) The Persistency of the Gender Gap Intersecting with Rural/urban Residence, and c) The Persistency of the Attainment Gap between Ethnic Minorities and the General Population.

Progress Made in the Last Two Decades

There is clearly a trend of progress made at all educational attainment levels for the total population – both sexes, minority and Han, urban and rural. First, Table 1 shows that illiteracy rates dropped steadily and on a large scale from 22.2% for the total population in 1990 (13% for males and 31.9% for females) to 4.9% in 2010 (2.5% for males and 7.3% for females). The decline in illiteracy rates was consistent in urban and rural areas and for both sexes: the urban illiteracy rate for the total population was 12% in 1990 (6.1% for males and 18.4% for females), but went down to 2.7% in 2010 (1.2% for males and 3.8% for females). In rural areas, there was also a drop

Table 1. Illiteracy and semi-illiteracy rates among population (age 15 and over), 1990, 2000 & 2010

	1990			2000			2010		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	22.2%	13.0%	31.9%	8.8%	4.7%	13.1%	4.9%	2.5%	7.3%
City	12.0%	6.1%	18.4%	5.2%	2.4%	8.2%	2.7%	1.2%	3.8%
Rural	26.2%	15.7%	37.1%	11.2%	6.2%	16.4%	7.3%	3.9%	10.7%
Rural/Urban Ratio (% Rural/% City)	2.18	2.57	2.0	2.15	2.58	2.0	2.7	3.25	2.82
Women to Men Ratio (% Female/% Male)									
Total	2.45		2.79		2.92				
City	3.0		3.4		3.22				
Rural	2.4		2.65		2.70				
% City Male/% Rural Female	6.08			6.8			8.9		

Source: State Statistical Bureau, Tabulation on the 1990 Population Census of the People's Republic of China and 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China from China's Ethnic Minority Statistical Yearbook, 2004

in the illiteracy rate, from 26% for the total population in 1990 (15.7% for males and 37.1% for females) down to 7.3% (3.9% for males and 10.7% for females) in 2010.

Second, [Table 2](#) shows that the gains in educational attainment have been made at all schooling levels. The percentages of the total population and of both sexes at the two lowest attainment levels (no schooling, completion of 6 years of schooling) were clearly reduced, and the percentages significantly increased at the higher

Table 2. Educational attainment for people (age 6 and over) by gender and education, 1996 & 2010

	1996			2010		
	Population	Male	Female	Population	Male	Female
No Schooling	15.6%	9.3%	22.1%	5.0%	2.8%	7.3%
City				2.1%	1%	3.2%
Rural				7.2%	4.1%	10.5%
Completion of 6 years of schooling	41.3%	41.1%	41.5%	28.8%	26.6%	31.0%
City				16.0%	14.6%	17.3%
Rural				38.1%	35.4%	40.8%
Completion of 9 years of schooling	31.5%	36%	26.8%	41.7%	44.1%	39.3%
City				36.1%	36.8%	35.4%
Rural				45.0%	48.8%	40.9%
Completion of 12 years of schooling	9.4%	10.9%	7.9%	15.0%	16.4%	13.6%
City				24.3%	25.1%	23.6%
Rural				7.7%	9.4%	6.0%
Completion of 3 or more years of college	2.2%	2.8%	1.6%	9.5%	10.2%	8.9%
City				21.5%	22.5%	20.4%
Rural				2.1%	2.3%	1.8%
Completion of 8 or more years of schooling	43.1%	49.7%	36.3%	66.2%	70.7%	61.8%
Men to Women Ratio		1.37			1.14	

Source: Data for 1996 were drawn from a sample of 1% of China's population. See State Statistical Bureau, China Statistical Yearbook, 1997 (Beijing: Statistical Publishing Company, 1997). Data for 2010 were from China's Sixth Census Survey in 2010

attainment levels (completion of junior high, senior high and three-year college or above) between 1996 and 2010. For example, 41.3% of the population had completed only 6 years of schooling in 1996 (41.1% for men and 41.5% for women), while in 2010 only 28.8% of the population was at the lower attainment level (26.5% for men and 31% for women). Turning to the upper end of the spectrum, [Table 2](#) shows a substantially higher percentage of the population completing 9 years of compulsory education: 43.1% of the total population (49.7% for men and 36.3% for women) in 1996 compared to 66.2% (70.7% for men and 61.8% for women) in 2010. The percentages of the population that completed 12 years of schooling and at least three years of college also increased enormously from 1996 to 2010.

Third, the patterns of progress in the total population's literacy rates and length of schooling over the last two decades have held steady in the case of ethnic minorities. Since minority educational attainment data in the 2010 Census was not made public until 2014, [Table 3](#) uses information comparing 1990 Census data with 2000 Census data. [Table 3](#) reveals that the illiteracy rate for all minorities was 17.8% (10.1% for men and 25.5% for women) in 1990 and 8.6% in 2000. [Table 4](#) also shows a vast increase in the proportion of the minority population that finished 9 or more years of education.

Table 3. Illiteracy and semi-illiteracy rates among population (age 15 and over), 1990 & 2000

	1990			2000		
	Population	Male	Female	Population	Female	Male
Minority illiterate	30.8%	20.5%	41.7%	14.5%	N/A	N/A
Han illiterate	17.8%	10.1%	25.5%	8.6%	N/A	N/A

Source: State Statistical Bureau, *Tabulation on the 1990 Population Census of the People's Republic of China and China's Ethnic Minority Statistical Yearbook, 2004*

The Persistency of the Gender Gap Interacting with Rural/Urban Residence

While general progress in educational attainment was made in the population as a whole and within each sex, gaps between the sexes and between urban and rural residents have been persistent. [Table 1](#) indicates that illiteracy rates declined significantly for both men and women; however, the gender gap ratios did not decline – in fact, they increased. For example, the gender gap ratio (% women to % men) in illiteracy rates in the total population was up from 1990 to 2010 (2.45 in 1990 and 2.92 in 2010). This pattern also held for both sexes when rural/urban residence is held constant. The gender gap ratio was 3.0 in 1990 and 3.22 in 2010 for the urban population and 2.4 in 1990 and 2.7 in 2010 for the rural population.

Table 4. Educational attainment for persons (age 6 and over) by gender and minority status, 1990 & 2000

	<i>Han</i>			<i>Minority</i>		
	<i>Population</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>1990 Census</i>						
Less than 6 years of schooling	20.6%	12.7%	29%	29/9%	21%	39.2%
Completion of 6 years of schooling	42.3%	43.2%	41.3%	43.5%	46.7%	40.1%
Completion of 9 years of schooling	26.5%	31.3%	21.5%	18.8%	22.8%	14.6%
Completion of 12 years of schooling	9%	10.7%	7.3%	6.8%	8.1%	5.4%
Completion of 3 or more years of college	1.6%	2.2%	1%	1.1%	1.4%	0.7%
Completion of 9 or more years of schooling	37.1%	44.2%	29.8%	26.7%	32.3%	20.7%
<i>2000 Census</i>						
Less than 6 years of schooling	9.0%			15.7%		
Completion of 6 years of schooling	37.6%			44.9%		
Completion of 9 years of schooling	37.3%			27.7%		
Completion of 12 years of schooling	12.1%			8.9%		
Completion of 3 or more years of college	3.9%			2.7%		
Completion of 9 or more years of schooling	53.3%			39%		

Source: State Statistical Bureau, Tabulation on the 1990 & 2000 Population Census of the People's Republic of China.

Table 1 also reveals changes in attainment gaps between rural and urban residents over the years: rural/urban attainment gaps increased for the total population as well as within each sex. The ratio for the illiteracy rate (% rural to % urban) for the total population was 2.18 in 1990 and 2.7 for 2010. It was 2.57 in 1990 and 3.25 in 2010 for men, and 2.0 in 1990 and 2.82 in 2010 for women. As a result, the impacts of the interaction between gender and rural/urban residence have been aggravated: in

1990, the ratio of illiteracy rates for rural females to urban males was 6.1, but in 2010, the ratio rose to 8.9.

However, when we analyse the data regarding 9-year (or more) schooling completion, we see an improvement in terms of ratio (% male to % female). [Table 2](#) reveals a smaller gender gap ratio for male to female (1.37 in 1996 and 1.14 in 2010). These numbers indicate males were 37% more likely to complete 9 years of mandatory education than females in 1996. However, males were only 14% more likely to do so in 2010. This is a phenomenon worthy of future investigation. Since the rural/urban residence category was not available in the 1996 survey, we will not be able to incorporate the rural/urban residence variable to conduct further analysis of 9-year schooling completion.

The Persistency of the Attainment Gap between Ethnic Minorities and the General Population

Since the 2010 Census has not yet released educational attainment data for ethnic minorities and the available educational attainment data in the 2000 Census (published in China's Statistical Yearbook 2004) was not classified by sex, we are not able to do a gender comparison within minority groups between 1990 and 2000. However, with the available data in the 1990 Census, [Table 3](#) shows that illiteracy rates among minority groups were 74% higher than that of the Han in 1990 and 69% higher in 2000. Furthermore, while the illiteracy rates in 1990 for minority males were double that of Han males, the illiteracy rates for minority women were four times the rates of Han men (see [Table 3](#)). The ratio between females and males in terms of illiteracy rates was higher for Hans (2.5) than for minority people (2.0).

[Table 4](#) shows that in 1990 the percentage of the minority population that had completed junior high, senior high or at least three years' college was far lower than that of the Han. Minorities were 29% less likely than Hans to finish junior high school (25% less likely in 2000), 25% less likely than Hans to finish senior high school (27% less likely in 2000), and 31% less likely than Hans to complete college education in both 1990 and 2000. When taking gender and minority status into consideration simultaneously, statistics show that Han males were twice as likely to finish junior high and senior high school as were minority females, and three times as likely to have a college education as were minority females. With regard to the change in percentage of people completing 9 or more years of schooling between 1990 and 2000, the ratio (% in 2000 to % in 1990) for Han people is 1.44 but the ratio for minorities is 1.64. This means that minorities made more progress during that 10-year period than did Han people. The minority-to-Han ratio of the gap for completion of 9 or more years schooling was unchanged between 1990 (.72) and 2000 (.73).

Due to the lack of systematic census data for analysis, we would like to cite information from research. Although the educational attainment of ethnic minorities

in China is generally lower than that of the Han, 2000 Census data reveals great variability in educational attainment among minority groups themselves (Postiglione, 1992). According to the 2000 Census data, 17 minority groups, most of them residing in northeastern and northwestern China, actually had one-third the illiteracy rates of the Han. By contrast, 15 other groups had illiteracy rates three times that of the Han. These latter ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Bulang, and Hani, usually live in Tibet and other southwestern provinces such as Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan (Rong & Shi, 2001). Kwong and Xiao (1989) reported that the illiteracy rate among minority groups is two to four times higher than that of the Han residing in the same region. The illiteracy rates for some minority groups can be extremely high if their demographic profile includes the combination of being female and living in underdeveloped rural areas in inland provinces – eight out of 10 such women were illiterate in 1990. In some ethnic minority groups, almost all rural women were illiterate.

Minority women residing in the least developed provinces were triply disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment. For example, although four out of 10 minority women were illiterate nationally, the illiteracy rates for the minority female population was 60% in Yunnan and 86% in Tibet. A minority woman residing in Gansu was 24 times more likely to be illiterate than a Han male residing in Beijing (81.5% versus 3.3%, respectively) (Rong & Shi, 2001).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In conclusion, the census data over the last three decades clearly indicates a vast improvement in educational attainment at all levels of schooling, for men and women, for residents in rural and urban areas, and for ethnic minority and Han people. But in spite of the remarkable progress, women, ethnic minority, and rural residents are still disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment at all levels and the advancements in education in the last three decades have not brought equal and equitable distributions (also see Cheng, 2009). Noticeably, there was a large-scale decline in illiteracy rates between 1990 and 2010 in favour of males and urban residents. Nevertheless, there are several positive developments worthy of our attention. Although females still lag behind males, the gender ratio for completion of nine years schooling was smaller in 2010 than in 1990. Moreover, regarding progress that ethnic minorities have made, the ratio of the percentage of minorities who completed junior high school compared to Hans was reduced between 1990 to 2000, the ratio (% minority to % Han) in nine-year schooling completion for 1990 and 2000 did not widen, and the growth in the nine-year schooling completion rate among the minority population outpaced the growth in the Han population during that 10-year period.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed in this paper are crucial given that researchers need to alert policymakers and educators to the continued growth of the attainment gap created by

pervasive inequality based on residence, ethnicity, gender and other factors. While the interpretations of the findings can be multifarious at multiple levels depending on which social, economic, political and cultural theories are applied, certain recommendations can be made in the following three areas: (a) Re-examine the educational investment strategies of the central, provincial, and local governments, (b) Promote awareness and timely understanding of the impacts of gender, minority status, rural/urban residence, etc. on education in the context of traditional and current political cultures, (c) Undertake school reform, including curriculum reform, and efforts to recruit and retain teachers, especially teachers from minority groups and from, as well as *for*, less-developed rural areas in inland provinces.

Investment Strategies in Education

Despite long-term and concentrated educational investment by the central and provincial governments in the poorest and least developed areas in recent years, expenditure on education in China has been far too low for too long. The Chinese Statistical Yearbook 1997 indicated that annual Chinese educational expenditures were lower than 2.4% of GDP in the 1990s: 2.4% in 1993, 2.0% in 1994, 2.1% in 1995, and 2.4% in 1996, ranking 114th in the world, far lower even than most other developing countries, compared with an average of 5.2% and 4.5% for Asian countries (China Statistical Yearbook, 1997). However, [Figure 1](#) shows that in the recent years, educational expenditures rose to 3.0% of GDP in 2006 and are expected to reach 4.0% of GDP in 2012.

Not surprisingly, there was a widespread disparity among regions and provinces in terms of educational expenditures. Scholars (e.g., Sherman & Poirier, 2007) have compared 14 advanced developing countries, including China, India, Russia, and Brazil and indicate that China showed the largest regional gap in terms of expenditures per K-12 student: in 2001, the highest-spending region (8559 yuan) spent 16 times more than the lowest (638 yuan). Moreover, provincial and local governments reportedly violate the law by withholding educational budgets. Funds from local governments are even less likely to be forthcoming in comparison with those from provincial governments. As a result, rural schools often receive far less money than their urban counterparts within the governmental required budget. It should come as no surprise that the annual expenditure per rural student in some provinces is less than 100 yuan per student per year.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Chinese government, like governments in many other developing countries, tended to improve rural education by initiating programs that focused more on informal education than on formal schooling and other long-term educational planning. However, in recent years, programs that were popular in the 1990s such as *Xiwang Gongcheng* (Project Hope), *Chunlei Jihua* (Project Spring Flower Bud), and the *Saomang Jihua* (Eliminating Illiteracy Campaign) were not heavily promoted. Instead, the central and provincial governments allocated a large amount of money in 2006 to the direct funding of primary schools and junior high

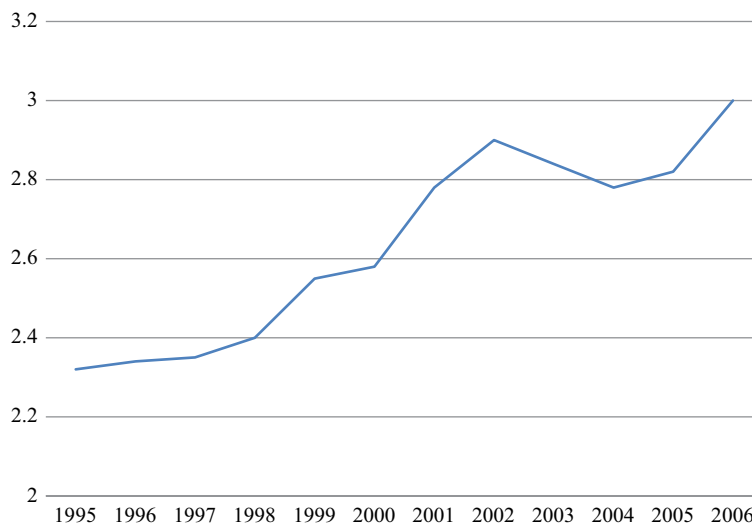


Figure 1. Expenditures per student (as% of Per Capita) in China, 1995–2006.
 Source: Information from China Statistical Yearbook (1997 & 2007)

schools in less-developed rural areas and minority concentrated areas in 12 inland provinces in the western part of the country. The central government funded 80 per cent of these provinces' educational budgets and this investment model in education was later extended to another 10 agricultural provinces in 2007 (World Bank, 2007). These funds enabled local governments to offer incentives to groups historically lacking in educational opportunities. The incentives include exemption from school tuition, free provision of boarding and meals, books, uniforms, and other needed items, and provision of direct subsidies to households through scholarships for educational materials and transportation (Wu, 2008). Provincial governments also hold local officials more responsible for enforcing the compulsory education law (i.e., making sure parents send their children to school). To further reduce educational disparities among regions and between rural and urban areas, we recommend increased accountability and support for local governments to enforce compulsory education, particularly for older students. Additionally, policies must work to equalize spending in rural areas across counties and provinces.

