

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*Education for Migrant Children:  
Policy Implementation in the Changing Urban Education  
System in China*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to examine the extent to which migrant children's education policy is implemented and identifies the factors that affect the implementation of this policy in the Chinese context. In the last two decades, urban China has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of children of rural-urban migrants. It has become a public concern that migrant children do not have access to education and cannot receive as good an education as do urban children in the cities, even though there are policies formulated by the central government to tackle this issue. The thesis adopts mixed research methods to examine the implementation of migrant children's education policy. Main sources of the evidence include semi-structured interviews, statistical data, government documents and internal reports by local schools. The thesis divides migrant children's education policy into three parts: funding and school access policy, equal opportunity policy and school support and social integration policy. It is found that policies for migrant children are selectively or partially implemented. Some policy goals have been achieved, while others have not. Certain groups of migrant children have access to urban public schools and receive high quality education while others do not. A policy analysis shows that migrant children's education policy is ambiguous in goals and weak in incentives, which grants local governments and schools scope to act with discretion. Non-implementation of sufficient funding and school access policy result from self-interested and habitual decisions of local governments. Implementation of equal opportunity policy is affected by the workings of the exam-oriented education system in China. Social integration policy appears to be well-implemented due to effective school support available to migrant children and good intergroup relationship between migrant and urban children. The findings imply that further policy reform is needed to improve the educational opportunities of migrant children. In particular, special attention should be focused on those policy areas not effectively implemented and more support should be directed to those migrant children who are more disadvantaged.

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## Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CCPCC  | Chinese Communist Party Central Committee                        |
| CERNET | China Education and Research Network                             |
| CNIER  | China National Institute for Educational Research                |
| DI     | Disposable Income  |
| DRC    | Development Research Centre of the State Council                 |
| EDA    | Economic Development Administration                              |
| GCSE   | General Certificate of Secondary Education                       |
| GCEA   | General Certificate of Education Advanced                        |
| GNP    | Gross National Product   |
| GRP    | Gross Regional Product   |
| KFC    | Kentucky Fried Chicken   |
| MBSC   | Municipal Bureau of Statistics of City C                         |
| MBSH   | Municipal Bureau of Statistics of City H                         |
| ME     | Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China              |
| MF     | Ministry of Finance of People's Republic of China                |
| MPS    | Ministry of Public Security of People's Republic of China        |
| NBSC   | National Bureau of Statistics of China                           |
| NCLB   | No Children Left Behind Act                                      |
| NPC    | National People's Congress                                       |
| PCA    | Principal Component Analysis                                     |
| PRC    | People's Republic of China                                       |
| SC     | State Council  |
| SES    | Socioeconomic Status   |
| SOE    | State-Owned Enterprise   |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Programme                             |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNRISD | United Nations Research Institute for Social Development         |
| VAT    | Value Added Tax  |

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

The aim of this thesis is to examine the implementation of migrant children's education policy within the context of rapid urbanisation and large scale rural-urban migration in China. Starting from 1958, the Chinese population was divided into rural and urban residents via the Household Registration system, which is also known as the *hukou* system. People were either registered as rural or urban residents according to their places of birth. Migration from rural to urban areas was strictly controlled and mostly prohibited. In 1985, to promote urbanisation, the control of migration was relaxed (NPC, 1985). Rural residents were allowed to live and work in cities as long as they were granted temporary residence certificates (*zanzhuzheng*). Since then, there had been a large number of rural residents migrating to cities each year (Zhang, 1999; Hussein, 2003; Li, 2004). According to the figure released by the National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China (NBSC, 2011), by the end of 2010, there were 221 million rural-urban migrants<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, an increasing number of migrant children started to live in cities as well. By 2000, there were 14.1 million migrant children under the age of 14 in cities across China. This accounted for 17.6% of the total number of children who lived in the urban areas (Guo, 2007). In 2003, the total number of rural-urban migrants' children aged 6-14 reached 6.4 million (Fan, 2004). There are mainly two reasons for the increase of migrant children in cities. First, "many rural-urban migrants, unlike their predecessors in previous years who came and left, now intend to settle down in cities" (Li, 2006, p.174). They prefer to bring the whole family with them. Second, education resources are distributed disproportionately between rural and urban schools. Two thirds of primary and junior school students live in rural areas, but they receive only half of the total funding of education (Jiao et al., 2007). The education standard in urban schools is

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<sup>1</sup> The formal translation of "rural-urban migrants" into Chinese is "xiangcheng qianyi ren yuan". A similar term which is also widely used is "migrant workers" whose Chinese counterpart is "nongmingong" or "wailai wugong ren yuan". The difference is that not all rural-urban migrants work for employers in cities. Some of them are self-employed. Migrant workers constitute a majority of rural-urban migrants, but are not equal to the latter. In most cases, however, the two terms are used interchangeably by the public and in academic research. The thesis will follow this tradition without further distinguishing their differences.

higher than that in rural schools. Migrants bring their children with them in hope that their children will receive better education in urban schools (Zhang et al., 2003).

Serious concerns have been raised in relation to education for migrant children in cities. Both media reports and academic research have revealed that migrant children have not enjoyed equal education in cities and have had no access to urban public education. For example, migrant families had to pay an extra amount of money in order to gain access to urban public schools, which is not applicable to urban children (Fan, 2004). Some migrant children dropped out of schooling simply because no urban schools were willing to provide study places to them (Guo, 2007). Meanwhile, some migrant families who could not afford the fees charged by urban public schools had to send their children to private schools established exclusively for migrant children. These schools are often known as migrant schools (*nongmingong zidi xuexiao*). Generally speaking, migrant schools were less expensive than public urban schools, but the standard of education was much lower than that of urban public schools. Furthermore, some migrant schools were not recognized by the governments as legal education institutions and therefore could be closed at any time.

The problem of education for migrant children is not due to the lack of policy to address this issue. A series of laws and regulations have been introduced by the central government since 2001 to ensure that migrant children could receive equal and high quality education in cities<sup>2</sup> (Qu and Wang, 2008). These central government policies can be divided into three categories, namely funding and access to urban education policy, equal opportunity policy and school support and social integration policy.

- Funding and access to urban education policy: the local education system should provide sufficient funding to schools so that the majority of migrant children are able to study in urban public schools.
- Equal opportunity policy: schools should apply the same school admissions criteria to migrant and urban children, teach them in the same classes (i.e. non-

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter provides a brief summary of the policy. A more detailed analysis of the policy will be executed in Section 5.2.

segregation policy) and make an effort to help migrant children catch up in studies (i.e. equalisation of academic performance policy).

- School support and social integration policy: Schools should provide support to migrant children so that they can adjust to the new environment in cities.

It can be noted from the above review that there is a discrepancy between what is happening in reality and what is formulated by the policy. For example, migrant children have no or limited access to urban public schools, even though central government stipulated otherwise. The question is why there is such a discrepancy? Is it because the relevant policies are not implemented? If they are implemented, why the outcomes are not as the policy makers expected? If they are not implemented, then what are the barriers to policy implementation? These questions are the main motivations to examine the implementation of migrant children's education policy in this thesis.

## **1.2 Existing Research on Implementation of Migrant Children's Education Policy**

There is only a limited amount of research on the implementation of migrant children's education policy. Some scholars (e.g. Fan 2004, Guo 2007) briefly mentioned the discrepancies between the policy goals and reality, but they did not look into why these policies were not fully implemented. So far, there has only been one monograph and three academic articles that formally investigate implementation of migrant children's education policy<sup>3</sup> since the government first published the policy to tackle this issue in 2001. All the discussions in these works focused on the first part of migrant children's education policy, namely funding and school access policy. They all found that funding and school access policy was not implemented.

Zhou (2006) argued that lack of funding is the main reason why school access policy could not be implemented (p.27). The key issue is that migrant children's education policy is not matched with financial resources. This prevented the policy from being effectively implemented. When the policies were not clearly formulated and local

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<sup>3</sup> Formal academic investigation on this issue refers to the research with two characteristics. First, the research clearly stated that its research objective or question focused on implementation of migrant children's education policy. Second, the arguments of the research were based on empirical evidence.

governments were left with discretionary powers, ineffective implementation was transformed into evasion of responsibility. Later in a monograph, Zhou (2007) collected evidence from three cities (Harbin, Shanghai and Beijing) to further support her theories.

Qian and Geng (2007) maintained that the *hukou* system is the decisive factor that affects implementation of migrant children's education policy. On the one hand, central government failed to formulate the policy clearly, so local governments took advantage of the *hukou* system to evade their responsibilities. On the other hand, because migrant and urban families were separated by the *hukou* system for decades, migrant families were ignored by society and local governments after they arrived in cities. Therefore, migrant children's education policy was not taken seriously by local governments or urban schools.

Li (2009) conducted a case study in city D in Guangdong Province<sup>4</sup>. He argued that school access policy imposed additional burdens on the local education system. Local governments and public schools were not willing to implement this policy. First of all, in order to do so, local governments had to split the funding for education between migrant and urban children. Local governments were unhappy with this, because they thought the funding should only be spent on urban children (p.16). Second, as more migrant children studied in urban public schools, local schools had to face new challenges in relation to administering these children. Local schools were not happy with this because it increased their workload (p.17).

Although these studies provided some useful insights into the implementation of migrant children's education policy, a series of questions still remain. First, Zhou (2006, 2007) argued that insufficient funding accounts for non-implementation of policy. A question arising out of this argument is: why is there not enough funding to implement the policy? Is it because local governments do not have the funding? Or is it because local governments do have the funding but choose not to use the funding to provide education for migrant children?

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<sup>4</sup> The name of the city was anonymised in Li's (2009) research.

Second, Qian and Geng (2007) pointed out that the policy failed due to the *hukou* system. This argument is equally puzzling. As mentioned in the research background section, the *hukou* system was relaxed in 1985 by Chinese government to promote urbanisation and rural-urban migration. Then how can the *hukou* system still function as a barrier to education for migrant children at the local level?

The third problem relates to migrant children's education policy per se. As mentioned above, existing research focused on funding and access to urban public education policy. Seldom did the research touch upon other policy areas such as equal opportunity, school support and social integration. The question is: are the other two aspects of migrant children's education policy being implemented?

Not only did the research on implementation of migrant children's education policy create a series of questions, but policy implementation in China per se is also full of puzzles. Implementation of government policy is a difficult issue that the Chinese government has had to tackle on a regular basis. There is a paradox here. On the one hand, the central government has continuously emphasised in the last three decades that every policy it formulates must be put into effect. Local governments must implement policy without delay or hesitation. Nor are local governments allowed to negotiate with the central government on policy goals and policy implementation. As former President of People's Republic of China (PRC) Xiaoping Deng once stated in a government meeting in 1988:

After the central government takes measures, local governments and departments must implement them firmly. The implementation must not only be swift but also forceful, otherwise governance is impossible. (Deng, 1993, p.277)

Such a stringent stance on policy implementation was reiterated and reinforced on many occasions in the ensuing decades. As former President Zemin Jiang said in a government meeting in 1998:

With regard to the decisions made by the central government, governments and communist party committees at each level must obey

the command and implement the decisions with compliance...If anyone dares to make decisions on their own, s/he will face the consequences. Do not say there is no warning ahead. (Jiang, 2006, p.166)

On the other hand, policies formulated by the central government are frequently misunderstood, misinterpreted, distorted, avoided or simply not implemented. Unintended or undesirable policy results are pervasive after policy goals are announced by the central government. As current President Jintao Hu (2004) pointed out in a government meeting

One of the problems we are often faced with is that there are numerous good ideas, good policies and good measures at both central and local level...but they were not put into effect and did not arrive at the expected results.

The paradox is that even though local governments are required to strictly follow the directives of the central government, there is huge flexibility in the course of implementation by local governments. It is observed that local governments often adapt the implementation process to suit other policy goals (Wang, 2007; Zhou, 2007). There is a well-known saying in China, which states “where there is policy from above, there are countermeasures from below” (*shangyou zhengce, xiayou duice*). This summarises the essence of adaptive implementation approach adopted by the local governments and, more importantly, failure to implement the policies in China.

Even though attracting widespread attention in the public, policy implementation in a Chinese context remains an under-researched topic. Relevant research is still in its early stages. The research aiming to explain non-implementation of policy in China is limited in number. Zhu (2006) pointed out that most of the policy studies in China before 2006 concentrated on “introducing the theories or translating the works from outside China” (p.83). Bi (2006) had a review of implementation research in China and arrived at the same conclusion. “In China, a majority of implementation research did not start until the 21<sup>st</sup> century...(and) most of it focused on introducing and assessing findings of implementation research in the Western Countries”.(p.8)

In summary, a review of existing literature indicates that implementation of migrant

children's education policy is full of unanswered questions. No research has been conducted to examine whether equal opportunity, school support and social integration policies have been implemented, and there are still no satisfactory explanations for the non-implementation of sufficient funding and school access policies. For this reason, this thesis aims to undertake a systematic examination of migrant children's education policy and discuss in depth the factors that affect the implementation of this policy.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research question of the thesis can be formally stated as: to what extent is education policy for migrant children implemented and why? There are two elements in the main research question. The first is to examine which parts of the migrant children's education policy are implemented. The second is to explain why some policies are implemented or not and identify the factors that affect the implementation of migrant children's education policy.

It is necessary to clarify the main concepts referred to in this research question. The first concept is policy. Existing literature suggests that public policy can be defined from three different angles: either as formal decisions made by the government (e.g. Haywood, 2000, p.31), the actions by the government in the public sphere of people's lives (e.g. Heclo, 1972, p.84) or an extra-discursive existence governing the social structure (e.g. Ball, 1994). The thesis will follow the first definition in the analysis and thus regard policy as a set of decisions made by the government<sup>5</sup>. On the basis of this line, a more elaborated definition of public policy provided by Jenkins (1978) seems to be useful to the thesis. Jenkins (1978) defined public policy as "a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve" (Jenkins, 1978). This definition indicates that the government normally makes decisions on two issues in the policy: the goals to be achieved and the means to achieve these goals.

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<sup>5</sup> The thesis does not adopt the second definition because it can be easily confused with the definition of policy implementation to be discussed below. The thesis will take a positivistic stance when analyzing the policy. Therefore, the third definition, based on post-structuralism philosophy, is not adopted in the thesis.

Based on this goal-oriented definition of public policy (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p.7), policy implementation is defined in the thesis as the effort by various policy actors to achieve the predesignated goals of public policy. Such a definition was adopted by many implementation scholars in the research. For example, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) pointed out that “[i]mplementation would...constitute the ability to achieve the predicted consequences after the initial conditions are met... the extent to which the predicted consequences take place we will call implementation” (pp.xxii-xxiii). When reviewing implementation literature, Hill (1993) pointed out that “the first wave of implementation studies... present [policy implementation] largely in terms of the subversion of the goals of original policy makers” (p.235). More recently, O’Toole, et al. (1997) provided a similar definition: “[b]y policy implementation, we mean problem-solving efforts stimulated by government and ordered into programmes” (p.138).

Policy implementation is a process. It is a collection of decisions and actions by various parties involved that may affect the achievement of policy goals. The extent to which policy goals can be achieved is an issue of implementation success or failure. In this thesis, if the policy goals are successfully achieved, it will be defined that the policy is effectively implemented. Likewise, if the policy goals are not achieved, it will be defined that the policy has not been implemented. Such a definition is in agreement with that of Hogwood and Gunn (1984) who defined that non-implementation is that the policy “is not put into effect as intended” or “fails to produce the intended results (or outcomes)”<sup>6</sup> (p.197). On the basis of these definitions, the first issue in the main research questions is actually to examine whether the objectives of migrant children’s education policy are successfully achieved, whereas the second issue is to explain why the policy goals are achieved or not achieved.

This thesis will maintain that the policy is implemented by government and government-funded organizations (e.g. schools, hospitals and etc.). In this thesis, they are called the implementers of the policy. However, these policy implementers are not

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<sup>6</sup> Hogwood and Gunn (1984) did distinguish between “put into effect as intended” and “produce the intended results”. They called the former “unsuccessful implementation” and the latter “non-implementation”. For convenience of analysis, the thesis will not distinguish between the two but call both of them non-implementation.

the only forces that affect policy implementation. The outcomes of policy implementation are also determined by the decisions and actions of other stakeholders that are affected by or can affect the policy. As O'Toole et al. (1997) pointed out:

The actors involved in implementation are not only drawn from governmental units; they may also include others whose efforts are required for the success of the implementation...The target groups...must be counted among the necessary participants and incorporated in network analysis, rather than treated as passive objects populating the implementation landscape. (pp. 138-139)

In this thesis, those non-government stakeholders that the policy aims to influence or affect are called target groups and those non-governmental stakeholders that can affect policy implementation are called pressure groups. This means that in order to examine policy implementation, researchers not only need to look at the decisions and actions of governments and government-funded bodies, but also look at the behaviours of target groups and pressure groups.

On the basis of the definition above, a series of sub-questions are presented to answer the main research question. These sub-questions can be divided into three groups. Each group of sub-questions addresses a particular policy issue relating to education for migrant children identified in Section 1.1. Each group of sub-questions asks to what extent a specific aspect of migrant children's education policy is effectively implemented and why.

The first group of sub-questions is concerned with whether sufficient funding and school access policy is effectively implemented and why. There are five sub-questions in this group.

- Q1.1 Is there sufficient funding to provide education for migrant children in urban public schools?
- Q1.2 Who is responsible for allocating the funding of education for migrant children at the local level?
- Q1.3 What are the factors affecting the decisions of funding allocation?
- Q1.4 What is the impact of funding allocation on access to urban public schools?

Q1.5 Do migrant children have access to urban public schools?