Impacts of Gender, Minority Status, Rural/Urban Residence

Before and since the 1986 legislation there have been heated debates about who should be held responsible for the lower education status of marginalized groups. Rong and Shi (2001) pointed out that recognizing and understanding the contradictions in education policies in the current political culture might result in potential solutions.

These contradictions include decentralization versus accountability, local control versus legitimation, priority versus equality, quality versus quantity, and privatization versus government control of schools. Governmental officials and policymakers should be educated and re-educated on the issues of social class, gender, ethnicity, and rural/urban residence in Chinese society (Ginn, 1996), as well as how these dimensions interact. For instance, attention should be paid to how the intersection of minority status, rural residence, and being female often compounds the effects of each separate characteristic. Policies to boost educational achievement for women and other disadvantaged groups must systematically and aggressively take into account geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic factors in the search for strategies to meet the challenges (Hannum & Wang, 2006).

School Reform

Teacher recruitment reforms. Niu (2009) highlighted the brain drain of veteran teachers from rural areas since the free contract between school and teacher (*Jiaoshi Pinren Zhi*) reform of 1993. New teachers have also been less attracted to rural jobs, exacerbating the current disparity between rural and urban teachers in terms of resources and in-service training (Ayoroa, Bailey, & Crossen, 2010). To remedy this, the State Council issued the The Decision on Enhancing the Rural Education in 1993. This requires teachers who wish to raise their rank to serve in rural schools for a certain period, usually between one and six years (Niu, 2009). In 2007, the central government initiated the Free Teacher Education Project (*Mianfei Shifan Jiaoyu*). In exchange for working in his/her home province for at least ten years, a participant receives free tuition, board and an allowance at one of six nation normal universities training teachers for rural areas. Finally, a school transfer fee has also been established through which urban schools must pay a fee to rural schools in order to hire one of their teachers. However, Niu argued these reforms are not enough. Niu recommended rural teachers also receive higher compensation, more training, and that more qualified graduates be recruited to teach in rural areas.

Curricular reforms. Reforms to Chinese curriculum have also been initiated, such as a shift away from the traditional exam-oriented approach and towards the more holistic approach of nations such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, as well as the student-centred approach that has gained popularity in Western nations (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). Some of these reforms include reduction in student workload and hours of instruction per year, less emphasis on rote learning and exam preparation, and more emphasis on cultivating creativity, teamwork, and practical skills. A driving force has been competition for high status foreign jobs, which often require the latter skills listed. Popular support for these reforms has been widespread, however many teachers have complained they have not received enough training on the new approaches. There has also been a lack of accountability and evaluation of these curricular reforms. Ultimately, Dello-Iacovo found that exam-oriented approaches

still predominate across China, and that attempts at more modern curricular reforms have proven unable to counteract the growing inequality in China's new market economy.

Concluding Recommendations

In addition to the educational investment recommendations described above, we recommend the following reforms for curriculum and teacher recruitment/retention. High quality teacher training should be provided to rural residents and minorities wishing to become teachers. They should be incentivized to remain in their communities, their knowledge of which is likely deeper than that of urban transplants. Curricular reforms need to be evaluated in terms of their ability to prepare *all* students for the current global job market. Those found effective should be tentatively implemented in other regions, using continual evaluation to adapt them to the local context. For any of the reforms suggested to be successful, however, central and provincial educational expenditures must increase, especially at the secondary level, and per-student spending across regions, and across counties within provinces, needs to be equalized.

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19. WIDENING URBAN RURAL DIVIDES

Examining Social Exclusion and Education Inequality in Chinese Schools

INTRODUCTION

China has undergone dramatic reforms since the adoption of the open-door policy in the late 1970s. Market principles were introduced to reform the planned economy adopted since the establishment of P. R. China. Accordingly, privatization, marketization and decentralization were widely used to restructure the public sector, including education. As a result of these neoliberal reforms, schools and universities relied more and more on revenues from markets and local governments. This, however, has posed a challenge for education equality. As schools depended more on local economy, economic disparity has become an important cause for education inequality. In particular, while China has experienced unprecedented economic growth in the past three decades, this growth has not benefited the urban and rural residents equally. Instead, it has widened the existing gap between cities and villages, which consequently led to urban rural inequality in education

Historical reasons, together with the current political and economic arrangements, have divided the urban and rural regions into two economies and two societies. Urban residents enjoy clear advantages, not only in educational services, but on most key lifestyle components, such as income, social services, and social security (Knight & Song, 1999). Restricted by the *Hukou* (household registration) system, rural residents have limited freedom to move to cities and do not enjoy the same social welfare as their urban counterparts (Chan & Zhang, 1999). The urban rural divide has drawn significant attention from both academics and practitioners, not only because it is a major cause of education inequality, but also because of the convincing evidence of social exclusion (Hannum, 1999; Wang, 2011). In the transformation from a planned economy to a market economy, China is experiencing social stratification and even polarization (Li & Bray, 2006). It is noted that the urban poor and rural poor are being excluded from markets, the urban society and welfare services through the accelerated process of urbanization and social transformation (Liu et al., 2008). Therefore, unequal conditions in school have been produced by both specific arrangements for education and a wider socio-economic context. In many respects, China represents a puzzling case given both the complexities in, and the persistence of, education inequality. To speak of inequality in China necessitates

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a rather broad understanding of the term, here understood to include inequality of both opportunity and process.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND EDUCATION INEQUALITY: KEY PERSPECTIVES

There are different perspectives to analyze social exclusion and education inequality, among which three distinctive approaches that make difference to policy making are resource based approach, right based approach and capability approach (Robeyns, 2006). Given the complexity of the China case, each approach provides a useful perspective to investigate contextual and specific causes for education inequality.

A dominant resource based approach underling educational policy is human capital theory. Human capital refers to personality traits that contribute to social production (Goode, 1959). The possible benefits for accumulation of human capital for individuals are increased employability and higher income (Becker, 1964). Therefore, decisions for education are informed by comparison between potential benefits and costs, including direct expenses such as tuitions and living expenses, and opportunity cost, such as reduced salary during training or forgone income in the period of receiving education. Due to the positive externality of education, society as a whole also benefits from investment of human capital through increased productivity, a better equipped workforce, and a well educated population. This provides ground for public investment in human capital.

Importantly for the present context, this approach has been widely adopted in examining the urban-rural disparity in education in China. For example, Ren (2010) uses survey statistics to demonstrate the effect of *Hukou* on return of education. He suggests accumulation of human capital and the pay-off in the labor market are largely determined by students' *Hukou* and consequently where they are educated (urban vs. rural schools). Drawing upon data from the 1980s, Knight and Song (1999) observed differences in educational attainment between urban and rural students even at that time.

Whilst these indicators are useful in that they paint a picture of educational expenditure and academic attainment and thus offer a straightforward way to analyze inequities between urban and rural students, they reveal only a partial picture of the problem due to the limitations of this approach. First, focus on resource distribution reduces education process to resource input and output (Unterhalter et al., 2007). Second, its overemphasis upon the instrumental value, particularly the economic value, as the benefit of education leads to negligence of the intrinsic value of education (Robeyns, 2006). From a human capital perspective, the value of education rests exclusively in private or collective return in economic forms, such as higher income or increased efficiency and productivity. Thus critics allege that HC fails to recognize social roles and the intrinsic value of education. On these grounds, Human Capital theory has been considered inadequate as a tool to investigate inequalities confronting people from diverse backgrounds who have different expectations regarding education (Robeyns, 2006).

By contrast, the right based approach views education as a basic human right every individual born with, and that some party, normally the state, has the obligation to ensure such a right. Efforts have been taken by the international society to promote the right to education through a number of documents and movements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the United Nations, 1948), the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), and more recently the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2000). Many countries subscribe to these international declarations and integrate the right to education into national constitutions or legal frameworks, thus ensuring the implementation of the right in practice. Both the intrinsic and instrumental value of education is acknowledged by the right based approach. On the one hand, education is essential to the development of life skills; on the other, it is an enabling right through which other values (e.g., respect, tolerance and equality) can be promoted. Even if education may not be able to pay off in human capital terms, every human being is entitled to decent education (Robeyns, 2006).

Despite its appeal, the right based approach has obvious limits. One frequent critique is that this approach makes grand declarations full of empty words and thus provides “no route for governments being held to account for their actual practices” (Unterhalter, 2005, p. 111). Nevertheless, one might argue that this is not a problem with the right approach *per se*, but with its implementation, as the good intentions of this approach have not often been effectively integrated into legal and administrative frameworks at the international, regional and national levels. Moreover the value of the RA, in terms of being a normative standpoint which highlights fairness in making regulations and rules, is a contribution to education equity in its own right. Therefore, it provides language which reminds us that “people have justified and urgent claims to certain types of treatment, treatment that secures their central capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 36).

The capability approach provides a new perspective to investigate the problems of the urban-rural divide in education by examining equity in capability development. To introduce the basic tenants of the capability approach, it is motivated by dissatisfaction with utilitarianism, libertarianism and Rawlsianism (Sen, 1979, 1990, 1992, 2000), and rooted “in the failure of standard theories to take adequate account of forms of deprivation and inequality” (Vizard & Burchardt, 2007, p. 15). Sen (1979) disputes Rawls’ resources-based concept of justice (Rawls 2001), and instead argues that the focus of social justice should be the distribution of capabilities. This includes both process equity – the achievement of capabilities (such as respect, participation in social life, access to education, housing, healthcare and other public services) – and opportunity equity, or the freedom to do so (Sen, 2005). Though disputing resource based measurements on equality, the capability approach does not deny the significance of resources in enhancing quality and equality of life (Walker, 2005, 2006). Instead, it recognizes the individual difference in conversion from resource to capability, that is, individual differences and constraints which affect what people can *actually* do and be, even if they are confronted with the same set of goods (Sen, 1979).

The central idea of CA is that human well-being is closely related to the “concentration on freedom to achieve in general and the capabilities to function in particular” (Sen, 1995, p. 266). Accordingly, analysis on equality would emphasize what people can actually do and be. This requires a distinction between functioning and capabilities. The former, which refers to “the various things a person may value doing or being” (Sen 1999, p. 75), is “more directly related to living conditions” (Sen, 1987, p. 36), such as being well-educated, well nourished, having access to paid work, food and shelter and being engaged in social life (Walker, 2006). The later is essentially a notion “of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead” (Sen, 1987, p. 36). Therefore, “a functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve” (Sen, 1987, p. 36). Agency freedom is central to the selection process of capabilities and functioning, in which the criteria for selection depends only on one’s own values and objectives, regardless of external factors (Sen 1999). The concept of agency highlights individual well-being, and therefore attaches features of what Walker (2005, p. 106) calls ‘ethical individualism’ to Sen’s CA. The CA not only emphasizes diversity and uniqueness of individual background, but also acknowledges the importance of external environment. It is sensitive to context, which is achieved through the establishment of links between the position of individuals and underlying social, political, economic, and cultural conditions (Vizard & Burchardt, 2007). This leads to a critical question, whether the institutional design can enable people to enhance capability in their realm of autonomy, or if it would confine them to specific states or actions.

Because of the different philosophical bases and analytical focuses, these three approaches are often used in competition. Nevertheless, despite each approach having its own premises which are sometimes incompatible with others, they still have strengths which complement each other. Both Sen (2005) and Nassbaum (2011) agree that the capability approach goes along well with the right based approach and that the two approaches can possibly supplement one another. While the former provides concrete ideas to supplement the abstract language of the later (Nassbaum, 2011), the normative value of right based approach for policy making, and its influence on global politics, provides what the capability approach lacks – a well-known discourse outside academia (Philips, 2002; Robeyns, 2006). Despite the criticism on economic values of education emphasized by resource based measurement for justice, the importance of resources is never denied. Instead of viewing resource as an end, the capability approach highlights the significant role they have as a means to help people realize potential. Borrowing well-developed indicators from human capital theory supplements the capability approach in assessing sufficiency of resources in promoting/restricting capability development, while focus on education process and the intrinsic value of education would rectify overemphasis on the economic value of education from a resource based approach. Therefore, this chapter will draw upon the strengths of the three above analyzed approaches to broaden the scope of analysis,

with the aim to provide a new perspective to investigate the problems of the urban rural divide in education which policy makers are unwilling/unready to deal with.

THE URBAN RURAL DIVIDE AND EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN CHINA

Though efforts have been made in recent years to reduce the urban rural gap in China, the dichotomy proves resilient given the difference between urban and rural regions ‘is even written into la’” (Harvey, 2005, p. 142). The better overall living conditions of urban residents, demonstrated particularly by an over three times higher income level in urban households (per capita) (NBSC, 2011), attract people to cities when they have the choice, especially when they are educated and seeking to improve themselves. This, however, creates a vicious cycle – well educated people go to cities leaving no one behind who can follow through with their good education in rural areas. Therefore, the urban rural divide has sharpened the urban rural disparity in education. What follows now is an investigation into how each of the three models discussed earlier shed light on different aspects of education inequality.

Key Point Schools and Restrictions on Capability and Freedom

Whilst it is widely acknowledged that education is an important means to enhance capability (Healy & Slowey, 2006; Klasen, 1998; Mellor et al., 2001; Rothschild, 1998), little attention had been given to the negative impacts of education on capability development until recently (Bradshaw et al., 2004; Healy & Slowey, 2006; Unterhalter et al., 2007; Waters, 2006). By investigating the context and implications of the ‘key point’ schools in China, this section illustrates how certain education policies confine agency freedom and hinder capability development, particularly for rural students.

The policy of key point schools dates back to the 1960s following Mao’s call to establish a number of good quality schools (Li & Wang, 2007). This plan was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, however, during which time radical attempts were made to equalize the quality of education across schools (Hannum, 1999; Li & Wang, 2007). After this political turbulence, the state’s priority leaned towards economic development. The education sector was restructured to train a skilled labor force to serve national economic goals. Given the limitations of available resources, the state attempted to do more with less by concentrating investment on a number of key point schools in cities in the hope of producing quicker and better results (Hannum, 1999; Murphy & Johnson, 2009). Thus a comprehensive hierarchical school system was developed, consisting of average schools, and key point schools at county level, city level, provincial level and ministry level (Li & Wang, 2007).

Key point schools enjoyed funding priority commensurate to their goals to produce more students that could progress to higher education (Hannum, 1999). Compared to other schools, key point schools were better equipped not only in terms

of infrastructure, but also quality teachers and students. However most, if not all, of the key point schools are located in urban regions; this has become a major cause of unequal access to quality education between urban and rural, or inequality of opportunities.

Furthermore, the key point school system has posed serious challenges to capability development for rural students. Due to *Hukou* limitations, it is very difficult for rural students to move to cities and attend key point schools. This undermines the agency freedom of rural students because they are restricted from pursuing goals that they may value. The poorer quality of schooling in rural regions also risks diminishing students' capability because of inadequacy in providing knowledge and skills necessary for both intrinsic and instrumental purposes. Indeed, tracking is an important factor contributing to widening gaps in academic achievement, particularly when mobility between tracks is limited (Burris & Welner, 2005; Gamoran, 1992). Moreover, tracking is also likely to produce a labeling effect among students, and the stigma attached to those in lower tracks is often linked to lower self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as lower aspiration for learning and future life (Algozzine & Stoller, 1981; Brodbelt, 1991; Sechrist & Stangor, 2005). Therefore, due to the key point and average schools classification, those who go to the latter tend to be viewed as academically and intellectually inferior by both themselves and society. Such a perception is likely to negatively influence students' attitude and behaviors (Sechrist & Stangor, 2005). Therefore, the process of being educated in non key point schools provides evidence of inequality for rural students, which would inevitably lead to inequality of outcome, or functionings.

To address this problem, the Act of Education (Standing Committee of the National Peoples Congress, 2006) was modified and put an end to the key point school policy. In practice, however, this legal requirement has not appeared to have fundamentally changed the situation, as the *de facto* privilege of key point schools remains, even if they are not using the label 'key point' (Bao, 2010; Li & Wang, 2007).