The second group of sub-questions concerns with whether equal opportunity policy is effectively implemented and why. There are three sub-questions in this group.

Q2.1 What are the factors that affect the implementation of equal opportunity policy?

Q2.2 What is the impact of these factors on the implementation of equal opportunity policy?

Q2.3 To what extent is equal opportunity policy effectively implemented? That is, do urban schools apply equal admission criteria, follow the principle of non-segregation and help out migrant children in study as required by the central government in practice?

The third group of sub-questions is concerned with whether school support and social integration policy is effectively implemented and why. There are three sub-questions in this group.

Q3.1 What support is provided by urban public schools to help migrant children adjust to the new study environment?

Q3.2 Is the policy goal of social integration successfully achieved?

Q3.3 What are the factors affecting the achievement or non-achievement of the policy goal of social integration?

## **1.4 Overview of Methodology**

The thesis employs a mixed-method approach to data collection in order to answer the research questions. I stayed in China for nine months to do fieldwork and collect data. The data collected include semi-structured interviews, government documents, internal reports of schools and statistical data. The data collection process was divided into two stages. The first stage was between July and October 2009. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and internal reports of schools were collected in this stage. The second stage started at the end of January and ended at the beginning of May 2010. Government documents and statistical data were collected in this stage.

The main source of evidence used in this thesis is qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews and it is used to answer the research questions listed in the last section. Silverman (2010) pointed out that “research methods should be chosen based on the specific task at hand” (p.9). With regard to this thesis, it seems that a qualitative approach is the most suitable method to answer its research questions. As mentioned in the previous section, one of the main tasks of the thesis is to examine the process and explain the results of policy implementation. This involves going into the details of policy implementation and looking at the interactions among different policy actors and groups. Such a task can be better achieved by a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. According to Bryman (2004), a qualitative approach “provides a great deal of descriptive details...emphasises on process...[and] is concerned with explanations” (pp.280-281).

I conducted 69 in-depth interviews in cities C and H to examine whether the goals of migrant children’s education policy were achieved and to identify the factors that affect the achievement of these policy goals. The interviewees included nine government officials, six school principals, six school teachers, 36 migrant children, six migrant parents and six urban children. The principals, teachers and children came from five schools.

Apart from the semi-structured interviews, I also collected government documents, internal reports of schools and statistical data. Government documents were collected from archives in National Library of China and official websites of the Chinese government. Internal reports of schools were collected from the five schools I visited. Statistical data were collected from an online database, official websites of the Chinese government and statistical yearbooks. The government documents, internal reports and statistical data play an assisting role in answering the research questions. They are used to illustrate the context of migrant children’s education policy, strengthen the findings of the thesis or supplement the arguments derived from semi-structured interviews. But they do not independently answer any of the sub-questions listed in the previous section.

## 1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 2 describes the context of migrant children's education policy. Three contextual issues will be discussed in this chapter. The first relates to the basic education system in China. This is to provide a comprehensive account of how the Chinese education system works. The second issue concerns the *hukou* system. The focus is on explaining the functions of separation and discrimination of the *hukou* system in China and its impact on rural-urban migration. The last issue relates to the problem of education for migrant children. Drawing on evidence from existing research, the thesis will examine the scope and severity of the problem relating to education for migrant children. In particular, the analysis will focus on school access, equal opportunity of education and social integration of migrant children, because they are also important issues in migrant children's education policy.

Chapter 3 reviews the broader literature on policy implementation and identifies the factors affecting it. The chapter divides these factors into two groups, namely generic factors and policy-specific factors. Generic factors refer to those that have impacts on different types of policy. Generic factors are further divided into two subgroups: preconditional factors and institutional factors of implementation. Preconditional factors of implementation include the design of policy goals and the room for implementer discretion. Institutional factors include self-interest and habitual behaviour. Policy-specific factors only affect a specific type of policy. These factors have been found in existing applied research to have had an impact on implementation of funding policy, equal opportunity policy and social integration policy respectively.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology of the thesis. First, this chapter will revisit the research questions and evaluate the data needed to answer these research questions on the basis of theoretical discussion in Chapter 3. Second, this chapter will also describe in detail the methods of data collection and analysis. Finally, this chapter will discuss the strategies that were undertaken in the fieldwork to improve research quality and ensure ethical research practices.

Chapter 5 discusses the room for implementer discretion in China and the policy goals relating to education for migrant children. Room for implementer discretion in China is

analysed within the context of inter-governmental relationships which includes administrative relationships, financial relationships and personnel appointments. With regard to policy goals, the focus of analysis is placed upon the clarity and feasibility of policy goals and their implications for policy implementation.

Chapter 6 answers the first set of sub-questions in relation to the implementation of funding and access to urban public education policy. It will examine whether sufficient funding is allocated to local public schools, explain which government agencies can make decisions on funding allocation, and how the task is carried out by different government agencies. The factors affecting the decisions on funding allocation are also identified and explained in this chapter. Finally, the chapter will examine the consequences of funding allocation and evaluate whether the policy goal in relation to access to urban public education is successfully achieved.

Chapter 7 answers the second set of sub-questions in relation to the implementation of equal opportunity policy. It will examine the incentives, goals and constraints of urban public schools and how these factors affect school admissions policy, non-segregation policy and equalization of academic performance policy. The chapter will also analyse the role that parents play in policy implementation.

Chapter 8 answers the last set of sub-questions in relation to the implementation of school support and social integration policy. This chapter will address three issues. First, it will examine the support provided to migrant children by urban public schools. Second, it will evaluate whether migrant children can integrate themselves into the new environment. Finally, this chapter will explain the policy results and look at whether school support is helpful to social integration.

Chapter 9 summarises the findings in the thesis and discusses their theoretical and policy implications. This chapter has two main tasks. First, it will bring the empirical findings together and answer the research questions listed in Chapter 1. Second, it will go back to the conceptual and theoretical discussions in Chapters 1 and 3 and compare the findings with existing theories. This is to examine whether the findings in the thesis confirm or reject existing theories. Meanwhile, it also serves the purpose of evaluating

the contributions that this thesis can make to existing literature. Finally, the chapter also includes a discussion of potential improvements to the implementation of migrant children's education policy and directions for further research.

## Chapter 2 The Context of Migrant Children's Education Policy

### Introduction

This chapter introduces the context of migrant children's education policy. It aims to illustrate the policy and social background against which migrant children's education policy was formulated by the Chinese government. The chapter will discuss three contextual issues including China's basic education system, the *hukou* system and the problem of education for migrant children.

Migrant children's education policy is an integral part of basic education system in China. The overarching intention of migrant children's education policy is to make sure that migrant children can receive the same education as do urban children in cities (Chapter 1). Such a policy intention fits in Chinese government's broader strategy of promoting equality in the basic education system in China.

Migrant children's education policy was formulated within the context of rapid urbanization in China (Chapter 1). On the one hand, after the *hukou* system was relaxed, a large number of migrant children migrated to cities and needed to study in urban schools. On the other, migrant children were denied access to urban public schools or could not receive equal education in cities. Faced with these problems and challenges, the central government needed to formulate policy to regulate the provision of education services to migrant children and to protect migrant children's right to education in cities.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of basic education system in China. The focus of discussion will be placed upon five issues including enrolment, finance of education, unequal distribution of educational resources, school examinations and parenting style in China. The second section discusses the history and reform of the *hukou* system in China and its consequences in relation to rural-urban migration. The final section discusses the problem of education for migrant children. This is to illustrate the history and the status quo of those issues relevant to migrant children's education policy.

## **2.1 The Basic Education System in China**

This section discusses the basic education system in China. To illustrate the workings of the basic education system, five fundamental issues will be examined including enrolment, finance of education, unequal distribution of educational resources, school examinations and parenting styles in China.

### **2.1.1 Enrolment**

In China, children normally start their basic education at six or seven years of age. Spanning twelve years, the basic education consists of six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education and three years of senior secondary education. The first nine years of basic education (i.e. primary and junior secondary education) is compulsory (Chan et al. 2008). Both parents and the government must make sure that children can receive this nine-year education. Otherwise, it is a violation of the law. The legal obligation of compulsory education was first established in the *Compulsory Education Law* enacted in 1986 where it was stipulated that “all school-age children...must receive compulsory education...[and] their parents or legal guardians should guarantee that their children complete compulsory education.”(NPC, 1986, Article 5 and Article 11)

Since the establishment of the compulsory education system, the central government has been promoting its universality. The last two decades witnessed a rapid increase in enrollment rates of both primary and junior secondary schools. Until 2008, the net enrollment of school-age children in primary education was 99.5%. This was an increase of 15% compared with 1965 (Table 2.1). In 1990, only 74.6% of primary school students could continue their studies in junior secondary schools, while the number increased to 99.7% in 2008 (CERNET, 2010b) .

After junior secondary education, students normally have two options: studying in normal high schools which normally results in entrance to higher education, or vocational high schools which usually results in employment after graduation (UNESCO, 2007). Since most parents hope their children could be educated in universities, competition for places in normal high schools used to be intense (Zhang

and Ju, 2005). Until the beginning of 1990s, less than half of graduates could study in normal high schools. However, due to the government's efforts to universalise normal high school education, the proportion has increased significantly since then. By 2008, four fifths of junior secondary school graduates were recruited by normal high schools (CERNET, 2010b).

For the children in compulsory education, school enrolment follows the catchment area principle (*jiujin ruxue yuanze*) (NPC, 1986, Article 9). Administrative districts or counties within cities are divided into different school districts. Each school district has at least one school which should take in all the students in its catchment area. However, the catchment area principle, first established in 1986 in the out-dated version of the *Compulsory Education Law*, was poorly implemented. Students, if they wanted to, could also study in those schools located in other catchment areas. All they needed to do was simply to pay a school selection fee (*zexiaofei*). This means that rich parents could send their children to those schools they preferred rather than following the catchment area principle.

Table 2.1 Enrollment of School-Age Children in Primary Schools since 1965  
(in million students)

| Year | School-age Children | Enrolment Rate | Year | School-age Children | Enrolment Rate |
|------|---------------------|----------------|------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1965 | 116                 | 84.7%          | 2002 | 113                 | 98.6%          |
| 1980 | 122                 | 93.0%          | 2003 | 109                 | 98.7%          |
| 1985 | 104                 | 95.9%          | 2004 | 105                 | 98.9%          |
| 1990 | 97                  | 97.8%          | 2005 | 102                 | 99.2%          |
| 1999 | 130                 | 99.1%          | 2006 | 101                 | 99.3%          |
| 2000 | 124                 | 99.1%          | 2007 | 99                  | 99.5%          |
| 2001 | 118                 | 99.1%          | 2008 | 97                  | 99.5%          |

Source: CERNET (2010a) Database

([http://www.edu.cn/gai\\_kuang\\_495/20100121/t20100121\\_441888.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/gai_kuang_495/20100121/t20100121_441888.shtml))

### 2.1.2 Financing Compulsory Education

Compulsory education in China was not free until 2006. Traditionally, the funding for compulsory education was jointly shouldered by the government and students. In principle, the governments provided funding for tuition fees, while the students had to pay miscellaneous fees (*zafei*). The new *Compulsory Education Law of the People's*

*Republic of China* enacted in 2006 cancelled these miscellaneous fees. “At the stage of compulsory education, the tuition fees and the miscellaneous fees are not charged” (NPC, 2006, Article 2). Since then, compulsory education became completely free.

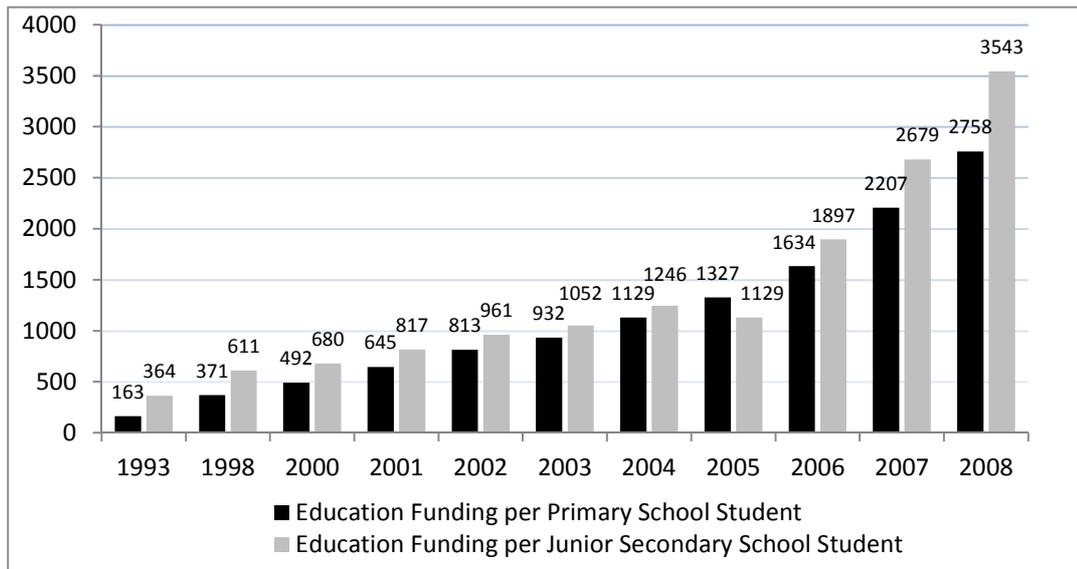
Under the decentralised fiscal system in China, funding for education is assumed mainly by local governments. “The central government was only responsible for grand policy, strategy and plans at the macro level, while local governments were responsible for all the other issues such as formulation and implementation of local education policy, institution and plans as well as leadership, management and inspection of schools” (CCCPC, 1985, Section 2). The central government did not provide funding for individual schools, but only made transfer payments to those provincial governments which were financially struggling on an annual basis. The transfer payments were not ear-marked for any specific kind of social service, but were rather a lump sum of money to be spent on education, science, culture and public health projects. How much money was allocated to compulsory education was decided by local governments (Li, 2008, p.63).

Government spending on compulsory education has increased rapidly since the 1990s. Annual funding for each primary school student and each junior secondary school student was only ¥163 (£16) and ¥364 (£36) respectively in 1993. In comparison, the figures rose to ¥2757 (£256) and ¥3543 (£354) in 2008 (NBSC, 1994, 1999-2009; Figure 2.1).

However, this did not mean that compulsory education in China was sufficiently funded by the government. As early as 1993, the Ministry of Education (ME, 1993) promised that the proportion of education expenditure in Gross National Product (GNP) would reach 4% at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This goal has never been achieved. The proportion has lingered around the level of 3% in the last decade, with the figure standing at 3.2% in 2007 (Figure 2.2). In 1996, the government spent 21.1% of its fiscal budget on education. The following years witnessed continuous decreases in the proportion of funding for education. In 2008, the proportion was 4.5% lower than the 1996 level. There were multiple consequences of insufficient funding, but according to Li (2008) two issues were especially serious. The first was that the payment of school teachers’

salaries was delayed. In some extreme cases, the payment might be delayed for as long as one year. The second issue was that local schools were in debt and did not have enough financial resources to purchase or replace school facilities such as desks and chairs (Li, 2008, pp.37-38).

Figure 2.1 Funding for Basic Education per Student by the Chinese Government (in Yuan)



Sources: Calculated based on NBSC (1994; 1999-2009)

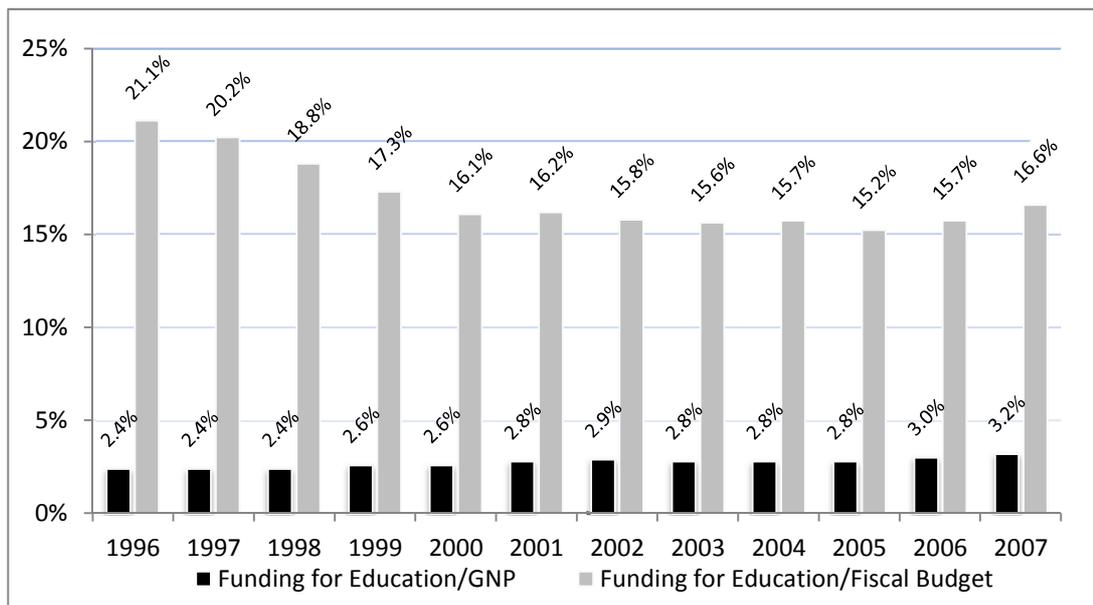
### 2.1.3 Unequal Distribution of Education Resources

Public funding for education was not allocated evenly among different regions, but was in favour of urban schools. For example, it was stipulated in the *Notification on Establishment of Staff in Primary and Secondary Schools* by the State Council (SC, 2001b) that the ratios of students to teachers in urban primary and secondary schools should be 1:12.5 and 1:19, while the ratios in rural schools should be 1:13.5 and 1:23 respectively. The inequality of resource distribution between rural and urban areas was exacerbated by differences in economic strength across the country. Generally speaking, local governments in urban areas had more financial resources than those in rural areas. The result was that urban schools received more funding than rural schools (Li et al., 2009, pp.284-287).