Given that the urban rural divide in education is not deliberately caused by a certain policy but more of a consequence of interrelated social processes, this would appear to provide evidence of passive exclusion in education (Wang, 2011). This passive exclusion is related to a wider socio-economic context in which a poorer living and learning environment undermines the collective capability of rural students. Indeed, the overall living conditions in rural regions are inferior to that in cities. Urban residents seem to benefit disproportionately from the economic growth in China by enjoying better economic opportunities and social welfare (Bao, 2010). It is noted that there are huge and widening gaps on financial affordability between urban and rural residents (Figure 1). Poor financial family background, on the other hand, is considered to be a major cause for higher drop-out rate and lower academic performance in schools (Brown & Park, 2002). This, in turn, is likely to cause disadvantages in job markets, which consequently leads to lower income and

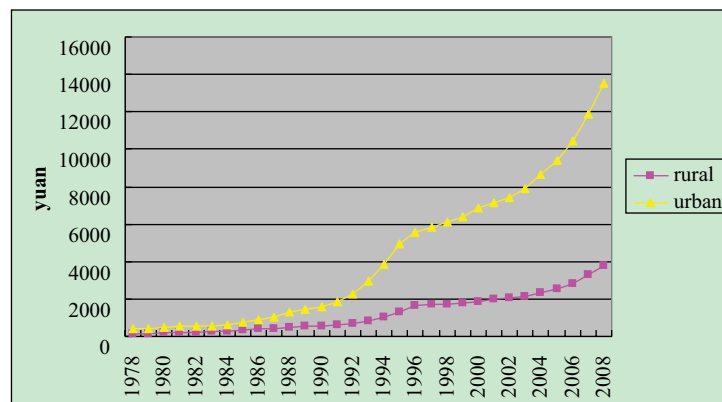


Figure 1. Consumption expenditure of urban and rural households (per year) (1978–2008). Source: NBSC 2010

living standard, which often adversely affect their children's education. Therefore, the overall disadvantaged socio-economic status of the rural areas poses a serious challenge to capability development of rural students as a whole.

Urban-Rural Disparity in Resource Distribution

There are studies which show that effective resource allocation tends to have a more positive impact on education equality in developing countries than in developed economies (An et al., 2008). Unequal resource allocation, which is disproportionately in favor of urban regions, is generally viewed as a major cause of urban rural disparity in education (UNDP, 2008). The latest Outline also adopts indicators measuring education input and output, including but not limited to fiscal investment, school conditions, teacher's background, access rate, and dropout rate (State Council, 2010). It suggests that education for urban students is better than that for rural students in terms of quality and opportunity for further studies (Bao, 2006; Wang, 2008). Firstly, the government provides less funding for education in rural regions than in cities. This results directly in lower education quality in rural schools. In 2007, public funding for secondary schools in rural areas was 103.2 billion *yuan* (USD 14.7 billion), which was only two thirds of the total expenditure on urban secondary schools (150.1 billion *yuan*, or USD 21.4 billion); however the population in rural areas was 1.3 times larger than that in urban regions in the same reporting year (NBSC, 2009). In terms of per student budgetary expenditure, the figure for urban primary was 154 *yuan* (USD 22), which was 1.6 times the figure in rural areas (95 *yuan*, or USD 13.6). The per student budgetary expenditure for junior secondary school in urban areas was 164 *yuan* (USD 23.4), compared to 126 *yuan* (USD 18) in rural regions (UNDP, 2008) (Figure 2).

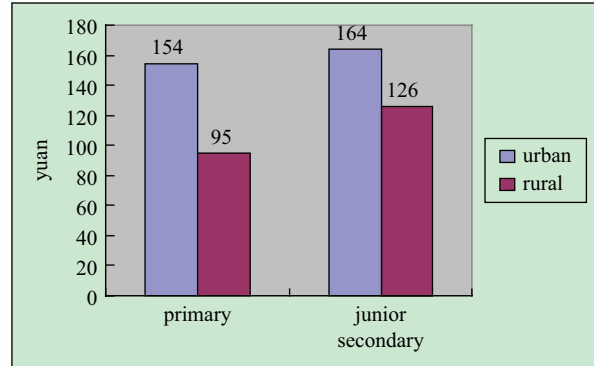


Figure 2. Budgetary expenditure on basic education (2004).
Source: developed from UNDP 2008

Quality of teachers is another important indicator for education quality. Despite the criticism on reducing measurement of quality of teachers to their academic and professional backgrounds (An et al., 2008), there is some validity in adopting these easy-to-measure factors as they provide a quick, though perhaps not comprehensive, guide to the urban rural disparity in education. It is recognized that the general quality of teachers in rural regions is lower than that in cities. For instance, there are less full-time teachers in rural compulsory education, and moreover, rural teacher educational attainment is lower than their urban counterparts. Figure 2 shows that the proportion of teaching staff who do not meet the national minimum requirement on educational attainment is higher in rural schools, while the rate for those with high educational attainment is much higher in cities than in villages (Figure 3).

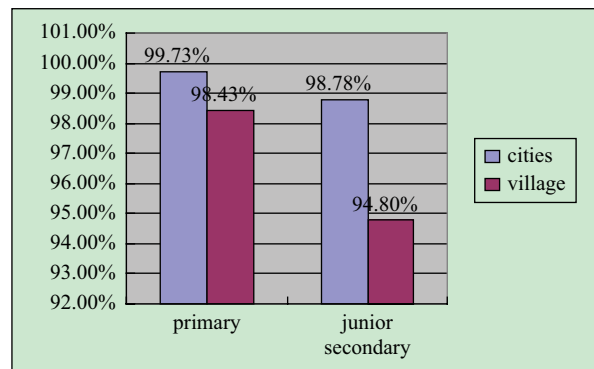


Figure 3. Percentage of teachers meeting the national minimum requirement on educational attainment (2006).
Source: developed from UNDP 2008

There are also more experienced teachers with senior professional ranks in urban schools, as illustrated in Figure 4. In addition, ageing of teaching staff is also a problem for rural school education (Bao, 2006). The underdevelopment of school education in rural areas seriously undermines successful progress from school to university, and therefore contributes to the low social mobility of higher education for rural students (Wang, 2011). Consequently, rural residents are disadvantaged in job markets because of low educational attainment, even though relaxed *Hukou* system allows them freedom to access market.

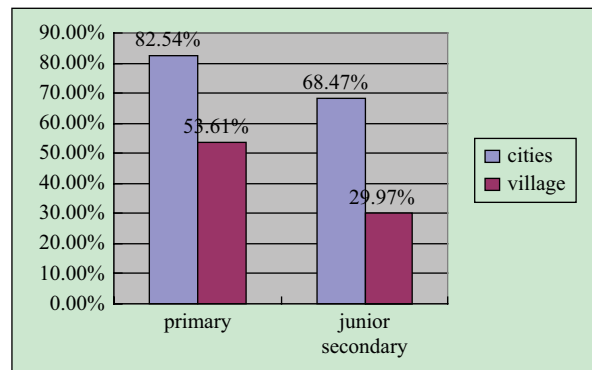


Figure 4. Percentage of teachers with high educational attainment (2006).
Source: developed from UNDP 2008

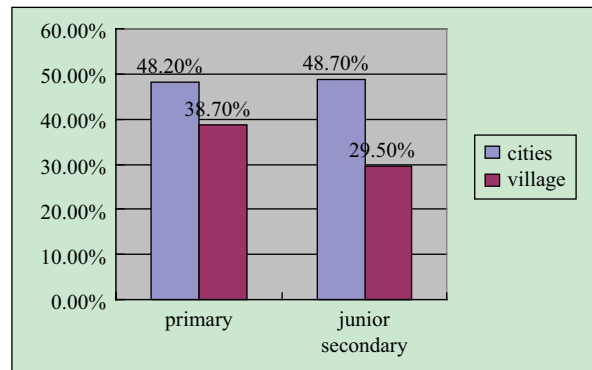


Figure 5. Percentage of teachers with senior professional rank (2007).
Source: developed from MOE 2008

Hukou System and Violation of Equal Educational Rights

The urban-rural disparity in education is a key dimension of the urban rural divide which is related to institutional factors deeply embedded in complex social processes.

The divide is rooted in the *Hukou* system which is designed to control the mobility of rural residents. The *Hukou* system was implemented in the late 1950s as a means to monitor the flow of population from countryside to cities. The *Regulation on Household Registration in People's Republic of China*, passed in 1958, legitimized the registration system of *Hukou* (Standing Committee of the National Peoples Congress, 1958). In 1964, the *Regulation of the Ministry of Public Security on Household Reallocation* was approved by the State Council, specifying that migration from countryside to cities, as well as from smaller to larger cities, would be restricted to discourage migration from rural to urban regions (State Council, 1964). These documents formed the legal basis for the urban rural dichotomy. With the implementation of a series of policies that favored urban residents in terms of social welfare and economic development, the urban rural divide has been widened (Bao, 2006).

Although it is stated in the Act of Compulsory Education that every child has an equal right to education (National People's Congress, 2006), it does not appear to be the case in practice because of the *de facto* disadvantage of rural residents in accessing education, particularly quality education. Yet rural students have not always been at a disadvantage. The decade of the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976, witnessed an exception to the urban superiority. In line with communist ideals and the empowerment of proletarians, the education system was restructured to equip peasants and workers with knowledge and skills. As a result of this movement, access to education in rural areas was enhanced at the expense of urban students (Murphy & Johnson, 2009). In the late 1970s, an over-emphasis on ideology and 'redness' was replaced by an urgent call for economic development; the education sector was, therefore, reformed to facilitate the achievement of national economic plans. Given that the starting point was low and that resources were limited, the state adopted a stratified strategy which concentrated investment on quality education to build elite schools in cities on the one hand, and expand rural education to eradicate illiteracy on the other (Hannum, 1999). While this policy had been effective to facilitate economic development, it inevitably led to rural schools being designed to be inferior to their urban counterparts (Hannum, 1999).

With the ease of mobility restrictions and prosperity of private markets in recent years, a large number of peasants, up to one tenth of the national population according to the 5th census (Dong, 2010), move to cities for better paid off-farm jobs (Murphy & Johnson, 2009). This, however, has caused serious problems for the education of their children. Some children move to cities with their parents, while others are left behind in rural areas; there is a vast body of literature demonstrating these children's education is passively affected in either situation (for example, Dong, 2012; Feng & Song, 2009; Wang, 2008). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate how migrant children are marginalized in school education, it is important to note that they are deprived of equal rights to education (Dong, 2010). As a result of the increasing number of migrant children, tensions arise in respect to access to education between permanent urban residents and the new

comers (Goodburn, 2009). The state's initial reaction to the situation was to channel migrant students to lower-quality private schools to assure local residents' access to good public schools. This was achieved by issuing a policy to allow public schools to charge extra fees, up to ten times the amount paid by local students in some cities, for those without a local *Hukou* (Dong, 2010; National Education Committee and Ministry of Public Security of China, 1998). Although migrant workers may earn more working in cities, their income is still significantly lower than average urban residents (Research Office Project Team, State Council, 2006). Therefore, they could barely afford the extra fees charged by public school and thus their children were essentially kept out of quality public education.

This financial barrier was lifted in 2003 in an effort to reduce the growing inequality between urban and rural students (State Council, 2003). Consequently, extra fees for migrant students to attend public schools are no longer backed by the state. Local governments in some regions, such as Beijing and Shanghai, issued relevant policies to subsidize migrant students in their localities (Dong, 2010). However, these policy responses appear to be more like *ad hoc* remedies to growing dissatisfactions with education for migrant children, rather than fundamental solutions to assure migrant children's equal right to education (Wang, 2011). This is because no practical arrangement has been made to specify the responsibility of the state in financing migrant children's education nation wide. Therefore, in practice, cost of schooling is often shifted from local government to migrant students (Dong, 2010; Goodburn, 2009).

There is a consensus that the urban rural disparity is a key dimension of education inequality. However, efforts to tackle the problem have not appeared to be effectively integrated into the legal and administrative framework in China. It is noted that while the Act of Education assures equal rights to education for some disadvantaged groups, such as disabled people, ethnic minorities and students in underdeveloped regions, it does not specify the state's responsibility to guarantee equal access to education between urban and rural residents (Bao, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion shows that each approach brings a useful perspective to examine education inequality in China (Table 1). The normative significance of the right based approach is clearly illustrated by the Act of Education; however, an equal right to education between urban and rural residents is not assured in the implementation as a result of both the passive exclusion caused by unequal socio-economic status of urban and rural residents, and the active exclusion caused by certain policies that exclude rural students from quality education (Wang, 2011). This clearly demonstrates the inequality of opportunity to access quality education for rural students. It follows, therefore, that although the right based approach fails to have a significant impact upon policy implementation, it is a useful tool for normative judgment by which scholars can enhance their understanding of educational inequality (Sayer, 2000). By contrast, human capital theory has had a significant influence on Chinese

education policy. The instrumental value of education for economic development and national competence is emphasized, while resource based indicators are adopted in the Outline (State Council, 2010). Ironically, even though resource input is heavily weighed in the measurement of education equality, the resource allocation apparently favors urban schools thus creating a vast gap in education quality between urban and rural schools. Application of the capability approach in the Chinese context reveals the negative impact on education in terms of capability development. Inequalities embedded in social processes are likely to constrain agency freedom in making educational choices, which would consequently undermine opportunity equality. Flawed educational design also hinders capability development and causes inequalities in the education process.

Table 1. Implications of the three models for education inequality in China

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Findings</i>	
Right based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal right to education is stated in the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal social status undermines equal right to education • Some policies exclude rural students from quality education • Equal right is not assured in implementation
Human capital approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource based indicators are adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-emphasis on resource input as measurement • Unequal resource allocation
Capability approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of capability is acknowledged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency freedom is confined • Flawed educational design hinders capability development

Source: developed by the author

Given the complexity and persistency of urban rural dichotomy in China, analysis from the perspectives of capability development, resource distribution and promotion of human rights are all important to broaden the analytical scope of education inequality. This allows one to investigate the persisting urban rural disparity as a dynamic cycle with processes of change that takes account of children's development of capability set and interpersonal and inter/intra-regional impacts on wellbeing. Consequently, improvement of education equity for rural students may require efforts from within and beyond the education system, given the interaction of right, capability and capital and the way they shape education disparity between urban and rural regions in China.

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20. NAVIGATING THE ASPIRATIONAL CITY

Processes of Accumulation in China's Socialist Market Economy

INTRODUCTION

In the years following the death of Mao and the accession of four new groups of Chinese Communist Party leadership, much has changed on China's political, economic, and cultural landscape. With "reform and opening up" as an overarching dogma, precious little remains of the policy and governance structures of the Mao years. The growth of inequality in income and wealth has remained one of the few reliable constants of this "reform era." In this chapter I consider the problem of inequality under the "socialist market economy" through an examination of China's emerging urban educational culture. The chapter reports on findings of a case study of a single city in north-central China. I examine how an emerging moral order that I call the "aspirational cité" (following Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) orients the beliefs and activities of the city's middle-class parents as they go about educating and getting an education for their children. Precepts of this aspirational cité articulate with processes of urban expansion and renovation to bring about new material forms and spatial relations. These processes are bringing into being an "aspirational city" that both nurtures and favours particular kinds of people, modes of educational practice, and ways of relating to society as a whole. Drawing on Harvey (1973, 2003) and Bourdieu (1985), I show how "accumulation by dispossession" in the material domain enables and constrains the pursuit and unequal acquisition of dominant forms cultural capital.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study upon which this chapter is based aimed to bring the educational beliefs and practices of Chinese parents into relation with the cultural and physical environments within which they are formed and elaborated (Yochim, 2014). Contemporary social life, particularly in its urban forms, is ineluctably a matter involving both social and spatial processes (Harvey, 1973). Therefore, the study of people, their ways of thinking and doing and their cultural milieus, requires that we deploy both sociological (cf. Mills, 1959) and spatial or geographical imaginations (Harvey, 1973). As Harvey points out, "spatial forms are not... inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but... things which 'contain' social processes in the same manner that social

processes *are* spatial” (p. 11). This fundamental condition of interrelatedness demands that the analyst consider “how best to portray the interpenetration between social process and spatial form that arises out of human practice” (p. 11).

The analysis in this chapter is mindful of social-spatial interpenetration in two ways. First, in the section below entitled “The Aspirational Cite,” I consider the ways in which official and popular conceptions of good people are linked to emergent spatial forms of the contemporary Chinese city. What it means to be a “good person” in a given place and time is a crucial component of Boltanski & Thévenot’s (2006) and Boltanski & Chiapello’s (2005) conception of “order of worth.” An order of worth comprises a comprehensive set of criteria by which judgements are made about the value or “goodness” of people, things, and social arrangements and, at the same time, can provide justification for one’s participation in an extant social order. Propaganda of various kinds is the primary vehicle by which an officially sanctioned order of worth is proposed and promoted, whereby “a series of novel political-cultural forms” is created to fulfill “the pressing need of the CCP...to consolidate its hold on China, justify its legitimacy, and instill a new socialist culture in the nation” (Hung, 2011, p. 2). An order of worth is also a set of propositions, precepts, or prescriptions that orients—imperfectly, to be sure—the thoughts and activities of people who live in a given socio-cultural environment. In this chapter, I focus on the kinds of people put forward as models of good persons under the present day order worth. To be sure, these models have changed over the course of China’s revolutionary history in terms of the traits, knowledge, and behaviours they should obtain and display. It goes without saying, for example, that the worker-peasant-soldier student of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution bears little resemblance to the contemporary image of the well-balanced student that animates the dreams of policy maker and parent alike. One of the crucial venues of ideal subject formation is the city itself, and the shapes and textures of its emerging spatial forms represents a rich expression of social and spatial interpenetration.