The inequality of educational resource distribution between rural and urban schools is reflected in Table 2.2. In urban primary schools, every 100 students had 7.2 computers on average, while in rural primary schools every 100 children only had 3.1 computers.

The numbers for junior secondary school students were 10.1 and 7.8 respectively. In urban areas, primary schools on average spent ¥300 (£30) on teaching equipment for each student, while rural schools spent ¥120 (£12). The former is 2.5 times as large as the latter. The average expenditure on teaching equipment for each student in junior secondary education was ¥510 (£50) in urban schools and ¥290 (£29) in rural schools.

Figure 2.2 Funding for Education Relative to GNP and Fiscal Budget



Sources: Calculated based on NBSC (2008)

The issue of unequal distribution of educational resources was not only confined to rural/urban comparisons, but also existed among different schools within the same cities, counties and townships. In 1978, the ME started to separate the schools into two types, i.e. key-schools (*zhongdianxiao*) and non-key schools (*putongxiao*). Key schools received more funding and employed more qualified staff. The reason for establishing a segregated system was to pool the limited resources together and invest them in a limited number of promising schools in hope that they would develop into first-class schools in a very short period of time (Chai and Cheng, 2008, p.103).

The key-school policy and the resultant inequality among the schools received widespread public criticism. In response to these criticisms, central government started to take a series of measures to promote educational equalisation. The State Council

published the *Decisions on Reforming and Developing Basic Education* in 2001. One of the main themes of this policy was to reduce the inequality between rural and urban schools. “Local governments should make integrated plans (*tongchouguihua*)...and make sure to meet the needs of compulsory education in rural areas” (SC, 2001a, Article 7).

Table 2.2 Educational Resources in Urban and Rural Schools in 2008

| Education Resources                                  | Urban Schools | Rural Schools | Urban/Rural |
|--|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| <b>Primary Education</b>                             |               |               |             |
| Books<br>(per Student)                               | 21.5          | 14.6          | 1.5         |
| Computer<br>(per 100 Students)                       | 7.2           | 3.1           | 2.3         |
| Libraries<br>(m <sup>2</sup> per 100 Students)       | 11.8          | 15.5          | 0.8         |
| Language Centre<br>(m <sup>2</sup> per 100 Students) | 4.3           | 1.8           | 2.4         |
| Equipment<br>(100 Yuan per students)                 | 3.0           | 1.2           | 2.5         |
| <b>Junior Secondary Education</b>                    |               |               |             |
| Books<br>(per Student)                               | 17.9          | 22.4          | 0.8         |
| Computers<br>(per 100 Students)                      | 10.1          | 7.8           | 1.3         |
| Libraries<br>(m <sup>2</sup> per 100 Students)       | 20.5          | 16.3          | 1.3         |
| Language Centre<br>(m <sup>2</sup> per 100 Students) | 6.9           | 5.3           | 1.3         |
| Equipment<br>(100 Yuan per students)                 | 5.1           | 2.9           | 1.8         |

Source: Calculated based on the CERNET Database ([http://www.edu.cn/2008\\_9526](http://www.edu.cn/2008_9526))

In 2005, the ME published *Some Suggestions on Further Promoting Equalisation of Compulsory Education*. Apart from reducing inequality between rural and urban schools, it also required local governments to reduce inequality among the schools in urban areas.

Local governments should make plans to renovate those disadvantaged schools (*boruo xuexiao*) and make efforts to reduce the number of disadvantaged schools... [Local governments] should make use of the

radiation effect of advantaged schools...to facilitate renovation of disadvantaged schools. (ME, 2005, Article 3)

Meanwhile, another theme of this regulation was to reverse the previous key-school policy and grant more favourable policies to disadvantaged schools. "...funding for education should be in favour of disadvantaged schools, and education surtax<sup>7</sup> should be used for renovating disadvantaged schools first" (ME, 2005, Article 3).

Finally, key-school policy was formally cancelled in the new *Compulsory Education Law* enacted in 2006 in order to promote equalisation of compulsory education. "Local governments and educational administration bodies should promote equalisation and reduce the gap among schools; it is not permitted to distinguish local schools between key schools and non-key schools" (Article 26). Despite these efforts and measures by central government, as will be seen in Chapter 7, the gap among local schools was not fundamentally reduced.

#### **2.1.4 Curriculum and School Examinations**

The curriculum of compulsory education in China is highly centralised. First, it is required that every school across the country should follow the same curriculum designed by the ME (2004). Table 2.3 lists the subjects the students must learn in schools. Schools are supposed to have ethics, Chinese, mathematics, physical education and art classes throughout the compulsory education period. Students should start to learn English and Science from Grade 3 and learn history and society since junior secondary education. Meanwhile, the ME also sets out the time that schools should spend on each subject. For example, schools are supposed to spend one fifth each academic year in teaching Chinese, 13%-15% in teaching mathematics and 6%-8% in teaching English. Finally, schools do not have too much freedom in relation to the textbooks they can use in daily teaching. Every year, the ME publishes a list of textbooks to be used in compulsory education. The schools can only adopt the textbooks on this list (ME, 2001, Article 27).

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<sup>7</sup> The definition of the education surtax and its relevance to policy implementation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Traditionally, students are required to participate in two examinations at the end of primary and junior secondary education: the graduation examinations and the entrance examinations. Graduation examinations for primary school graduates were cancelled in the *2006 Compulsory Education Law*. But the graduates in junior secondary schools still need to take graduation examinations (ME, 2006, Article 12). The graduation examination is important in the sense that it is one of the basic conditions of student graduation and progression. By and large, the graduation examinations are not difficult. Most students have no difficulty in passing them<sup>8</sup>.

Table 2.3 National Curriculum of Compulsory Education in China

|         | Grade                       |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | Percentage of Time |  |
|---------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|---|---|--------------------|--|
|         | 1                           | 2 | 3                                 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                   | 8 | 9 |                    |  |
| Courses | Morals and Ethics           |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 7%-9%              |  |
|         | Chinese                     |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 20-22%             |  |
|         | Mathematics                 |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 13%-15%            |  |
|         | Physical Education          |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 10%-11%            |  |
|         |                             |   | English                           |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 6%-8%              |  |
|         |                             |   | Science                           |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 7%-9%              |  |
|         |                             |   |                                   |   |   |   | History and Society |   |   | 3%-4%              |  |
|         | Art (Music or Painting)     |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 9%-11%             |  |
|         |                             |   | Comprehensive Practice Activities |   |   |   |                     |   |   | 16%-20%            |  |
|         | Local and School Curriculum |   |                                   |   |   |   |                     |   |   |                    |  |

Source: ME (2004)

Table 2.4 Progression Rates of Junior Secondary School Graduates 1997-2008

| Year | Progression Rate | Year | Progression rate |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| 2000 | 51.2             | 2005 | 69.7             |
| 2001 | 52.9             | 2006 | 75.7             |
| 2002 | 58.3             | 2007 | 80.5             |
| 2003 | 59.6             | 2008 | 82.1             |
| 2004 | 63.8             | 2009 | 85.6             |

Sources: Official Website of the Ministry of Education

(<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s4959/201012/113469.html>)

In contrast, the entrance examinations are more difficult. The scores that a student can achieve in the entrance examinations determine not only whether the student can

<sup>8</sup> In some cases, graduation examinations are combined with entrance examinations.

progress to higher level schools but also the schools where the student will study in the following years. The entrance examinations of high schools are especially difficult. Historically, the students have to work very hard if they want to continue their study in high schools. However, as the government kept spending more money each year in senior secondary education, there are now more study places in high schools than a decade ago. In 1999, there were 171,322 classes in 11,064 high schools across China. In 2009, the numbers rose to 380,374 and 11,695 respectively (ME, 1999, 2009). Accordingly, it is easier for junior secondary school graduates to progress. As shown in Table 2.4, nearly 70% of junior secondary graduates progressed to high schools in 2005. The figures continued to increase in the following years. In 2009, the progression rate was 85.6%.

The entrance examinations are highly selective. Local schools vary in terms of their ability to help children get good examination results. The schools where the students can get better results are oversubscribed. There are more applicants than places available in these schools. In this case, the oversubscribed schools make use of entrance examinations to select the best students they can get<sup>9</sup>. Every oversubscribed school sets up its own minimum enrolment score (*luqu fenshu xian*) in accordance with their popularity among the students. Only those students above the minimum score will be accepted by the school. Even though the *2006 Compulsory Education Law* forbade junior secondary schools from holding entrance exams (NPC, 2006, Article 12) or from selecting students in accordance with academic ability, as will be seen in Chapter 7, this policy was poorly enforced in reality. Local schools still have a very strong tendency to “skim the cream”.