The second indicator of the interpenetration of social and spatial processes is the ways in which the emerging city has become a social field upon which the educational practices of parents appear as practices of accumulation. Viewing these activities, intentional and otherwise, as practices of teaching and learning that produce, with greater or lesser success, particular kinds of citizens only partially explains the transformations of Chinese educational culture occurring at present. A second set of concepts of use in the present research comprises Bourdieu’s (1986) notions of “capital,” “habitus,” and “field” (Bourdieu, 1986). For Bourdieu (1998), capital exists in three “fundamental guises” (p. 47). Economic capital is only one of these, though it is typically the most visible and, from the perspective “life chances” (Weber, 1999 [1922], p. 116), the most important. Indeed, growth in the income and wealth of the informants at the centre of this study and in Chinese society at large is essential to any explanation of the depth and breadth of educational activities that Chinese parents engage in both inside and outside of the family home. Money, to

say the least, is a condition of possibility of pursuit of the high *suzhi* promoted in the aspirational *cit *. It is also clear that all of the informants in this study are—some more, some less, some directly, others less so—beneficiaries of the enormous quantities of economic capital released and generated through the process of urban renovation. Money and property of various kinds, however, tell only one, albeit pivotal, part of the story. Also crucial and often mis-recognized are concurrent processes of “social” and “cultural” capital conversion and accumulation, that is, the processes by which social connections and social status, esteem, and expressions of taste come into play to differentially position and re-position people over time. For my purposes, it is cultural capital that is of most concern as two of its three forms—“embodied,” “objectified,” or “institutionalized” states (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47), are central to my observations in this study. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which parents pursue particular forms of embodied and institutionalized cultural capital, for these practices can be seen as both objects and products of pedagogic action, whether diffuse, family, or institutional (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu sees the embodied state as the fundamental form of cultural capital (p. 48) precisely because it is disproportionately acquired through bodily practices that begin very early on (Bourdieu, 1977; Eagleton & Bourdieu, 1992).

Thinking in Harvey’s (2005) terms, spatio-social processes of the kind playing out in China’s cities in general and in Shijiazhuang in particular can be understood as “accumulation by dispossession.” Harvey draws on Marx’s notion of “primitive accumulation,” renaming it to take account of contemporary forms of dispossession in an era of advanced capitalism. He (2001, 2005) describes accumulation by dispossession as a response to a “crisis of overaccumulation,” a condition characterized by the existence of stocks of unproductive capital that, inevitably, seek productive outlets to restart the process of accumulation. Accumulation by dispossession comprises a collection of processes, some “cutting edge” (p. 147), and others, more useful for my purposes, familiar throughout the history of capitalism, specifically “the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights...into exclusive private property rights (p. 145). The role of the state in this process is also crucial (p. 45), as is the process of proletarianization, by which whole classes of people are co-opted as wage-earners (p. 146). Accumulation by dispossession involves not only the enclosure of new physical spaces, but also the “appropriation and co-optation of pre-existing cultural and social achievements as well as confrontation and supersession” (p. 146). In the case of contemporary China and other developmental states, it is the process by which “determined entrepreneurs and developmental states... ‘join the system’ and seek the benefits of capital accumulation directly” (p. 153). Accumulation by dispossession, in this connexion, is “the necessary cost of making a successful breakthrough into capitalist development with the strong backing of state powers” (p. 154). The task of assessing the linkage of urban renovation to inequality in China is necessarily a matter of linking “the mechanisms which connect allocational decisions...on such things as transportation networks, industrial zoning, location of public facilities, location of

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households, and so on with their inevitable distributional effects upon the real income of different groups in the population” (Harvey, 1988, p. 51).

THE STUDY

The Site

This study is designed to explore the thoughts and activities of parents in only one urban setting. But its implicit claim is that the observations I make are “transferable” (Guba, 1981; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) to other similar urban contexts. Therefore, it is worth pausing to dwell on the kinds of restrictions that the phrase “similar urban contexts” implies. Such limitations flow in part from the multiple meanings ascribed to “urban” in contemporary China. Popular exposure to all things China in recent years has led to a relatively high awareness of that country, including the fact that it is fundamentally split along urban-rural lines. Yet to recognize this and to make too simple a division between the two is to fundamentally misunderstand that “urban” might designate, *inter alia*, distinctions of: governance, where it implies “city,” a level of government that includes provincial capitals as well as those urban centres one step below; size of a locale (a “big” or “small” place) in terms of population or, more importantly, economic development and/or political influence; residence status, where one’s *hukou* (户口—residence permit) literally inscribes a semi-permanent gradation of citizenship and the place (s) where the rights associated with *xiang xia* (乡下—countryside/rural) and *chengshi* (城市—city/urban) status obtain more or less fully; and/or a more generally implied social status, where the suggestion of or even proximity to rural origin can be particularly damning. As lived experience, these distinctions shift and increase in complexity as rural to urban migration proceeds apace, effects not diminished by the temporary status of much of the staggeringly large migrant labour population. The population of any given Chinese city is now surprisingly hybridized and undergoing constant change as a result.

For the purposes of this study, “urban” designates parents who live in Shijiazhuang, a city of moderate economic development and political influence on the national scene, and, thus, a not-prestigious but, on the whole, typical non-internationalized Chinese city. To the residents of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, or Guangzhou, even to residents of second-tier eastern coastal cities such as Dalian or Wuhan, Shijiazhuang is rather *tu* (土—literally “soil” or “earth,” but inflected as a slight it connotes backwardness) and, by implication, much closer to “rural” than they see themselves to be. Yet it is, at the same time, the capital of a province of roughly seventy million and the largest of that province’s eleven cities. By 2004, the city proper housed a relatively modest two million, but, as the centre of its own prefecture, it now governs more than nine million people. While it does provide a range of educational opportunities to the residents of Hebei, its post-secondary institutions are not in the same class as the relatively few, well-known, and nationally supported comprehensive institutions located in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Xi’an. For all intents and purposes,

then, while Shijiazhuang is most definitely a “city” and certainly not “rural” by the objective standards set out above, it nonetheless can be seen to be so by the subjective criteria described in the fourth of the categories of distinction. Put differently, for Shijiazhuang’s most aggressively upwardly mobile, true urbanity exists elsewhere, in Beijing, Shanghai, or overseas.

The Participants

Initial participants in the study were recruited purposively, a strategy associated with “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and subsequent informants were recruited using snowball sampling. I identified parents of children currently in the midst of their nine years of *yiwu jiaoyu* (义务教育 – compulsory education) as well as those of children about to enter these years. When I initially interviewed these parents, they were parents to children ranging from *youeryuan* (幼儿园 – preschool/kindergarten) to *chu san* (初三 – Lower Middle School Year Three/Grade 9), or approximately three to fifteen years of age. By the end of the period of study, the youngest of these children was in her last year of *youeryuan*, the oldest in the midst of writing *gaokao* (高考—high school exit exams). Initial informants were drawn from an existing group of contacts that included past work colleagues and research collaborators. Subsequent informants were identified through referrals from this initial group, i.e., through “snowball” or “respondent-driven sampling”, an approach that provided access to respondents whose occupations, e.g., government/Party officials, made their recruitment problematic (Heckathorn, 1997). I recruited informants representing a total of fifteen families. Those introduced below were key to the data generation as I was able to interview them most thoroughly and spend the most time observing them.

Data Generation and Analysis

I collected four types of data in the study. First, I compiled a time-based series of corpora consisting of magazine articles, policy documents, speeches, editorials, posters—any material that contained guidance to its consumer in terms of what kinds people might be considered “good,” what forms of knowledge and activities ought to be pursued in order to rear such people, and how the fostering of population comprising them could bring about a developed, just society. I constructed four corpora, each comprising documents in and around the years 1950–1955, 1966–75, 1978–1989, and 2000–present. Second, in order to document and interpret the processes transforming Shijiazhuang, I took photos of public places, construction sites, *da zi bao* (大字报—big character posters) announcing *san nian da bianyang*, and of the many posters and billboards advertising housing and commercial developments. With these data sources, I was concerned with recording *san nian da bianyang* in terms of both spectacle—i.e., the massive scale and scope of change and the impact on the city’s residents—and as visual indications of the city as

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re-imagined in planning documents. I collected maps of the city at different points in time, some available publicly, others supplied by contacts. I also collected news stories detailing plans for and discussing the progress of *san nian da bianyang*. Third, following completion of informed consent procedures, individual respondents were engaged in an informal interview whose purpose was to establish a trusting relationship, to sensitize me to their life circumstances, and to spur my thinking on productive lines of inquiry in subsequent interviews. Each of the respondents was interviewed on at least one further occasion about a range of topics that preliminary reading, observations, and interviews suggested might be of concern to parents, as well as matters of theoretical interest. Fourth, I kept a written account of the things I saw, heard, and experienced while gathering and reflecting on data in the field work phase of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

THE ASPIRATIONAL CITÉ

There have been many important changes in China in the past two decades, and these have been accompanied by a new vision of what it means to be a good person. This vision is merely one aspect of an order of worth that I call “the aspirational cité” that also includes new conceptions of valuable knowledge and appropriate ways of relating to others. What can be said for certain is that in large segments of China, educational development is no longer focused on popularization but, rather, “quality.” This focus is often framed by the concept of *suzhi jiaoyu*, a notion closely tied to processes of differentiation (competition and choice), privatization/marketization (Chan & Mok, 2001), and, according to a diverse group of writers, the bodily transfer of surplus value from the *nongmingong* (农民工—peasant labourers) to the nascent “middle-class” (Anagnost, 2004; Fong, 2007; Murphy, 2004; Wang, 1998).

The Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) (Ministry of Education, 2010) is the culmination of a long process during which the most current order of worth has come into being. As the quotation above from the document suggests, the overriding aim of educational action in the coming decade is the production of a citizenry whose knowledge, skills, and attitudes positions the nation for the economy of the future. This order of worth has at its core a heavy critique of past educational practice, in particular the lack of creativity produced by the system, said to be the result of *yingshi jiaoyu* (应试教育—exam-oriented education), excessive indulgence of parents in their children, and excessive pressure placed on children by parents. China’s education system fails to produce top-notch talent. Chinese students are “scoring machines,” rather than “earnest [applicant]s in their chosen fields” (H. Zhang, 2010, p. 49). It is these qualities of China’s educational system and culture that are the target of the most recent focus on *jianfu*, which is articulated less in the specific language seen in the past, and more in the overwhelming weight of a normative vision of what the system and culture ought to be that amount to a culture of *jianfu*, a discursive structure that uneasily reconciles contradictory desires for

educational attainment with anxiety over excessive pressure, the development of the nation with intensification.

Publicly available sources, both official and popular, are replete with commentary on the qualities that define a good person in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Desire, curiosity, creativity, love of learning, optimism, autonomy, generosity, dedication, filiality—all of these come together in descriptions of ideally “balanced” students, parents, teachers, and workers. Each of these categories of good people seek out opportunities for learning in a wide range of venues, including through self-study. Good people love reading and self-cultivation. Xu Yuhua, a model of one such person, participates in learning sessions at the public library to “enlarge [her] mind” (Zhao, 2010, p. 51). Such learning is better than playing mahjong or relaxing at home. Learning is something to be spontaneously and freely shared with others. Despite this admonishment, good people also desire to be together with their families. Students ought to be allowed to and able to choose their own educational path and to express themselves freely in their studies. The education system itself should mirror this freedom and be freed from central control. Education ought to favour skill over knowledge memorization and move away from strictly teacher-directed content. This free atmosphere will allow students to “cultivate a rounded personality and strong and upright character” (p. 50). Institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and democratic movement are seen as crucial to the needs of the nation. “Habits,” “hobbies,” “reactions to setbacks,” and “ability to communicate and cooperate” account for differences in achievement (Zeng, 2008). Good people are able to support themselves, appreciate “the value of work, independence and help for others, building his confidence in his own ability to support himself like a man.”

Similar qualities obtain in the figure of the good teacher. Good teachers are dedicated, intelligent, astute observers of children, and top-rated teachers are crucial to the success of China and its students. Good teachers promote, first of all, a sense of happiness and security in students, communicating passion for their work and optimism. They respect life, as does the model teacher, Zhuo Li, who exemplifies ideals of progressive education (Zeng, 2008). Zhuo is egalitarian in outlook, believing in the basic intellectual equality of the vast majority of students, and he disapproves of competition as a path to achievement, focusing instead on nurturing the good habits and skills of all students. The good teacher recognizes the dangers of heavy pressure and promotes moderation, believing in a high degree of latitude for children, room for play and experimentation. Another good teacher, Zhang Kailang, has a strong sense of obligation toward his students, feeling the need repay his advantages and pass on his interest in science. Zhang is a hands on scientist, working together with other scientists to pursue results and answer students’ questions. The good teacher seeks to “kindle an interest in the natural sciences among students” (p. 47).

The good students such teachers seek to nurture are developed in an all around manner, including in hygiene, culture, and education. They are curious about the natural world, and pursue knowledge through scientific investigation. One such student is Zhang Hao, a grade six student who devised an experiment to test for

a whitening agent—and toxic chemical—in mushrooms (O’Mahony & Bravery, 2011). Good students like Zhang demonstrate “wild” curiosity about the natural world (Lu, 2010, p. 46), but are keenly aware of the connection of science and nation, aware of China’s scientific pursuits. Good students have curious, creative minds and a “healthy and optimistic attitude toward life” (Zhang, 2012, p. 27). They carry themselves differently from the potentially unsuccessful. Wang Jingyun, for example, “walks out of a classroom beaming with a confidence and pride rarely seen in a three-year-old” (Hou, 2008, p. 31). Among other pursuits, those who seek education overseas are praised, especially those *haigui* (海归) who return to China. For all *haigui*, Deng Xiaoping is a model par excellence, demonstrating the kind of fortitude, leadership, and, especially new skills and knowledge that can come from overseas study (Grossman, 2010). All overseas study is valued, but the most desired *haigui* are those who hold masters and Ph. D. degrees in management, science, and technology. Good students work to expand their social circles, to “activate the positive side of their mind[s]” (Lu, 2009b, p. 56), and to study eagerly and pursue self-improvement. The virtuous student desires to “[return] home” and has “a deep passion and ambition to serve [his] country using...newly acquired...skills” (Jiang & Feng, 2009, p. 25). The intellectual does not dwell on past personal tragedies such as those suffered in the Cultural Revolution, but is, rather, grateful and future oriented. Like all good people, the student-intellectual puts his heart and soul into the job and is, above all, not conservative, while maintaining a simplicity of life, even to the extent of riding his bike to high level meetings (Jiang & Feng, 2009). Chinese students work hard, are well-behaved, value education, and aim high. In terms of their modes of study, good students are “active learners...capable of independent study and making [their] own decisions” (Ling, 2011, p. 26). Many students, like Zhang Jin, study English out of interest; others, such as Li Qiang, do it to ensure success (Lu, 2006). Good students may love learning, but they are not naive about the material benefits that accrue to those who study well. Education is also an instrumental pursuit, so good students are willing to spend their own money to go abroad. One thing that good students are not motivated by is good marks, which ought to take a back seat to the pursuit of knowledge for self-development, the development of the nation, and the material well-being of one’s own family.

There is a way, superficially at least, in which these new aims are pursued by familiar means. For example, the development of good students begins in the home, so there is plenty of guidance on how to be a good parent. It is not easy being a good parent in this new society, but what a good parent can and does do is pursue his or her own education. As a result, *jiating jiaoyu* (家庭教育—family education) consultancies are becoming a popular way for parents to overcome their own perceived deficiencies as parents. These businesses help parents to see how they can raise the kind of children the country needs by teaching them that communication with their child, who ought to be spoken to as a person rather than as a child, is crucial. Above all, good parents avoid a sole focus on formal education and the pursuit of superior childhood “CVs” by way of entering the best schools (Lu, 2009a). Good

parents offer help, patience, and comfort, enjoy the happiness and success of their children, and a feeling of intimacy with the child. A good mother pursues education to improve her parenting skills. Good parents understand the value of education and, in seeming violation of the model for good teachers above, competitiveness: “they do not want their children to lose out at the starting line” (Hou, 2008, p. 30). Children receive early education in order to avoid overindulgence. Still, the goal of good parents is the all around development of their child, often pursued through the spending of large amounts of money at companies such as Gymboree. Here, both child and parent are positioned as learners. The child, through “games, music and arts” develops his/her “coordination, communication skills and [personality], and [is] expected to become self-confident and sociable” (p. 31). As with good students, parents use such methods to pursue their dreams for their children. They are dedicated to the education of their children, desiring happiness and health for their children, and freedom from the excessive burden of repetitive and pointless homework.