### **2.1.5 Parenting Style in China**

Students in China have to work very hard to get good scores. Some students start to attend cram schools even before the start of their compulsory education. Such a hard working spirit is directly related to the Chinese parenting style. To be more specific, most parents expect their children to get good exam results and find good jobs, so they press their children very hard to study. As Wu (2004) pointed out, “parents regard their

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<sup>9</sup> The motivation, procedures and results of school admission by entrance exams will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

children as their private property and so manage all their time, expecting them to learn as much as possible in order to succeed and stand out from their fellows in society” (p.30).

Parental involvement is a very important part of compulsory education in China, because parents are responsible of making sure that the obligation of children to receive compulsory education is fulfilled (NPC, 2006, Article 5). However, parenting styles in China are full of puzzles and debate. For example, Dornbutch et al. (1987) and Steinberg et al. (1992) classified the Asian parenting style as highly authoritarian. But, they found it difficult to explain why Asian children growing up in such an authoritarian environment could achieve good examination results. Their findings on academic achievement of Asian children seem to be in direct contradiction with what they observed among other ethnic groups, in the sense that authoritarian parenting style is correlated with bad school performance.

Some researchers (Chao, 1994) pointed out that this paradox lay in the misinterpretation of the word “authoritarian”. The definition of “authoritarian” in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* is: “believing that people should obey authority and rules even when they are unfair, and even if it means that they lose their personal freedom” (p.69). Baumrind (1966) suggested three prototypes of parenting style: permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. According to Baumrind, “the authoritarian parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard...She believes in keeping the child in his place, in restricting his autonomy...she [believes] that the child should accept her word for what is right (p.890)”. Both definitions here suggest that there is nothing positive attached to this concept.

“Authoritarianism” does not seem to be an accurate description of the parenting style in China. Some scholars preferred to directly use the Chinese word “*guan*” to describe Chinese parenting style, because it seems very difficult to find an English word to cover the entire meaning of “*guan*” (Tobin et al., 1989; Wu, 1996). “*Guan*” in Chinese also means controlling one’s freedom. But there is a big difference in connotation

between “authoritarianism” in English and “*guan*” in Chinese. While an authoritarian parenting style means controlling their children’s freedom on the basis of unfairness, absolute standards or even oppression, Chinese parents “*guan*” their children for the sake of their children’s own good. Therefore, “*guan*” is related to a very positive mental image. In effect, those parents who are strict with their children are applauded by the people around them. The basic philosophy behind this is that these parents are responsible and they care about the future happiness of their children (Chao, 1994, p.1112). In addition, there is a socially constructed belief in China that sacrificing today’s freedom for future happiness or success is ethically and pragmatically acceptable and even desirable (Ogbu, 1983, p.189).

Children, when very small, are instilled with the belief that they should be obedient (*tinghua*) to their parents, and obedient children are socially constructed as “good children” (Wu, 1996, p.21). In other words, Chinese children are brought up in an environment where obedience has entered the ethical domain of people’s lives. As they grow up, they tend to form a social agreement with their parents, with both parties regarding obedience as a good virtue and a necessary condition for future success. On the basis of such a mutual agreement, most children in China follow their parents’ expectation to work very hard in school.

Parenting style is not only part of compulsory education system in China but also important to the discussion of education for migrant children. As will be seen in Chapter 7, the parenting style of migrant parents has a series of consequences on the implementation of migrant children’s education policy.

## **2.2 The *Hukou* System and Rural-Urban Migration**

The issue of education for migrant children at its origin comes from institutional separation and control of the *hukou* system. Historically, the overall strategy of national development between 1949 and 1978 was to pool the limited public resources together and invest them in heavy industry (e.g. steel production) in the hope that China could catch up with western industrialised countries as rapidly as possible (Cai and Lin, 2003, p.50).

To pursue this strategy, more public resources were directed to urban governments with the aim of building up heavy industry in cities, with urban residents enjoying better social services than rural residents. For example, because urban schools received much more funding than rural schools, the education standard in urban areas was much higher than that in rural areas (Section 2.1). Due to regional inequalities in economic development and social welfare, rural residents were highly motivated to migrate to urban areas to enjoy higher levels of social welfare (Locke and Zhang, 2010, p.81). With this background, the *hukou* system came into existence.

The *hukou* system was formally established in 1958 when the National People's Congress (NPC) published the *Hukou Registration Regulation on People's Republic of China*. The establishment of the *hukou* system was mainly for the purpose of population management and social administration. To be more specific, the residents in People's Republic of China (PRC) could only register with one *hukou* in one place. In China, every local police station had its own administration area (*guanxiaqu*) which was also called the *hukou* zone. Local police stations were responsible for processing the *hukou* registrations of the residents living in their *hukou* zones (NPC, 1958, Article 3). In principle, if a person wanted to live permanently in another *hukou* zone, s/he must apply for a migration certificate (NPC, 1958, Article 10). In practice, it was very difficult for the application to be approved (Chan and Zhang, 1999, p.823).

There were two types of *hukou* status, namely agricultural *hukou* and non-agricultural *hukou*. Most residents with agricultural *hukou* lived in rural areas and most residents with non-agricultural *hukou* lived in urban areas. Therefore, they were usually called rural *hukou* and urban *hukou* for convenience (Chan and Zhang, 1999, p.832). Because the government tightly controlled the approval of migration certificate applications, only a tiny proportion of rural residents could convert their rural *hukou* to urban *hukou* which gave them the permission to live permanently in urban areas. As a matter of fact, the government set an internal quota of 0.15% each year for *hukou* conversion before the 1980s (Wan, 1999). In other words, only 15 out of 10,000 rural residents could be approved and migrate to cities each year. In this way, the *hukou* system institutionally separated rural and urban populations, and strictly controlled rural-urban migration.

The *hukou* system aimed to effectively prevent rural residents migrating to cities and competing for limited social resources with urban residents. Supposedly, this was to ensure that the long-term strategy of developing heavy industry was being enforced successfully. In this sense, the internal control and separation of the *hukou* system was supposed to serve the public interest. As former Minister of Public Security (MPS) Ruiqing Luo (1958) explained<sup>10</sup>:

[Aimless migration to cities] imposes pressure on urban transportation, housing, supply, employment and education...in the long-term, the future direction of socialist construction is to develop heavy industry first...therefore, rural and urban populations should satisfy the needs of socialist construction...we cannot let the urban population increase aimlessly. Nor can we let the rural population move out aimlessly.

The institutional separation and the control of rural-urban migration were relaxed after 1978. First, more rural residents could be approved for *hukou* conversion. The internal quota of *hukou* conversion increased from 0.15% to 0.20% each year (Wan, 1999). That is to say, an additional 5 out of 10,000 rural residents each year could convert their *hukou* status from agricultural to non-agricultural.

Second, the *Regulations on Temporary Population Management of People's Republic of China* published by NPC (1985) established the temporary residence system. People with rural *hukou* were permitted to live, open businesses or be employed in urban areas for more than three months, as long as they were granted a temporary residence certificate (*zanzhuzheng*) by a local police station (NPC, 1985, Article 1). The MPS published the *Methods of Applying for and Collecting Temporary Residence Certificate* in 1995, further revising the requirements in relation to the lengths of stay for the temporary residence population. The residents with rural *hukou* were required to apply for the temporary residence certificate after staying in urban areas for one month instead of three months (MPS, 1995, Article 3).

The establishment of the temporary residence system meant that people with rural

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<sup>10</sup> MPS (1958), *Regulations on Hukou Registrations in People's Republic of China*. Beijing, Ministry of Public Security. (<http://www.mps.gov.cn/n16/n1991360/n1991447/2142531.html>)

*hukou* did not need to convert their *hukou* status anymore if they wanted to stay or work in cities for a long period of time (Hussain, 2003, p.3). All they needed was the temporary residence certificates. The Chinese government designed the temporary residence system to encourage rural-urban migration. In practice, it is neither complicated nor difficult to apply for the temporary residence certificate (MPS, 1995, Article 5). Most rural-urban migrants can easily be granted with temporary residence certificate as long as they present the certificates required by local bureaus of security (Chan and Zhang, 1999, p.832, Wang, 2005, p.74). In principle, the temporary residence certificate is valid for one year and can be renewed if it becomes out of date (MPS, 1995, Article 6).

It should be noted that the temporary residence system only relaxed the control on migration and did not address the issue of social welfare provision to the migrant population. In particular, the temporary residence system did not make clear whether children could migrate to cities with their parents and whether these children could study in urban schools if they did move to cities. In the decade following the announcement of the *Regulation on Temporary Population Management* (NPC, 1985), there was not a single law or regulation to address the issue of education for migrant children. It was this void in regulation that created a series of problems relating to education for migrant children which will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.3 The Problems of Education for Migrant Children**

As an increasing number of migrant children migrated to urban areas, both media reports and academic research were concerned that migrant children could not receive the same education as urban children in cities (Chapter 1). In particular, four issues were at the centre of public and academic attention: access to urban public schools, education in migrant schools, equal opportunity of education, mental well-being of migrant children.

### **2.3.1 Access to Urban Public Schools**

According to Zhang (2001), the issue of education for migrant children began to attract public attention in the mid-1990s. The earliest media report can be traced back to 1995, when the article named “*Where Do Floating Children Study: Discussion on Education*

*for Floating Population's Children*" (liudong de haizi nashangxue: liudong renkou jiaoyu tantao) was published on *China Education Daily* (zhongguo jiaoyubao) (21/01/1995).

It was not until 1998 that formal research started to look at education for migrant children. In the first few years after 1998, academic research almost exclusively focused on access of migrant children to urban public schools. Researchers and scholars found that it was extremely difficult for migrant children to gain access to urban public schools. In many cases, urban public schools simply refused to take in children of migrants. The consequence was that a large proportion of migrant children dropped out of schools and could not receive any education in cities.

For example, based on a survey conducted in Beijing, the capital city of China<sup>11</sup>, Zhou (1998) found that the drop-out rate of migrant children was estimated to be 27%. Ci and Li (2003) conducted a survey in Hongshan District of Wuhan city<sup>12</sup>. They held the same position as Zhou (1998) in terms of access to urban public schools.

...It is very difficult for migrant children to study in urban public schools...Some of them drop out of school, play on the streets every day or wander around with their parents. Some others start to work as child labors and experience the sufferings of life. (p.17)

Due to limited access, the enrolment rate of migrant children is low. Ci and Li (2003) estimated that the enrolment rate of migrant children in Wuhan city was 93.6%. This number was below the average rate for school-age children at the national level. Furthermore, they also found that the enrolment rate of girls (89.7%) was lower than that of boys.

Zhang et al.(2003) conducted research in Beijing, Shenzhen, Xianyang and Shaoxing. On the basis of in-depth interviews with 106 migrant parents, they also found that many migrant children have no access to urban public schools. "No access to urban public schools is what the parents most strongly complained about in the interviews...This

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<sup>11</sup> Beijing is also one of the four municipalities in China. The other three are Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing.

<sup>12</sup> Wuhan is the capital city of Hubei Province

problem exists in many big cities...but is most severe in Beijing". (p.13)

Liao (2004) carried out a case study in Shanghai. He estimated that, until 2003, only 37.5% migrant children were studying in urban public schools in the city. It is very difficult for children of migrants to study in urban public schools in Shanghai. He further argued that this was not because Shanghai did not have sufficient financial resources to support these children. After examining the consumer price index (CPI), demography of rural to urban migrants, marital status of female migrants and the size of the migrant children population in Shanghai, he argued that public schools had sufficient capacity to take in most migrant children (pp.5-6). The implication of Liao's (2004) research is that urban public schools turned down migrant children simply because they did not want to take them in.

Perhaps the most systematic and recent research to date is the 2006 survey initiated by China National Institute for Educational Research (CNIER). The research team distributed structured questionnaires to 5806 migrant students, 5806 migrant parents and 2477 teachers in 66 schools in 12 cities. The schools in the survey included both public and migrant schools. In 2010, the findings of the survey were published in a monograph titled *Research on Education for Migrants Children* (Tian and Wu, 2010).

Regarding the issue of school access, the findings of the CNIER research can be summarised into three points. First, an increasing number of migrant children were studying in urban public schools. As shown in Table 2.5, until 2007 there were 1.9 million migrant children in 12 cities. This accounted for nearly one third of the school-age children in those cities. On average, 60.9% of them studied in urban public schools. Compared with the findings in earlier research (Zhou, 1998; Ci and Li, 2003; Liao, 2004), the CNIER (2010) results suggest that there was some improvement in terms of access to urban public schools.

Second, the total number of migrant children and the proportion of migrant children in urban public schools varied from city to city. Mega-cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou harboured the largest numbers of migrant children. For example, there were 0.4 million migrant children in Beijing. This figure is 9 times larger than that of

Shenyang. But the proportions of migrant children in urban public schools in megacities were lower. For example, only 28% of migrant children studied in urban public schools in Guangzhou, whereas all migrant children attended urban public schools in Shenyang (CNIER,2010).

Third, it is still very difficult for migrant children to find study places in urban public schools. According to the survey (CNIER, 2010), 32.7% of migrant parents thought it very difficult and another 40.0% of migrant parents thought it quite difficult to study in public schools. Only 9.2% thought it not difficult to send their children to public schools (p.81). All in all, the CNIER research suggested that migrant children did have more access to urban public schools over time. However, this improvement in terms of school access varied considerably in different cities and a large number and proportion of migrant children were still out of the urban public education system.

Table 2.5 Migrant Children in 12 Cities in China in 2007 (in thousands)

| City         | Migrant Children in the Cities | Migrant Children Excluded from Public Schools | Migrant Children in Urban Schools/<br>Migrant Children in Cities | Migrant Children/Children in the Cities |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Beijing      | 403                            | 153   | 62.0%  | 36.1%                                   |
| Shanghai     | 316                            | 146   | 53.9%  | 29.7%                                   |
| Guangzhou    | 390                            | 280   | 28.0%  | 31.1%                                   |
| Chengdu      | 102                            | 43  | 58.2%  | 31.6%                                   |
| Hangzhou     | 141                            | 44  | 68.4%  | 20.4%                                   |
| Wuxi         | 143                            | 14  | 90.0%  | 28.9%                                   |
| Zhengzhou    | 115                            | 18  | 84.3%  | 14.7%                                   |
| Shenyang     | 43                             | 0   | 100.0%   | 6.1%                                    |
| Yiwu         | 34                             | 21  | 37.8%  | 52.0%                                   |
| Shunde       | 51                             | 4   | 91.3%  | 23.2%                                   |
| Shijiazhuang | 67                             | 0   | 100.0%   | 6.7%                                    |
| Urumqi       | 74                             | 10  | 86.3%  | 7.4%                                    |
| Total        | 1884                           | 736   | 60.9%  | 30.4%                                   |

Source: Tian and Wu (2010, p.63, p.66)

### 2.3.2 Education in Migrant Schools

Since late 1990s, more and more private schools were established to take in migrant children only. These schools were often known as migrant schools (*nongmingong zidi xuexiao*). Education in migrant schools is actually an issue closely related to access to

urban public schools, because those migrant children who attended migrant schools were often those who were denied access to urban public schools.

Academic research on migrant schools and their educational activities started to appear in 2001. Han (2001a, 2001b) carried out a survey in Beijing. Based on a survey of 2161 students in 19 migrant schools, she (2001a) found that there were two main reasons for which migrant parents sent their children to migrant schools. First, migrant schools were less expensive. On average, the tuition fees in migrant schools were ¥300 (£30) per semester. No other fees were required from migrant families. According to Han (2001a), the fees charged by public schools were two or three times as large as those in migrant schools (p.5). Second, migrant schools were close to children's homes. Among the children who participated in the survey, 76.8% reported that it took them less than 30 minutes to get to school (p.6).

However, migrant schools also had obvious disadvantages. Educational standards in migrant schools were inferior to those in public schools. This was reflected in a range of issues including school facilities, the curriculum (Han, 2001a, pp.6-7) and the qualifications of teaching staff (Han, 2001b, pp.12-13). The following description of school facilities by Han (2001a) can illustrate the point better:

Some school buildings are no more than shabby cottages, while others are converted from abandoned warehouses. Some classrooms even do not have windows. Desks and chairs are second-hand stuff from public schools. Some schools are very short of financial support. The desks and chairs are made of compiled bricks. In order to save on the rent, some classrooms are crowded with more than 80 pupils (Han 2001a, p.6).

Lv and Zhang (2001) also conducted a survey on migrant schools in Beijing. They visited 114 migrant schools and collected more detailed information. First, most migrant schools were located in areas where there were a large number of migrant families (p.103). Second, migrant schools were not well-regulated. The number of migrant schools increased rapidly after 1994. Each year a large number of migrant schools were registered, but at the same time many schools were shut down either because they could not make a profit or because their education standards were too low

(pp.103-104). Third, migrant schools varied considerably in terms of education standards. Some migrant schools could provide a high standard of education to migrant children and thus enjoyed favourable reputation among the public, while others could hardly be regarded as schools. For example, among the 114 schools they visited, 22 of them had only two teachers. Most of these 22 schools were founded by married couples. The founders of migrant schools were normally lacking in basic skills and qualifications. A majority of them had only completed secondary education. Two of the principals were even illiterate. As Lv and Zhang (2001) commented, “it is surprising to see that those who help others get out of illiteracy are themselves illiterate”(p.105).