THE ASPIRATION CITY

Due in no small part to an ever-present layer of smog, Shijiazhuang is not a beautiful city. Partially in response to the condition of the city and its image in the country as a whole, the Hebei Provincial government initiated a policy known as *san nian da bianyang*. The policy meant to not only clean up the province’s cities, but also to respond to and promote rapid urbanization and economic growth. As the capital city—one with a rather dowdy reputation—Shijiazhuang was singled out for special improvements. The provincial government aimed for a capital city on the level of “advanced capital cities,” with improved traffic infrastructure, a high quality environment, “improved cultural quality, and a high-end industrial structure,” and to enhance its capacity to provide provincial level services to the south central region of the province (Hebei People’s Government, 2007). As with all cities, Shijiazhuang was to be improved in terms of the “taste” of its urban construction, and the city was to be designed and built in a manner reflecting careful planning and ingenuity (ido.3mt.com.cn, 2009). Clear preference was given to high rise residential structures organized according to principles of “scientific planning.” Public buildings were to pursue high cultural design principles so as to realize a city with a rich urban culture appropriate to the spirit of the times. Such a city ought also to be environmentally sound and pleasing to the eye, a principle that led to the creation of urban parks and a massive greenbelt around the city. Residents of the city were also made an explicit target of *san nian da bian yang*. Indeed, raising their *suzhi* was to be part and product of the program. *Da zi bao* around the city did more than announce the coming of *san nian bianyang* and projects related to it; they also broadcast messages urging citizens to self-renovation using such phrases as *jiefang sixiang* (解放思想—liberate thinking) in an aggressive campaign of diffuse pedagogic action (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

San nian da bianyang is in one sense a straightforward instance of spatio-temporal fixing (Harvey, 2005) deemed necessary in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. The collapse of international markets for Chinese-made goods meant that something had to be done to absorb the subsequent surpluses of capital and laid-off labour. Many world governments responded with a neo-Keynesian fix, but none did so with the vigour and on the scale of the Chinese government. It responded with a massive capital injection amounting to 4 trillion yuan (approximately \$586 Billion US), much of which went into infrastructure such as a new high speed intercity rail system (Barboza, 2008). Government also progressively eased interest rates, provided capital through banks, and governments at various levels implemented a basket of policy measures to encourage new commercial and residential construction, including tax relief for households that purchased additional apartments and granting land transfer rights to peasants (Reuters, 2008). The last of these measures has been particularly important to the enormous spectacle of *san nian da bianyang*. Hebei Province as a whole and Shijiazhuang in particular have taken advantage of the credit made available through state owned banks, money that has gone toward both massive and numerous public infrastructure projects and private land development, the scale of which is apparent in the 2008–2010 municipal redevelopment plan. The city's 2008 redevelopment plan marked a large number of *cheng zhong cun* (城中村—urban villages) and *penghu qu* (棚户区—shantytowns) for demolition and redevelopment. Massive new housing projects now dominate long-established areas of the city and stretch to the horizon on repurposed agricultural land on the city's margins opened up by new high speed expressways. Public and private developments go hand in hand, as public projects spur the development of surrounding lands (see http://www.zhijia.com/zt/20111027_sjzhcz/ for example). Urban renovation in Shijiazhuang is guided in part by principles, precepts, and propositions defined by the moral order of the aspiration cite. As Harvey puts it, such an overall strategy is rarely formulated, never mind achieved on the ground, and I do not mean to suggest here that there has been an active effort on the part of the formulators of *san nian da bian yang* to do so. What I do suggest is that a de facto strategy of this kind has brought about a shift in the terrain upon which urban China's educational culture plays out. Intentional or not, my interest in Shijiazhuang's renovation remains squarely on processes related to the production of inequality.

Because Shijiazhuang is a relatively new city, the product of a fortuitous location along both north-south and east-west transportation corridors, the consumption of surrounding villages through progressive sprawl, and in-migration, the kinds of cultural and moral differentiations so clear in old cities like Beijing and Shanghai were nearly impossible to discern in the pre-*san nian da bian yang* order. Still, the capital intensive nature of the changes the city continues to undergo means that the city is subject to spatio-social transformations of a similar kind. A number of concrete observations about Shijiazhuang city can be made based on the general effects of urban renovation, including the decline of *danwei* neighbourhoods; de-ruralization;

the shift from “free” markets to supermarkets; beautification, culturalization, and spiritual uplift; and mobilization.

First, a general movement of privatization of residential homes is facilitated by policy that enables the investment of large amounts of capital in new neighbourhoods. Many of these neighbourhoods are being constructed on the rubble of demolished *cheng zhong cun* in a process that is most accurately described as accumulation by dispossession. Still, precisely who accumulates economic capital in this process is not as simple as it appears at first sight. It is clear, for example, that property developers are the immediate beneficiaries of redevelopment, and an ownership class of urban rich has emerged through this process, as has a supporting geography of luxury automobile retailers and shopping malls, five star hotels, and expensive restaurants, not to mention exclusive gated and guarded residential communities. At least one family described in this study belongs to precisely this class. But it is not only developers who benefit monetarily through the transfer and redevelopment of land in the city. The explosion of new residential housing stock would do little to benefit developers in the absence of people to purchase and live in the new neighbourhoods. Real estate holdings, whether gained in the *danwei* housing divestment process or through purchase of new housing stocks in the marketplace, are crucial repository of economic capital for middle-class urbanites. Rapid inflation, particularly in the housing market, has multiplied the value of transferred wealth. Newly transferred and purchased apartments have become an important source of wealth for the urban residents of contemporary China, a factor that became apparent in interviews with Xiao Jiao. As her family deliberated where to send the boy to university following his graduation from high school, one of the possibilities explored was overseas enrolment. Anticipating the expenditure of a large amount of money, they actively considered the sale of one of their three apartments as a way to finance the plan.

Capital has not exclusively flowed in an upward direction. Given the structure of land-use rights in the still socialist state and the peculiar spatial organization of Shijiazhuang city, some benefit has had to flow to the large number of residents of these *cheng zhong cun* lands in order to free up the land for redevelopment. The most common form that such compensation took was the granting of apartments in new developments to former residents, transfers that amount to a genuine gain of a fixed capital asset and an absolute upgrade in standard of living. These residences are used either as homes for grown children in the future or as rental properties and important sources of income for former villagers. The precise financial effects of such redistribution schemes are beyond the scope of this research, but informal inquiries with current and former villagers confirm that this is the most common result of redevelopment despite the fact that a significant number of settlements are perceived as unjust and that there is no shortage of cases of absolute dispossession without compensation. Despite the fact that most residents have been compensated in the process of removal, the unequal proportioning of the proceeds of redevelopment nonetheless indicates a process of accumulation by dispossession. The investment

of massive amounts of capital in this process underscores the extent to which the re-spatialization of the city is directly connected to the social re-classification of Shijiazhuang city.

Second, the shift from “free” markets to supermarkets indicates another aspect of the spatiality of social processes. This process is more obviously linked to notions of cultural betterment and conceptions of the good life found in the aspirational *cit *. The removal and replacement of farmers’ markets with supermarkets is not unrelated to the redevelopment of village lands, of course. Indeed, it is part and parcel of the process as many of the new residential complexes are also commercial as developers aim to benefit from all opportunities available to them. But the accumulation and cultural uplift is achieved in a single stroke—villages and adjacent unsightly outdoor markets can be paved over and replaced by massive new residences and commercial complexes as two avenues of future accumulation are followed at once. At the same time, the proletarianization of village residents, already a decades-long process begun when the city physically surrounded the village, is taken to its logical conclusion as surplus farm labour is absorbed into the new commercial districts.

Third, and intimately related to this process of proletarianization, the re-designation of land for new purposes related to beautification, culturalization, and spiritual uplift demonstrates the integration of spatial and social processes. The construction of such spaces is an important aspect of *san nian da bian yang* and can be attributed to ways of thinking about modernity closely associated with the aspirational *cit *. For example, one of the major long term projects initiated under *san nian da bian yang* is the *huancheng shuixi*, a vast, city-encircling project that aims to solve the city’s drainage problems and, at the same time, improve the quality of life of residents. In most cases, construction of this waterway will involve the re-classification of land previously set aside for food production. In others it will involve the demolition of villages that previously stood outside of Shijiazhuang proper. Other projects related to cultural uplift have required more traditional redevelopment in the centre of the city, including the removal of derelict housing and commercial space to make way for an expansion of the provincial museum and library. In some ways, each of these re-developments are counterintuitive from the perspective of capital accumulation. Each involves the dedication of enormous amounts of capital to the construction and ongoing operation of facilities that will be money losing ventures in the long run. Here, combining the notion of accumulation by dispossession with a related concept, spatio-temporal fixes (Harvey, 2001, 2005), helps to resolve this apparent contradiction. Recall that for Harvey, accumulation by dispossession is a response to a crisis of accumulation, a crisis that is resolved by movement of capital into new spaces (spatial fixes) and into new fixed assets that enable future accumulation (temporal fixes). Accumulation by dispossession is, of course, most obviously a case of the former type of crisis resolution, as socialist housing stocks are brought into capital circuits through privatization, mainly of land resources. The array of beautification, culturalization, and spiritual uplift projects amount to another form of spatio-temporal fixing, one that aims through public

pedagogy (cf. diffuse pedagogic action) to create new kinds of citizens (modelled on precepts, prescriptions, and propositions described in the aspirational *cit *) and, in the process, open up to exploitation a new class of workers once protected within work units and other forms of collectives, especially in the case of *cheng zhong cun* residents. The creation of these new citizens through educational processes is a way to open up new “territory” for capital accumulation.

Fourth and finally, new patterns of mobility have been enabled through the construction of an advanced transportation system. The most obvious indications of this new system at present favour the shift from bicycle travel to private cars, although it should be noted that the bicycle remains a prominent mode of transportation. The development of a transportation network involves a finely textured array of changes. First, expansion and widening of the existing grid in the older parts of the city aims to make travel by private car more efficient, especially in terms of its use for traveling to and from the city’s new commercial districts. Second, a series of freeways have been constructed to enable rapid transportation across medium distances. Third, more high speed freeways link old areas of the city to new residential districts that lie far from the city centre. Finally, long distance travel infrastructure connects Shijiazhuang to China and the outside world. A second phase of the upgrading of the transportation system is now underway as the city has invested a large amount of capital in the building of a subway system. From the perspective of accumulation by dispossession, the development of this new transportation network both enables and directly dispossesses. In terms of the former, new and far flung neighbourhoods, commercial districts, not to mention cultural and educational institutions, could not fulfill their promise as centres of capital accumulation if people could not practically live in them or travel to patronize them. With respect to the latter, vast new roadways require land, and former residents of the lands required have had to move to make way. Most importantly for my purposes, the development of an advanced transportation network is also very much about enabling the new classes of aspirational residents imagined in the aspirational *cit *. It is to this mode of enablement that I now turn my attention.

CULTURAL CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

I have already deployed a series of concepts associated with “pedagogic action” to recognize the different kinds of teaching and learning that go on in contemporary urban China. These concepts allowed me to identify pedagogic action in the family education efforts of parents and/or grandparents as they teach their children to eat properly, to walk up the stairs by themselves, or to care for others by doing simple things like picking up litter in the neighbourhood. Similarly, parents subject their children to institutionalized pedagogic action by registering them in compulsory education and, at considerable expense in terms of both time and money, enroll them in an array of extra-curricular classes and activities. Finally, everyday life in Shijiazhuang is replete with a less obvious if equally intense diffuse pedagogic action

under the tutelage of the spaces, places, and networks of the constantly changing city in which they live.

The kinds of practices I observed and discussed with parents hinted at the importance of embodied cultural capital. Pedagogic action, especially in the early years, is described as only tangentially knowledge-focussed and is explicitly concerned with cultivating habits of the body. Sitting down and “reading,” for example, is as much about learning the habit of sitting quietly and paying attention to a book as it is about early literacy. Walking up the stairs is less about getting exercise or saving grandma’s back than it is about developing the important habit of not relying on others and of working toward explicit goals. More subtly, the kinds of poses constantly encouraged, required, and practiced for photo taking indicate the ways in which valued cultural capital is inculcated. The myriad commonplace practices of *jiating jiaoyu* that amount to an effort to instil valued forms of embodied cultural capital—what Bourdieu more succinctly refers to as *habitus*—are supplemented by direct pedagogic action.

Reinterpreting the precepts, prescriptions, and propositions of the aspirational *cité* through the concepts of cultural capital and *habitus* help to clarify the objects and aims of pedagogic action and the social economy of cultural forms and practices. Reference to another of Bourdieu’s concepts, *field*, brings the importance of the aspirational city back into focus. In Bourdieu’s social theory, what people think and do cannot be separated from where they do it. The parents whose lives informed this study live in a social geography of “intersecting fields” (Bellamy, 1994), each featuring a specific quantity and distinctive distribution of available capital resources. These fields are characterized by conditions of unequal power, scarcity, and competition, in Bourdieu’s (1986) terms, “the unequal distribution of capital, is the source of the specific effects of capital, i.e., the appropriation of profits and the power to impose the laws of functioning of the field most favourable to capital and its reproduction” (p. 49). Those with the greatest quantity of the most valuable forms of capital in a given field, in other words, also have the power to set and change the rules of the game within the field. It is obvious that one could identify a Chinese “educational field” and analyze it in precisely this way. While a heavy reliance on high examinations gives the Chinese education system a sheen of meritocracy, widely varying conditions between regions, cities, and even within cities and individual schools engender heavy competition for educational placements deemed to be of the highest quality. This competition also brings economic capital into play within supposed public schools, as parents are often able to pay special fees to charter schools set up within the walls of otherwise publicly built and funded schools.

My main aim in invoking the concept of field, however, is to bring the pedagogic activities of parents into relation with the conditions imposed by the material, geographical field of contemporary Shijiazhuang. Attempts to measure up to the ideal through educative projects of one kind or another are enabled or constrained by the way that capital endowments position one within the moral and physical orders of the city. Economic capital endowments are particularly telling in the new

Shijiazhuang, built as it is to foster differing scales of mobility in its citizens. Where roadways were once built to facilitate movement over relatively short distances, typically by bicycle or public bus, a second layer of higher speed traffic arteries has been added to enable longer commutes and shopping trips for those with the resources to buy private cars. It remains to be seen what lines of force the construction of a new subway system will introduce to the urban field of Shijiazhuang. Parents who in the past could choose only the between sending their child to a local school or relocating to a new district can more readily exercise choice in the educational marketplace so long as they have enough money, time, connections, and/or knowledge to do so. For parents endowed with such assets, Shijiazhuang is a field of educational opportunity that supports a vision of the “educating parent,” one that is closely aligned with the precepts, prescriptions, and propositions of the aspirational *cit *. A birds eye view of the city emerging from the latest round of property investment reveals the scope of this expansionary project—a city that ten years ago could only be travelled across with great time and effort can now be circumnavigated in a fraction of the time, but only for those families with access to private transportation and whose homes lie in close proximity to these new transportation networks.

Xiao Lu and Lao Wang are parents in one such family. Despite the fact that they plan to send their children to school abroad, to Xiao Lu and Lao Wang the Shijiazhuang reconstructed under *san nian da bianyang* has brought opportunity, nascent wealth, and a lifestyle attuned to and increasingly aligned with the precepts, prescriptions, and propositions of the aspirational *cit *. Social and economic capital have afforded them the mobility required to purchase a home near the school to which they wished to send their daughter, and later near a central Shijiazhuang park in a home that provides efficient access to all areas of the city, not to mention the family’s nanny. Family connections gave them access to a piece of land in the country side—both a “private paradise” (L. Zhang, 2010) and a place where the “slow life” is possible—made accessible via roadways rapidly constructed under *da bian yang*. Improvements of these same roads have allowed them to move to a larger new apartment in the city centre overlooking the city’s largest park, a home large enough to accommodate a second child and, on weekends, Xiao Lu’s mother, who helps with the children more often now that she has retired.

Xiao Zhao’s is another family similarly positioned. In my interviews and discussions with her, matters of class and status came up often. Xiao Zhao is not naive about the unequal capacity of families to realize a child of high quality/balanced development, and is especially aware that it is easier for people of higher social class to pursue kind of all-around development encouraged under the aspirational *cit *. She maintains that, although it is possible for a child from a poor family to study well, ensuring that such children exhibit qualities of balanced development is not easy, that is, the *zonghe suzhi* of such children is not easily achieved. But for a family of means, if the child can study well, it is likely that the child will be well-developed in all respects. She holds that this is related to the family’s capacity to provide the opportunities to broaden the child’s horizons. It is obvious to Xiao Zhao, in other

words, that a child from the village who has studied well and thus added to his or her stock of institutionalized cultural capital in the form of an educational credential, is very likely to be lacking in other areas considered crucial to the formation of a person of balanced education. In other words, as discussed above, such a child is likely to fall behind in terms of his or her stockpile of other forms of valued cultural capital, most importantly the kinds of embodied cultural capital that Xiao Zhao goes to great lengths to instill in her daughter. For Xiao Zhao, a stay-at-home mother in a family of significant means, *san nian da bianyang* has modified the city in ways more in line with the kind of life she aspires to and a life that her material circumstances make possible. The ability to easily move about the city by car enables the pursuit of her educational projects in ways impossible prior to *san nian da bianyang*. What's more, these social and economic conditions and her family's positioning within them that make it likely that her daughter will do well in terms of living up to the precepts of the aspirational *cit  *. One aspect of their current life that works in favour of this eventually is precisely the family separation that might otherwise be seen as a detriment. Xiao Zhao's husband works in Shenzhen, meaning that she and her daughter often go to that city to visit him. While there, they can also go to nearby Hong Kong, a more modern and advanced city than Shijiazhuang. They can visit Disneyland Hong Kong, which Xiao Zhao believes can work to broaden her daughter's horizons.

San nian da bianyang has affirmed and accelerated processes already enabled to great extent by the privatization of housing. Lao Zhang and Xiao Li's family, for example, already entitled to homes subsidized by each of their respective employers, the establishment of a quasi-private foreign language school opened a venue for the realization of their educational aspirations for the daughter. At the same time, *san nian da bianyang* has allowed that school to grow in size, to increase its intake of students, and to upgrade the quality of services and facilities it offers. It has also led to high density redevelopment of former village lands in close proximity to the school. Where six floor walkups and villages comprising single family dwellings occupied much of the surrounding lands, the school is now dwarfed by newly developed commercial and high rise residential developments. Their close proximity to school in high demand means that such homes are in high demand for families like Lao Zhang and Xiao Li's whose desire is matched by the material means to realize the dream of providing the best schooling possible.

Successfully inculcating a socially useful habitus is an intensive and high stakes game in contemporary urban China, both from the perspective of academic success and in terms of the future social success. The apparent ejection of one member from the larger social group to which she once made a vital contribution must be understood in part by recognizing the extent to which the aggregated capital resources of her family made them dispensable. From the perspective of economic capital, they simply can no longer afford to take part in the kinds of activities required to move with Xiao Lu's "in crowd." Economic capital is important, though not determinative in this respect, as a number of current members of Xiao Lu's social circle are of

similarly modest means. Nor should objectified cultural capital be ignored, as it is obvious that much attention is paid in this group to famous brands and the possession of them. Driving a Range Rover instead of a modest Buick or, even further down the social value chain, a domestically produced Cherry, most assuredly grants a degree of access to the group. What finally separates these members from exiles like Xiao Du, however, is their ability to exhibit the kinds of embodied cultural capital that mark them as members of a common social group—working out at the right kind of gym; not just drinking red wine, but also being seen to appreciate it through a set of socially sanctioned and carefully produced and monitored bodily gestures; seeking out opportunities to live an adventuresome and active life; responding eagerly (with a ready “absolutely!”) to invitations to take part in adventurous activities; and crucially, demonstrating the frenetic activity associated with pursuing any and all means to achieve collectively desired *zonghe jiaoyu* outcomes for their children—their ability to exhibit, in short, an aspirational habitus.

CONCLUSION

One of the difficulties of researching and trying to find plausible explanations for the shape and texture of Chinese society and culture is the extraordinarily rapid pace of change. Descriptions accurately made are quickly outdated as policy changes in response to economic and social pressures. For this reason my strategy has been to focus not only on the myriad social forms that emerge in rapid succession but also on the underlying relations that make such transformations possible. Rather than beginning and ending my analysis with present conditions, I used them as my starting point, in particular what I referred to as the twin spectacles of urban growth and renovation and educational desire. I then began to look for ways to bring the two into relation with one another, concluding that the urban forms and spatial order of Shijiazhuang enable and constrain the ways in which its residents go about trying to be “good people” and educate their children. Both the city and the common ways of educating self and child in the home and beyond are conditioned by norms that circulate broadly in China, not to mention in the globalized educational culture that has emerged over the past three decades. These ways of being and educating are familiar to those who have observed the globalization of educational systems and norms over the past three decades. A focus on flexibility, creativity, and all-around development has become common in education systems the world over, as has ever more stringent systems of audit and control. The combination of the two has brought into being a contradictory situation; children, their families, and the schools charged with education and schooling appear to be employing ever more coercive methods of producing creative, individualized citizens. In the case of China, all of this is meant to bring into being a citizenry with the qualities needed to drive forward the process of modernization, to make China, at minimum, a *xiao kang* (小康—moderately prosperous) nation. And while its material achievements toward this end are remarkable, it is hard to escape the conclusion that by failing to build a society

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with a good enough overall quality of life, it may have succeeded only in creating the conditions of possibility of the radical psychic separation of these new citizens from the New China.

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21. EDUCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN

The Effects of Rural-Urban Migration on Access to Primary Education

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s, China has experienced historically unprecedented levels of internal migration. Estimates suggest that there were at least 250 million internal migrants in 2011 (NBS, 2012). While many migrants move between rural areas, the fastest growing type of migration is rural to urban, as migrants choose to work in better-paid non-farm occupations in urban areas. In Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and hundreds of other cities, migrant workers toil in factories, in sweatshops, on construction sites and in micro-businesses, up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week. These men and women move across the length and breadth of the country to earn enough to support themselves and their families and, if possible, to save for the future. Rural-urban migration is, for many, a powerful mechanism for escaping rural poverty.

Many of these migrants take their children to the cities. While rural-urban migration may present an effective route out of poverty for adults, the effects on these children are much less clear. In particular, there may be especial problems for migrant children in terms of education, since the Chinese state places serious restrictions on the ability of the children of migrant workers to access education in urban China. To enrol in state schools, migrant children need official documents, which few have; are required to take entry examinations based on different curricula; and face strict quota systems. Many migrant parents therefore send their children to expensive migrant-run private schools, the majority of which are unregistered, of dubious quality, and represent a significant cost burden to migrant parents. Furthermore, despite positive changes in state attitudes towards migration since the 1990s, both central and local government in China seem to oppose the provision of private education to migrants, and schools are frequently closed down. This paper examines the existing literature on migrant education and integrates this with my own interviews with migrant parents and children, as well as the teaching and observing classes in semi-legal migrant schools that I conducted in Shenzhen in 2008-2009. It assesses the impact of central and local state policies on migrant children, by comparing their educational experiences before and after migration. My findings provide a sharp contrast to much recent research on adult migrants, which

argues that migration is overwhelmingly beneficial, by suggesting that there may be significant disadvantages to migration for children.

MIGRANT CHILDREN

China's rural migrant situation is directly related to two historical phenomena: the introduction of market-style reforms, and long-term population mobility constraints. During the 1950s, in an attempt to control population movement, the government classified every resident as rural or urban through the household registration system (*hukou*). One's classification determined not only one's place of residence, but also the benefits received from the state. Urban dwellers had access to state-subsidised benefits such as food, life employment, medical insurance, housing, social security and pensions (Solinger, 1999). Rural-dwellers received none of these, but were expected to be self-sufficient. Two methods were used to maintain *hukou* classifications: neighbourhood committees reported newcomers to the authorities, while basic goods were allocated only to urban *hukou*-holders. This system was extremely effective. By fixing each person into a geographic position, social status and social relations were effectively assigned by the state. After the mid-1980s, however, a relaxation in implementation of *hukou* laws and the re-commodification of many goods allowed the growing urban private sector to absorb large numbers of low-paid rural labourers. Increased agricultural productivity caused by the new Household Responsibility System from 1981 and a decrease in per capita cultivated land created a huge surplus of peasants – around 95 million by 1984 (Li, 1996). While some found employment in new rural industries, millions moved to cities, establishing networks of migrants and encouraging further migration.

Most rural migrants come from poor areas in the interior and west of China, moving towards more economically-developed eastern coastal regions. The main reason for movement seems to be the large income gap between cities and countryside. However, there are also important non-economic reasons for migration, including the desire to experience city lifestyles, which are frequently presented in the Chinese media and in state discourses as being more “advanced” than rural life, and which may be particularly important for parents wishing their children to become modern urban citizens.¹

Most rural migrants find employment in the urban informal sector, where work is insecure, badly-paid, tedious and often dirty or hazardous. State-owned work units are particularly willing to employ migrants, since they do not have to provide staff housing and benefits to non-local workers. While minimum wage systems and restrictions on working hours have been introduced in many cities since 2004, these seem to have been largely ineffective, with many migrant workers working excessive overtime for less than the minimum wage (Du & Pan, 2009).

The pattern of rural-urban migration has changed significantly since the late 1980s, when most migrants were single adults, usually men moving for construction or factory work, or women going into service. Family members

were often left behind in home villages, with children cared for by remaining spouses or by grandparents. However, as urban employment stabilised and accommodation became more widely available in the late-1990s, migrant labourers began to bring family members to join them in China's cities. While most surveys show that the majority of migrants are still unmarried adults aged 15–30, 2006 data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicated that 20% of rural migrants now migrate with spouse and children. The 2010 All-China Women's Federation survey estimated that the number of migrant children in China's cities was 35.8 million, representing a 41% increase on 2005 (ACWF, 2013). While much recent work on adult migrants in China have shown very positive effects of migration, both for the individual labourers and their home villages, there is much less clarity about the impact of migration on children (Du et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2003; Zhu & Luo, 2008).

FIELDWORK

In order to investigate the impact of migration on migrant children, including on their education, I conducted seven months of fieldwork in Shenzhen in 2008-2009. Shenzhen, a city of sub-provincial administrative status in Guangdong province of southern China, situated immediately north of Hong Kong in the Pearl River Delta, provides an interesting case study, since it is considered to be especially progressive, and is often regarded as a blueprint for the development of other urban areas in China. Since becoming China's first Special Economic Zone in 1980, Shenzhen has become a major manufacturing centre and the financial, commercial and industrial centre of southern China. The population is approximately 14 million, of whom only around 2 million have legal permanent residence in the city. The rest are migrants, giving Shenzhen the largest number of migrants of any Chinese city (Guangzhou Ribao, 2010). Although not all migrants come from rural areas, it is estimated to have the highest rate of rural-urban migration in China (Tan, 2000, p. 294). Most rural migrants work in factories, particularly unmarried migrants aged 15–24, a group usually thought to make up the bulk of rural-urban migrants (Mou et al., 2011). However, there are also many older, married migrants in the city, often engaged in informal sector small businesses such as market vending. A recent study of migrant housing in Shenzhen found that 53% of migrants in the city live with their families, that the majority of married migrants have at least one child, and that most have brought their child to Shenzhen (Wang et al., 2010, p. 87–88). The true number of migrant children in Shenzhen is unknown, but official figures in 2008 put the number of non-local-*hukou*-holders aged 6–15 at 540,000 (Shenzhen News, 2008).

My fieldwork in Shenzhen formed part of a larger comparative study, assessing the impact of migration on education, family finance, health and wellbeing in both China and India. In Shenzhen, I surveyed migrant families from May 2008 to January 2009, carrying out semi-structured interviews with parents and children inside the SEZ boundaries. I interviewed 66 children and 92 parents of children who

were between 6 and 12 years old both at the time of migration and of interview, and who had moved to the city directly from their home village not more than 5 years earlier. It was difficult to find adult interviewees, especially during the Olympic period (June–September 2008), and so I used a combination of methods, primarily door-to-door interviewing in areas where rural migrants lived and worked but also visiting factories with a local auditor and occasional “snowballing”. I interviewed children in and around migrant schools and in migrant communities. In interview, I focused on the quality of education received in the native village and in Shenzhen, obtaining detailed information on school facilities from the children, since parents were often not well-informed. I also visited four Shenzhen state schools, and taught or observed classes in four private migrant schools, in order to acquire first-hand knowledge of migrant education in the city. In the next sections I will discuss the situation of migrant children in both the state education system, including relevant changes in national and regional legislation, and in private migrant schools, drawing on details of my field research. I will then focus briefly on gender, an overlooked issue in the assessment of the impact of migration on children’s education, before concluding with a discussion of why migrant children’s education in urban China continues to be restricted and suggesting problems this may pose for the future.

EDUCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN: STATE SCHOOLS

Since urban primary education in China is usually considered of much higher quality than in most rural areas, it might be thought that migrating children would benefit from a better education after migration. However, several institutional factors prevent migrant children from attaining a decent education. Although primary and lower middle school education (usually ages 6–15) is legally compulsory for all children, city governments still have no absolute obligation to educate the children of migrants. From interviews with migrant parents in Shenzhen, I found that although 87% (78) of school-going children had attended state school before migration, with just 13% (12) receiving private education, in the city only 18% (16) of school-going children went to state school and the vast majority attended low quality private schools.²

Until 1996 migrant children were refused permission to enrol in urban state schools at all, since responsibility for their education officially lay with their areas of origin. From then, in an attempt to enrol more migrants in state schools, central government allowed urban schools to charge migrants extra fees to cover the cost of additional resources. Most fees were beyond the means of migrant workers, so very few migrant children were enrolled. Although in 2003 a State Council Decision stated that migrant children should not pay more than local children, and a further 2004 recommendation limited the permissible types of fees, in many areas migrants continued to be excluded from state schools because of high fees levied by individual schools (and sanctioned by local governments) (Goodburn, 2009). In August 2008, the “two-waiver” policy to waive all tuition and textbook fees during the nine years of compulsory education, already in force in rural areas, was extended to China’s cities

(SC, 2008). However, local governments were given discretionary powers to decide whether to include migrant children based on actual conditions, and in many cities, only registered migrants fulfilling strict criteria were eligible for the “two-waiver” policy. In Shenzhen, only migrant children who were in compulsory education and had registered with the Education Department as students were eligible. I will return to the conditions necessary for registration below.

In November 2008, the Ministry of Finance, and the National Development and Reform Commission promulgated the Circular on the Abolition and Suspension of 100 Administrative Fees, which included the abolition of temporary student fees and miscellaneous fees for compulsory education. However, since local governments had already been granted flexibility on this issue by the State Council, this circular seems not to have brought about immediate changes. In late 2008, migrant children in some parts of Shenzhen were still paying as much as three times more than locals for their education (SPG, 2008), while Guangdong provincial government documents indicated that the collection of temporary student fees remained a problem in some Shenzhen state schools in 2011 (Shenzhen Online, 2011).

Aside from fees, there are also serious administrative barriers to migrant children’s state school entry. Among parents I interviewed, the overwhelming reason for not attending state school in Shenzhen was the family’s lack of the documents necessary to register as a student. To enter a state school in Shenzhen, a total of six official documents were required, known as the “5 + 1” (*wu jia yi*): five certificates and one proof. Parents, teachers, school principals and local officials all gave slightly different descriptions of these, and there was a great deal of confusion as to which documents were required in what circumstances. However, the most common documents said to be necessary were: temporary residence certificate (*zanzhu* or *juzhu zheng*); family planning certificate; school transfer letter (*zhuanxue guanxi han*); birth certificate (*chusheng zheng*); social insurance certificates of both parents (*fumu shuangfang shebao*); and property deed or officially-stamped rental contract (*fangchan zheng* or *zulin hetong*). By contrast, no documents at all were required to enter most private migrant schools. Very few families I interviewed had all of the documents, which could be both difficult and expensive to obtain.

In particular, most parents reported that birth certificates had not been common in their villages, especially for children born at home, and were costly and difficult to obtain later. Social insurance was expensive to purchase and many parents, especially those who were self-employed, could not afford it. Housing rental contracts were also very difficult to come by, since the majority of families were living in illegally-let rooms. Family planning certificates were, of course, not available to families with children born “out of plan”. Even school transfer letters could be difficult to obtain, since these had to be brought from the child’s previous school, which might necessitate expensive journeys to apply for and to collect the document. Furthermore, two parents reported that rural school principals were unwilling to provide this document, since the school’s funding was based on the number of children officially “attending”.

Even if the family could provide all necessary documents, a Shenzhen state school place was still unlikely. The entry of non-local children into state schools was controlled by strict quotas, and those without a Shenzhen *hukou* could be admitted only after all local *hukou*-holders had been granted places. Since better schools filled up quickly, there was often no space for migrant students in state schools within their district. If parents wished to enrol their child in another Shenzhen state school, outside their official area of temporary residence, they would again be subject to “out-of-district fees”. Transportation there could also be expensive, time-consuming or dangerous. Furthermore, migrant children were selected for entry in those schools which had spare places by competitive examination, based on the city schools’ curriculum, which was often very different from that in the children’s home villages.

In some cities, greater efforts have been made to enrol migrant children in state schools. Shanghai seems to have been one of the most successful. In 2008, the Shanghai city government responded to the central state’s increased emphasis on migrant education by launching a “three-year action plan for the education of migrant children”, characterised by further opening of public schools to migrant children. Chen and Feng (forthcoming) estimate that in 2011 about 70% of Shanghai’s migrant children were enrolled in state schools. Administrative barriers to entry, which had included the provision of many different certificates as in Shenzhen, were relaxed in 2011, although entrance for children born “out of plan” may be more difficult.³ Although Beijing has been slower in incorporating migrant children into state schooling, recent estimates for the number now enrolled are similar (HRIC, 2012). Other urban areas have much lower rates, however, with Kunming and Guangzhou having only 55 and 40% of migrant children in state schools respectively (HRIC, 2012). Furthermore, these figures may greatly overestimate the true numbers of enrolled children since most surveys of migrant families include only those who have officially registered as “temporary residents” in their city, a process which many migrants choose not to undertake because of high direct and indirect costs (Lan, forthcoming).⁴

Even where migrant children are able to enrol in urban state schools, studies show continued concerns about their education (Fang et al., 2006; Han, 2004; Wang & Fan, 2005). As Terry Woronov (2008) has observed, policies that allow migrant children to enter state schools do not address the issue of how they are treated once enrolled, or how good the education provided is. While news reports in China on the education of migrant children are usually sympathetic in tone, they very often attribute part of the problem to the “quality” (*suzhi*) of migrant children and parents, pointing out that many migrant children have not received pre-school education, that their parents’ educational level is low and that their home environments are “unfavourable” to study (Goodburn, 2009). Children of migrant workers are perceived by some urbanites as being “out of control”, “ill-disciplined”, “dirty” and “ignorant” (Goodburn, 2009). Migrant children may therefore face challenges within state schools including discrimination from urban teachers, classmates and parents of local students (Fang et al., 2006). Indeed, some migrant parents cite discrimination in state schools as

a reason for not wishing to send their children to these schools even if they could (Goodburn, 2009; Woronov, 2008). Lan Pei-Chia's recent study of state schools in Shanghai has demonstrated a high level of discrimination against migrants, who may be segregated in separate classrooms and playgrounds, wear separate uniforms and enter through different doors to prevent mingling with local students (Lan, forthcoming). Even where there is no deliberate segregation, state schools designated to receive migrants may be seen as "dumping grounds" for undesirable children and avoided by parents (Woronov, 2008).

Despite these issues, I found that for the children attending state schools in Shenzhen, 100% (16) of parents thought the school quality was good. In particular, they praised the quality of the teaching, the school facilities and the wide range of subjects taught. Of the children interviewed, two mentioned that it was difficult to make friends in state schools. However, this is likely to be less of a problem in Shenzhen than elsewhere, since, because of the city's spectacular growth, very few people are genuinely "local". Migrants are therefore less obviously targets of discrimination and bullying than in many other Chinese cities. Despite problems making friends, all seven children I interviewed who attended state school said that their school was good. Good teachers, interesting classes, and excellent facilities were all praised. Although there may be serious problems of discrimination in state schools in some cities, then, in Shenzhen I found that the few migrant children able to attend state schools generally received a good quality education.

EDUCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN: PRIVATE MIGRANT SCHOOLS

With restricted access to urban state schools, as well as concerns about discrimination, many migrant parents in China's cities have little choice but to enrol their children in "black" unlicensed private migrant schools. Migrant schools were first started in the early 1990s by retired teachers and other migrants because of the need to provide alternative education for their children (Han, 2004). In the early years, they were informal: many were based in disused buildings or the living spaces of migrant families and were funded through tuition fees, which were much lower than those charged by state schools at that time. However, as migration increased, the profitability of operating migrant schools attracted entrepreneurs, including those with a local *hukou* and with no background in teaching. Since migrant schools are privately run and most are unlicensed, there are no standards, and many schools provide a very poor quality education.

There have been several studies of the conditions in private migrant schools. All have suggested that such schools are much inferior to urban state schools in terms of the education provided – although most have focused solely on schools in Beijing (Goodburn, 2009; Kwong, 2004; Wpronov, 2004, 2008). It seems likely that most migrant children receive an education inferior to that of urban children. How their education compares to that of rural children is much less well researched. My research on Shenzhen therefore aimed to compare the quality of the education in

migrant schools not only with urban state schools but also with the schools children had attended in rural China, in order to assess the impact of migration on their education. The following material is based on parent and child interviews as well as on my own observations.

In Shenzhen, although initial migrant schools were set up by migrants to provide affordable, accessible education, most now function as profit-making businesses, charging high fees. In fact, even before the 2008 legislation waiving state school fees, some migrant schools charged more than local state schools. The mean monthly tuition fee in migrant schools in 2008 was approximately RMB295 per child, compared to RMB130 for those who paid full state school fees (mostly before July 2008). The mean combined monthly income of parents interviewed was approximately RMB4,080, and some couples earned as little as RMB1,800, while for single parents and families where only one parent worked the monthly income could be as low as RMB1,000. Migrant school tuition fees, then, represented a major burden to most parents, especially those with more than one school-aged child, and when combined with the additional fees for books and equipment charged by most schools. One private school I visited did offer much-reduced fees to parents who had the “*wu jia yi*” documents, but gaining this discount was next to impossible since the criteria were even stricter than in most Shenzhen state schools. Unsurprisingly, I did not find any child attending at reduced-rate fees.

It is unclear why any parent with the necessary documents to enrol their child in state school would choose a Shenzhen migrant school, regardless of fee discounts, because of the enormous difference in school quality. Unlike in previous studies of Beijing migrants (Woronov, 2004; Wang, 2008), in Shenzhen no parent cited discrimination in state schools as a reason for choosing a private migrant school, and all those interviewed said that they would send their child to state school if they could. Migrant parents’ perceptions of Shenzhen state schools and the education provided there were uniformly good. Perceptions of migrant schools, by contrast, were poor.

Of the 72 parents whose children attended private migrant school, only 27% (19) thought that the school was “good” and 73% (53) thought it was “bad” or “very bad”. Nearly two-thirds said the school was bad because the overall education was bad, and a third because the teachers were poorly trained. Many parents also mentioned poor facilities, overcrowding and bad discipline. While 38% (22) of children attending migrant schools thought that their school was “good”, most of these gave the reason as having made friends there. Only 6 of those who thought the school was good mentioned a good education or good teacher. Several spoke of problems of discipline and violence, which were especially serious in two schools I visited.

Many parents expressed anger at the disparity between state and private schools. Only two parents thought that the private school their child attended was better than Shenzhen state schools, and both were fathers of boys who attended schools with high tuition fees (above RMB 500 a month). One of these, a street restaurant owner

from Guangdong, referred to the school as an “elite” (*guizu*) private school and was proud that he could send his son there. His two daughters, however, attended the local migrant private school, where tuition fees were RMB 280 a month, and which he described as “really very poor”.

It was difficult for migrant schools to improve their teaching and facilities, not only because of limited resources and lack of state support, but also because of their vulnerability to closure. Unlicensed schools, which constituted the majority of migrant private schools even within the SEZ, could be closed down by local government at any time. Migrant schools were thus constantly under threat of closure, which might happen without warning, and with no attempt to ensure children’s schooling was not disrupted. It was initially difficult for me to gain access to schools, since principals and teachers were afraid that if I drew attention to poor conditions, they would be closed down. Even at the best migrant school, which I was told was licensed, staff were worried the license could be withdrawn and the school closed. At the start of 2007, I was told, three unlicensed schools had been closed, and a further two were closed during my fieldwork. Yongcan, an 11-year old boy from Hunan, had for two years attended the “Excellence School”, which was closed without warning. Yongcan missed a month of school before transferring to another migrant school. His father said:

They told us the children would be sent to other schools, but the [school our children attend now] is too expensive and much further away. They told [my wife] the fees for this semester will be refunded, but we haven’t received any money. What’s more, I have heard that this school doesn’t have the school licence either! How can parents know what documents the school has?

School principals were left facing a contradiction: they were unable to improve the quality of their schools while under constant threat of closure because of their low quality.

My observations highlighted the differences between state and private migrant schools. None of the four state schools I visited was a “key” or “experimental” school, but the quality was high. All had attractive buildings, with large playgrounds and sports areas, while classrooms were attractive and well-equipped. Many classrooms had computers and projectors, and all had blackboards or whiteboards, televisions/DVD players, maps, charts and other facilities. Three schools had special facilities for learning English, and all had dedicated rooms for music and art. Classrooms were mostly spacious, and furniture in good repair. All teachers were reportedly educated at least to the level of teacher-training “normal” university and had taken the Shenzhen Municipality’s examination for teacher employment. Students were well-behaved, polite to teachers, and generally quiet and attentive in class. I did not observe any physical bullying.

The four private migrant schools where I taught or observed classes were very different. Only one was in a purpose-built block, while the others were in dilapidated converted factory buildings. In one, factory work continued on the ground floor.

Although all had playgrounds, these were inadequate for the numbers of students, so sports lessons were minimal and break-time play was restricted. Classrooms were old, dirty and cramped in all four schools, with class sizes of between 55 and 70 compared with an average of 35 in state schools. Furniture was old and broken. Some children lacked chairs. There were few maps, charts or other facilities, and only one school had computers for student use (two machines for 1,200 students). There were no dedicated classrooms for special activities. Lavatories were inadequate for the numbers of students, and staffrooms too few and too small for the teachers, many of whom slept in dormitories in the schools, where they ate, slept and prepared lessons.

Unlike in state schools, there was little size and age uniformity within classes, since many children had missed schooling or enrolled late. Each class had several children significantly older than the rest, who were bored and disruptive. Discipline was poor in all four schools, and extremely bad in one. Eight children mentioned that they were frightened of other schoolchildren, and I was told that older boys bullied younger and newer pupils. I observed many incidents of physical violence. When I taught in one school, I was frequently interrupted by students leaving their seats, talking, shouting and hitting other pupils. Students in one class would turn over desks if bored and run into the corridors. Punishment was imposed in the form of occasional thumps from teachers, or offending students were made to stand in the staffroom reading after class, but these methods did little to alleviate the problems.

Few teachers in migrant schools were qualified teachers, and many were at most senior technical high school (*zhongzhuan*) graduates. Two teachers had not completed senior high school. Most were under 25, and many had not taught before. Many parents complained about high staff turnover, as teachers left to find more profitable non-teaching jobs. The monthly salary of migrant teachers was around RMB1000, compared with RMB4000-6200 in Shenzhen's state schools and over RMB1400 (including overtime) in local factories. Some children had experienced six different class teachers in one semester. The teachers of English had woefully inadequate English, and one 20-year-old teacher told me frankly that she could not speak a word of English. Students in the same school did not seem to have grasped much mathematics either, with members of a fourth-year class struggling with two-digit addition.

Although I could not compare actual levels of achievement of children in migrant schools with those in Shenzhen state schools, the results of a recent study of Shanghai schools suggests that migrant children in private migrant schools do significantly less well in core subjects than those in state schools. Chen and Feng (forthcoming) find that on average the Chinese score for migrant students in Shanghai state schools is higher than that of those in migrant schools by 10 points, while the test score gap in mathematics is 16 points. A similar study undertaken in Beijing also suggests that migrant students in state schools significantly outperform those in migrant schools, achieving test scores more than 10 points higher (Lai et al., 2012).

While the education received by most migrant children seems to be of poor quality, especially when compared to the education in urban state schools, it is

possible that it is nonetheless better than that available in most of rural China. This view was repeatedly suggested to me by urban Chinese, who, while agreeing that private migrant schools were of dubious quality, stressed that they were much better than anything available in rural areas. However, when I asked migrant parents and children to compare education before and after migration, a surprising picture emerged. Over half of parents (49) preferred the village school, and only 36% (32) thought the city school was better. When parents' answers are broken down by type of school attended in the city, the issue becomes clear. For children attending state school in Shenzhen, 15 of 16 parents thought the city school was "much better" than the rural school. By contrast, only 24% (17) of parents whose children attended private school thought it was better than the village school (most because the curriculum was broader). Even many parents who had rated the village school as bad said it was preferable to the city migrant school. The children's answers were similar, with all children who attended state school, but only 31% (18) of those who attended private school, saying that the Shenzhen school was better. In particular, both parents and children felt that teachers had been better before migration, with many parents commenting that teachers in migrant schools were badly trained, did not "take care of" children and could not discipline them.

This finding seems to contradict some of the older literature on migrant schools in China. For example, Woronov (2008) emphasises that, although the Beijing migrant school she studied in 2001 was worse in many ways than urban state schools, children there greatly preferred the migrant school to those in their home villages, in part because the quality of instruction was higher. However, the other reasons given by children she spoke to for preferring to study in Beijing related not to their education itself but to living with parents, who could supervise their schoolwork better than grandparents in the village, or to the fact that since migration their families could afford to send them to school regularly, as well as to buy higher quality food (Woronov, 2008, p. 106). Children I interviewed in Shenzhen mostly also expressed a preference for living in the city, and gave similar explanations about living with parents and eating better food. However, in terms of actual quality of education very few thought that the migrant school and its teachers were as good as those in their home village. This may partly reflect the considerable efforts made by the state to improving rural education in recent years, including investment in teacher salaries, buildings and facilities and curriculum reform, as well as the abolition of tuition fees from 2006 (Hannum et al., 2008). The more recent study conducted by Lai et al. (2012), comparing Beijing migrant schools with state schools in rural Shaanxi, supports my finding that migrant education is worse than that in rural China – in particular in terms of school resources and quality of teaching.

EDUCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN: A GENDER GAP?

The effect of migration on the quality of schooling children receive seems serious. For those few children able to attend state school after migration, the quality of

their education is much improved compared with in rural China. However, the large majority of children can attend only private migrant school, where the quality of the schooling seems worse than in home villages. It seems plausible, then, that for many children migration has a serious negative effect on primary education. One aspect which has not been explored at all in the existing literature, however, is that the impact of migration on children's schooling may vary by gender. I found that nearly two-thirds of those children who attended better quality state school after migration to Shenzhen were boys. There were two main reasons for this.

The first reason was that male births were more likely to be officially registered. Family planning quotas in most of rural China allow a couple to have a second child if their first is a girl. The more children a family had in excess of family planning quotas, the less likely younger children were to be registered, since registration of out-of-plan births involves payment of a large fine. This was much more likely to affect girls than boys. Among families I interviewed, out-of-plan boys were more frequently registered than girls, since most parents of younger sons thought the fine worth paying to include boys on the family *hukou*. Even the births of some eldest or second daughters may have been hidden so that the family could "try again" for at least one son. Girls, therefore, were less likely than their brother to have the necessary documents to attend state school.

The second reason for the less frequent enrolment of migrant girls in Shenzhen state schools was that some parents saw the education of their sons as more important than that of their daughters, and made more effort to acquire relevant papers, undertake complicated admissions procedures, purchase extra equipment required by the school and pay for extras such as bus fares to send their sons to state schools. In interviews many parents tended to emphasise boys' schooling over that of girls. This was less common in single-child families, perhaps because of more financial resources available to invest in the child's schooling, or because these parents would be dependent on their child in their old age. However, many families with several children seemed to pay less attention to the schooling of daughters than of sons. In fact, in several families I found that younger girls may not be enrolled in school yet, despite being at least 6 years old and in some cases as much as 8 or 9. While delayed school enrolment was already more common for girls than boys before migration, it seems likely that this was exacerbated by moving to Shenzhen because of the much greater costs of education in the city. These negative effects of rural-urban migration on the education of girl children in particular may seem surprising in the context of developmental discourses about more "modern" urban attitudes, including towards gender, and represent a clear counter to the idea, expressed in at least one recent study, that migration to the city works to decrease son-preference (Wu et al., 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

Most Chinese researchers recommend the expansion of city state schools to accommodate more migrants as the solution to migrant children's education

problems. This is thought likely both to reduce the hostility and discrimination experienced by migrant children in urban China, and to improve the quality of the education they receive (Han, 2004, p. 53). To some extent, this is already taking place, with cities like Shanghai and Nanjing increasing the number of state schools which can accept migrant students, while in some districts of Beijing designated state-run migrant schools have been launched (Renmin Ribao, 2012). However there remain serious obstacles to the enrolment of migrant children in urban state schools. The need for an array of official documents before a child can be registered as a student prevents many from enrolling, while family planning regulations continue to restrict school places to one child per family. These problems are in addition to the issues of quotas and different curricula, as well as the discrimination which migrant families continue to report from urban teachers, children and parents.

One possible solution might be for local governments to recognise and improve existing private migrant schools, at least in the short term. However, the state has mostly taken a more hostile approach. The attitude of the central government during the 1990s was described as “do not ban, do not recognize, let it run its course” (*bu qudi, bu chengren, zisheng zhimie*), which allowed the (technically illegal) schools to exist as long as they maintained a low profile (Kwong, 2004). However, since then there have been sporadic crackdowns on migrant schools on the part of city authorities, most notably in Beijing before the 2008 Olympic Games (HRW, 2006). Most other city governments have operated similar campaigns, which are now ostensibly on the grounds of removing low quality facilities which may be hazardous to health and safety, removing structures which lack planning permission or requisitioning land for other projects, rather than removing illegal schools *per se*, but which have the same result.⁵ Stringent regulations as to the minimum standards required to set up a school, including various kinds of sports facilities and a campus of at least 15,000 m² in Beijing schools, are impossible for even the best migrant schools to meet (Hu & Li, 2006).

Furthermore, state hostility to migrant schooling seems to stem not only from city governments, which might be expected to show some antipathy to the strains on resources caused by large influxes of migrant settlers, but also, to some extent, from central government, which has failed to provide additional resources to areas with large migrant populations to cope with the extra costs of migrant children's schooling. Nor has the central government taken steps to prevent local authorities from closing unlicensed migrant schools arbitrarily, or to pass any permanent law to hold local governments responsible for the schooling of all children, regardless of *hukou* status. All these facts suggest that the responsibility for the lack of education for migrant children lies not only with local authorities, but also with a central government which has been reluctant to take action to improve the situation.

Julia Kwong (2004) has suggested that state opposition to private schools set up by migrant communities arises from a tension between the state and the emerging civil society in China. According to this argument, the authorities resent popular support for migrant schools, seeing them as an encroachment on their monopoly

on the provision of education. I have suggested elsewhere that this interpretation downplays the acceptance of licensed private schools in the Chinese education system (typically attended by the children of wealthy non-migrants), but it does raise an interesting question about the way the Chinese state views rural migrant communities (Goodburn, 2009). Although a major policy shift has occurred since the late 1990s in state attitudes towards migration, from attempts to curb the flows of migrants to the encouragement of labour migration for development, there has not been the same shift in attitudes towards migrants themselves. Large migrant communities exist broadly outside the state system, in that few migrants have state social insurance, use state healthcare or participate in state organisations; many do not follow state family planning regulations and have unregistered “black” children; and, because of their mobility, few are effectively monitored by local state networks. The creation of migrant schools may therefore seem less like acts of entrepreneurship within the state framework, and more like attempts to create an alternative system altogether. The state’s response may, then, reflect a more general fear of the potential challenge to state legitimacy posed by the vast numbers of migrants in the city, rather than a more general antipathy to non-state provision of goods.

The state’s failure to ensure a decent education for the tens of millions of migrant children thus remains a serious issue for China’s development. Examination of the numbers involved shows that migrant students are becoming increasingly important. The number of local-*hukou*-holding children in both rural and urban schools is falling, since declining birth-rates have reduced the number of children in each successive cohort (NBS, 2012). The rate of migration, on the other hand, is high and increasing. Migrants are increasingly choosing to remain in cities, and more children are migrating with their families. Tens of millions of migrants who currently live in the city have no plans to return to village life. If the children of these migrants are denied access to a decent education, this is likely to have a serious, long-term effect on China’s social and economic development. The existence of a badly-educated urban underclass of rural migrants who hope to settle long-term in the city may bring problems of social stability. The existence of separate classes of “haves” and “have-nots” has long been a concern to the Chinese government in the context of the rural-urban divide, which may have reached its widest ever in income and consumption terms in 2009 (OECD, 2012, p. 18), but the settlement of rural families in China’s cities brings the problem into urban areas themselves. Meanwhile, continued high economic growth rates combined with the decreasing size of the labour force may shortly create a situation of rising demand and falling supply. While rising wages and a changing industrial structure have potentially huge positive effects for the country as a whole, China will have to move up the “productivity ladder” to become competitive in skilled industrial sectors. A key question is whether the labour force will be sufficiently educated to be able to perform this kind of work. The existence of tens of millions of rural-urban migrant children who have no access to a decent primary-level education (and whose education is actually largely worse than that in rural China) suggests a major problem for China’s future.

NOTES

- ¹ See, for example, Kipnis, 2011 for a discussion of modernisation discourses in China and their impact on education.
- ² In fact, some of those children receiving private education in rural China actually attended state schools as fee-paying pupils, which was usual in some areas for children born in excess of family planning quotas.
- ³ From 2012, the provision of a one-year Shanghai residency permit and proof of employment and rural origin were reportedly sufficient (Lan, forthcoming).
- ⁴ My interviews found that in addition to the cost of the application itself, opportunity costs through time away from work and indirect costs of repeated journeys to PSB bureaux could cause reluctance to apply for a temporary residency permit perceived to offer few benefits.

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POSTSCRIPT

Policy, Markets and the Local

Spotlight on China: Changes in Education under China's Market Economy is a rich overview of Chinese education in an important and difficult period of historical transition and major reform. Shibao Guo and Yan Guo have brought together insightful chapters on the broad array of issues ranging from the ongoing challenges of school and curriculum reform; population growth and mobility; teacher education and work; an emergent private education sector; and, a burgeoning higher education sector. Against a backdrop of emergent policy and official ideological shifts, at the heart of this volume are the host of intended and unintended, collateral and unplanned effects of educational reform for students, teachers, educational administrators, families and communities.

These range from a robust informal “shadow” economy of tutoring (Zhang & Bray, Chapter 6), to high levels of teacher stress and burnout (Beckett & Zhao, Chapter 9), from local schools with limited resources struggling to implement mandates from afar to the emergence of private boarding and tutoring schools (Wang & Chan, Chapter 10), from persistent and emergent patterns of educational inequality in rural and remote settings (Parkhouse & Rong, Chapter 18; Wang, Chapter 19), particularly among cultural and linguistic minorities, to the emergent educational problems and needs of Chinese workers, educators and families on the move in the new economy (S. Guo, Chapter 7; Goodburn, Chapter 21). At the same time, these chapters model the diverse approaches to educational research currently underway in Chinese education: from foundational theoretical work and critical policy analysis, to rigorous empirical analysis and rich interpretive case study.

These brief comments make the case that there are two challenges facing educational research on China: (1) the larger issues of policy and spatial/geographic ‘scale’ in national and regional educational reform; and, relatedly, on how these issues repeatedly return us to (2) the significance of studies of the variable, often idiosyncratic local uptake of policy. Both are directly linked to the cultural, spatial/geographic, demographic and socioeconomic diversity and heterogeneity of the ‘new’ China and, hence, of Chinese education. And both are keys to unpacking the persistent theme that runs across this volume: residual and emergent patterns of educational inequality in access and participation, achievement and outcomes, knowledge and capacity. In so doing, I want to argue that this is less a case of

paradigmatic ‘market-driven’ reform that follows Neoliberal principles, and more an instance of persistent unresolved tension between centrally-generated policy and local uptake, between official ideology and local discourse practice, and ultimately, between grand policy narrative and local educational stories, struggles and everyday practices.

I read this volume as a cultural, linguistic and disciplinary ‘outsider’ to Chinese education. While my general expertise includes educational policy and sociology, curriculum and school reform in Australian, Canadian and Singaporean contexts, I have worked in and around Chinese education for several decades now, occasionally teaching and lecturing at Beijing Normal University. Writing as an overseas Chinese academic, my optics for this piece are, of course, tempered by standpoint and biography – as are the contributions of this remarkable collection of scholars and social scientists based in China, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This said – to the task at hand.

Educational policies are, by definition, official bids to shape the flows and movements of human subjects (e.g., teachers, principals, bureaucrats, lecturers, students and, indeed, families), economic and material resources (e.g., salaries, tuition fees, scholarships, buildings, textbooks), and texts and discourses (i.e., policies, curricula, classroom talk, test and exams) across educational systems (Luke & Hogan, 2011). This shaping sets out to achieve deliberate *normative* ends – including the intergenerational production and transmission of specific ideology and belief, selected cultural practices and specialized knowledges in the interests of individuals, communities, institutions and, indeed, the state and capital. As the authors here point out. There is a clear consensus across this volume that the normative means and ends of Chinese education are in a significant period of transition, with the reform of official curriculum and educational governance, teaching and school leadership focusing on the production of new human capital for domestic and globalized development and growth. This is occurring under the broad auspices of market-based reform of the Chinese economy and key state institutions. It is set against the backdrop of issues of political continuity and social cohesion, with official concern about increasing economic inequality between Eastern and Central China and its Western provinces, between urban and rural populations (e.g., Goodburn, Chapter 21), between Han Chinese and cultural and linguistic minorities, and between children of the emergent middle class and those of low socioeconomic backgrounds (see Yang, Cheng & Bian, Chapter 15).

As elsewhere in East Asia (e.g., Singapore, Korea), the official discourses of curriculum have shifted to focus on those forms of creativity and student-centered learning putatively linked to technological expansion, economic innovation, initiative and entrepreneurship. There is strong focus on what are now the key languages of economic globalization (in this case, Chinese *and* English as new economic commodities; see Y. Guo, Chapter 8; Zeegers & Zhang, Chapter 4), and the newly unified school/university field of STEM (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) indexed against the demand for specialized communications and

technological expertise in expanding industrial and digital, financial and service sectors. These are the hallmarks of the new transnational curriculum settlement: a renovation and extension of the postwar human capital model (Luke, 2005). That model was premised on the idea that expanded provision in compulsory schooling and higher education could set the conditions for economic growth with improved social and economic equality.

In this regard, Chinese policy approaches have an apparent kinship with the broader transnational policy settlement which Tan and Reyes (Chapter 2) refer to as ‘Neoliberalism’. As always, the translation of economic and cultural, material and ideological practice from Anglo/American/European educational reform (most recently, through organizations like the OECD) to the Chinese historical and cultural context requires analytic delicacy and empirical caution. I recall a very awkward lecture at Beijing Normal a decade ago, where I attempted to explain the historic roots of the ‘privatization’ and ‘marketization’ of American, British and Australian state education by reference to Chicago School free market economic models and Thatcher-era attacks on the trade-union movement and welfare state. To say the least, the seminar audience and I struggled to map clear historical and material parallels in Chinese economic and social history. So I begin from a cautionary stance about whether and how educational, social and economic ideologies and their affiliated state policies travel across geographic, national and cultural borders, with what historic baggage and cultural meanings, and with which substantive material effects (Luke, 2011).

The North American and European critical take on Neoliberalism focuses on the production of a possessive individualism well-suited for the class-stratified generation of capacities for transnational corporate capitalism. The situation in China, of course, reflects radically different political economic and cultural histories. As Law’s (Chapter 3) discussion of new models of citizenship points out the reforms on the table – while ostensibly driven by a reorientation towards the ‘market’ – underline many key dialectical tensions at work in Chinese education. These include the ideological and practical tensions between reconstructed versions of traditional Chinese culture, state capitalism and socialism, between the “rule of law” and “party rule”, between individual rights and collective state interests. Across this volume we see evidence that curriculum is one key site for the working through of these issues – particularly in attempts to ideologically reconstruct Confucianism, Deweyianism and other intellectual and cultural resources.

In the case of post-1949 expansion of higher education, Zhang, Dai and Yu (Chapter 11) argue that the current university system was born “in denial of, and opposition to” 2000 years of higher education traditions. These have now been supplanted by a Western-derived “hybrid system” that faces major unresolved issues in governance, academic culture and core educational values. The result, they argue, is a higher education system emerging from successive major expansions of scale and infrastructure whose central challenges and future development turn on larger issues of political and economic stability. These emergent and contingent directions

for Chinese universities have potentially ambivalent effects in terms of the system's mixed goals of equity of access, inclusive expansion, and the generation of new knowledge and innovation – particularly in light of the well-documented mixed and highly contentious effects of the corporatization and marketization of higher education in the West (cf. Marginson, 2011).

On the surface at least, we see trace elements of Neoliberal reform at work in both the school and higher education sectors. There is an official discourse on 'quality', on the shifting of fiscal and administrative decision making from national to provincial and local jurisdiction and responsibility, on ostensive models of school and university autonomy and privatization. These in turn are weighted against a performative focus on accountability. In this model, educational system performance can be quantitatively benchmarked in relation to the overarching goals of the increased and more equitable production of new human capital, which in turn can be assessed vis a vis correlation with improvement in traditional metrics of employment, intergenerational social and economic mobility, GDP, gender equity, and so forth.

Yet the move from grand policy narrative to regional and local implementation is always fraught. As Wu's discussion of the concept of *suzhi* illustrates (Chapter 5), many of the central axioms of reform are subject to complex cultural and historical mediation and translation. Further, these official policy discourses travel into the "hinterland" of Qiandongnan, Wu documents their local uptake in the context of longstanding Miao and Dong cultural histories and practices. Wu's analysis models the key problematics in educational reform and policy analysis: first, the degree to which official discourse, however coded and broadcast from centre to margins, consists of a series of "floating signifiers" (i.e., *suzhi*), that are subject to not only the eccentricity of local discourse practice, but, in this case, to the resilience and power of Indigenous minority cultures. Wu's point is that, whatever its intents, the discourses of market-based reform are leading to "fragmented" and "messy" local uptakes, with mixed educational effects on both students and teachers, communities and schools. We encounter a very different picture of the local uses of policy in Yochim's (Chapter 20) study of 15 families in an "aspirational" city of Shijiazhuang. Here Yochim documents how families in the growing middle class are building and exchanging cultural, economic and social capital in the new Chinese cityscape of intense urban high rise development, expanded transportation and commercial infrastructure, and new levels and kinds of state and private educational provision.

Turning to Chinese higher education, Wang and Chan (Chapter 10) here describe a "controlled decentralization" of the system that enabled the opening of new private and semi-private institutions. In their framing of higher education reforms, Yan, Mao and Zha (Chapter 12) term the approach one of "Chinese-style Market preserving federalism", describing a local "promotion tournament" system that uses performative metrics to create incentives for provincial officials. The approach to a centrally-driven fiscal decentralization, they argue, creates a host of ambiguous outcomes, including the increase in gaps between provincial performance on equity indicators.

These are not just archetypal cases of what philosopher Michel Foucault (1972) once described as the “eccentric” local uptake of discourse. They are as well empirical questions framed by actual geographic and demographic diversity and scale. The chapters here can only begin to capture the geographic/spatial diversity and cultural/linguistic heterogeneity of China and Chinese education. In this regard, the educational policy questions are in part framed by a larger historic challenge of Chinese national heterogeneity and diversity: about how to constitute and maintain social cohesion and political continuity in the face of large-scale population growth and movement, ongoing urbanization, cultural, demographic and linguistic diversity, and an uneven distribution and concentration of resources and wealth. The point is that the questions of scale and implementation faced by Chinese educational reform are by definition extensions of the core question around national integrity, identity and unity that spans Chinese history. Particularly since 1949, national governance has been seen to entail, *inter alia*, the extension and standardization of language and writing systems and the promulgation of national ideology and history through universal education. These historical dynamics of scale, place, cultural history and national ideology arguably make China an exceptional case in contemporary educational policy.

I make this point as a corrective to the current enterprise of cross-national comparison of the performance of education systems and universities and its affiliated industries of PISA, TIMSS, Times Higher Education Supplement, the Web of Science and so forth. Led by a perennial search for the ‘right’, universal educational model, the Western pursuit of “Shanghai model” (or Finland, Singapore and Korea, for that matter) as an exemplar of generalizable practice is, at best, scientifically naïve, and at worst, spurious and misleading (Luke, 2011). And the studies here show how educational systems reform and the relationships between policy discourses and local effects are wholly contingent upon the interplay of national ideologies and political economies, demographics and geographies of scale, on the one hand, and heterogeneities and diversities of culture and place, on the other.

There is no doubt that China is undergoing major policy shifts that are broadly premised on a still emergent models of state-regulation of quasi-markets. But for me the underlying theme of *Spotlight on China* is that despite all systemic efforts to calibrate and control policy with fidelity to its intents – local stories happen. It is in these face-to-face, everyday institutional lives that the new China, its diverse human beings, their labor and artifacts, ideas and beliefs are being constructed. One of the responsibilities of educational research is to document these local effects, and then, as this volume does, assemble them into a broader sociological overview and framework, searching for key and recurrent social and material relations of power, continuities and discontinuities of discourse, lived human equalities and inequalities, and, indeed, enabling institutional sites and practices. I was struck by the simplicity and clarity of Loren Yochim’s observation: “One of the difficulties of researching and trying to find plausible explanations for the shape and texture of Chinese society and culture is the extraordinarily rapid pace of change. Descriptions accurately made

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are quickly outdated as policy changes in response to economic and social pressures” (p. 345). For the moment, then, *Spotlight on China* provides a state of the art picture: dynamic, partial, full of contradictions and tensions, and, as we speak, in movement and local reconfiguration.

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