Following the two surveys above, studies on children in migrant schools have proliferated. Most of the research has taken the form of case studies in different cities in China. Some of the most representative authors in this field may include Zhang (2008) in Guiyang<sup>13</sup>, Chen (2008) in Guangzhou<sup>14</sup>, Lv (2008) in Wuhan, Feng (2008) in Jinzhou<sup>15</sup> and Zhang and Liu (2008) in Xiamen<sup>16</sup>. By and large, these authors all pointed out that migrant schools had their advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the education standards in migrant schools were not as good as those in urban public schools, but on the other hand, migrant schools at least could provide some basic education services to migrant children if these children were unable to study in urban public schools.

### **2.3.3 Equal Admission Criteria and School Treatment**

For those migrant children who did have access to urban public schools, there were concerns in relation to educational inequality. Here educational equality refers to two issues including equal admission criteria and equal school treatment. It should be stressed that educational equality discussed in this subsection is slightly different from equal opportunities in migrant children’s education policy which include equal admission criteria, non-segregation and equalisation of academic performance (Chapter

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<sup>13</sup> The capital city of Guizhou Province

<sup>14</sup> The capital city of Guangdong Province

<sup>15</sup> A city in Liaoning Province

<sup>16</sup> A city in Fujian Province

1). To group different issues together and give them different “labels” is simply for convenience of discussion but serves no conceptual or theoretical purposes.

With regard to unequal admission criteria, the researchers had found that migrant parents had to pay extra fees so that their children could be accepted by urban public schools. These extra fees were often called “sponsor fees” and urban children normally were not required to pay them. The charging of sponsor fees appeared to be arbitrary, because the amount of sponsor fees to be charged seemed to be totally decided by local schools. For example, Zhou (1998) found that almost every migrant child in his sample who studied in urban public schools paid sponsor fees which ranged from ¥1000 to ¥10000 (£100-£1000) in total. In comparison, Ci and Li (2003) reported that all migrant families in their sample were required to pay for extra fees which amounted between ¥400 (£40) and ¥1000 (£100) per semester.

The sponsor fee is not only an example of unequal school admission criteria, but it also imposes a huge financial burden to migrant families. As a matter of fact, this latter point links back to the issue of schools access. As mentioned earlier, migrant children have no access to urban public schools because they were turned down by these schools. This aside, there is also the factor of affordability. Some migrant children cannot study in urban public schools because their family cannot afford the sponsor fee. As Zhou (1998) pointed out “in this case, low income [of migrant families] became a major reason for which their children could not study in urban public schools” (p.20). Zhang et al. (2003) raised the same point in their research. “Unreasonable fees charged by urban public schools had kept many migrant children outside the school gates”(p.14).

Apart from unequal admission criteria, there is also the issue of unequal treatment in the schools. This point was often raised in research after 2003. Feng (2007) found that migrant and urban children were not treated equally in schools. As he pointed out, “migrant children...were often ignored in classes...and teachers did not care about migrant children as they cared about urban children”(p.100). Feng and Zhang (2008) argued that some migrant children were excluded from daily social interaction by their peers, and some were even bullied by other students. The interviews with migrant

children conducted by Yang et al. (2003) can further illustrate this point:

Sometimes (urban children) look down upon us and they don't play with us...They know we don't wear decent clothes and live in storied houses as they do. They can sense we come from other places, so they are not willing to play with us. (p.15)

At first, they were willing to play with us. But after we invited them to our homes and they found we lived in shabby houses, they didn't want to make friends with us anymore. (p.15)

#### **2.3.4 Psychological Well-Being of the Children of Migrants**

Some researchers have concentrated their attention on the psychological well-being of migrant students in urban public schools. Existing research suggests that migrant children in urban public schools might suffer from a range of psychological problems such as low self-esteem, self-blame, anxiety, loneliness and in lack of psychological security (Liu et al. 2007). Hu and Guo (2007) compared the mental status of migrant and urban children in Chongqing using the PMSH test which contained eight factors. By examining the t-statistics, they found that migrant children were significantly worse than urban children in five factors including learning anxiety, physical condition, self-blame, loneliness, and fearfulness. Hu and Guo's research also found that there were no significant differences between migrant boys and girls in terms of mental health measures. However, there were significant differences among migrant children in different grades; higher grade students were less likely to suffer from psychological problems.

Zhou (2006) analysed the psychological status of migrant children in Beijing. Similar to Hu and Guo's (2007) findings, there were no significant differences between boys and girls in terms of mental health and lower grade students seemed to be more likely to have psychological problems. Moreover, Zhou (2006) compared the mental health status of migrant students in public schools with those in migrant schools. He found that migrant children in public schools had a stronger feeling of loneliness.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the context of migrant children's education policy. The

discussion focused on three issues including the basic education system in China, the history of the *hukou* system and the problem of education for migrant children.

The basic education system in China is the first contextual issue discussed in the chapter. Migrant children's education policy is an integral part of this system. The general policy orientation of migrant children's education policy is to promote equal education between migrant children and urban children. Such a policy orientation reflects the broader policy strategy of Chinese government in reforming the current basic education system and promoting equalisation of that system.

Since 1980s, the Chinese government has been trying to promote the universality of compulsory education, which accounts for the first nine years of basic education. Government's effort to universalise compulsory education was largely successful with enrolment and progression rates in primary and junior secondary schools increasing rapidly in the last two decades.

Since 2006, compulsory education in China has been made free of charge. Even though the Chinese government has continued to increase the money spent on compulsory education each year, compulsory education remains underfunded. Moreover, education resources are unevenly distributed in China. First, rural schools are allocated far fewer resources than urban schools. Second, there are big differences in terms of education resources between schools in the same cities or counties. The government has tried to tackle the issue of unequal distribution of education resources and promote educational equality, but it appears to have been unsuccessful so far.

The curriculum in basic education is highly centralised. The students are required to learn the same knowledge in class and take part in standardised examinations to graduate from school or get promoted to higher levels of education. Entrance examinations determine which school the students can study in. The examinations are difficult and selective. The students face much competition and have to work very hard to get good examination scores. The parents push their children hard to study and expect their children to get good scores. Children understand these expectations and are obedient to their parents.

The second contextual issue discussed in the chapter is the *hukou* system. The formulation of migrant children's education policy aims to address the migration problems arising out of the relaxation of the *hukou* system. The *hukou* system established in 1958 separated the entire population in China into rural and urban populations. Migration from rural areas to urban areas was strictly controlled by the government.

Rural-urban migration was relaxed in 1985. Under the temporary residence system, migrants were allowed to live and work in cities after they were granted temporary residence certificates. However, the temporary residence system did not touch upon the issue of welfare provision for migrants. In particular, there was a lack of regulation in relation to education for migrant children. The government did not make clear whether urban schools were supposed to provide education services to migrant children.

The final contextual issue discussed in the chapter relates to the problems of education for migrant children. Due to a lack of regulation, migrant children faced a number of difficulties in relation to the receipt of urban education. Even though the government started to tackle this issue later on, problems of education for migrant children continue to persist.

This chapter discussed four problems relating to education for migrant children. All these problems are the issues which central government tries to address in migrant children's education policy. The first issue relates to access to urban public schools. In comparison with a decade ago, increasing numbers of migrant children now have access to urban public schools. However, it is still difficult for many migrant children to find study places in urban public schools. Those migrant children who are denied access to urban public schools have to attend migrant schools. While migrant schools are less expensive than urban public schools, education standards in these schools are generally low. Another issue is that migrant children attending urban public schools may suffer from educational inequality. These children may face unequal schools admission criteria or be treated unequally in schools. Finally, migrant children in urban public schools may suffer from psychological problems such as lack of confidence,

anxiety and loneliness. This problem is especially serious among younger migrant children.

## **Chapter 3 Factors Affecting Policy Implementation: A Review of Broader Literature**

### **Introduction**

The history of research on policy implementation can be traced back to the early 1970s. In 1973, Pressman and Wildavsky published the monograph titled *Implementation: how great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland*. This is recognized by many scholars as the first academic work on policy implementation. The academic research on implementation proliferated since late 1970s (Hill, 2002). Scholars in different countries and from different disciplines joined the debate to explain why policy is not implemented and propose how to achieve effective implementation.

This chapter reviews the literature on policy implementation. It sets out to answer a central question: what are the factors that lead to effective implementation or non-implementation of policy? The aim of the chapter is to identify the factors in existing studies that can explain the non-implementation of education policy for the children of migrants. In other words, effective implementation or non-implementation of policy is treated as a dependent variable, and this chapter aims to identify all possible independent variables in the literature.

This chapter divides the factors affecting policy implementation into two groups. The first group is generic factors. These factors may affect the implementation of various types of policies. Generic factors can be further divided into preconditional factors and institutional factors. Preconditional factors include policy goals and the discretionary power of implementers. They are not directly a part of the process of policy implementation. However, they shape the process of policy implementation and affect its results. Institutional factors include self-interest and habitual behaviours. They are the behavioural patterns of policy implementers and thus may also be called behavioural factors. The first section of the chapter will discuss preconditional factors, while the second will focus on institutional factors.

The second group of factors is policy-specific factors. As mentioned in Chapter 1,

migrant children's education policy consists of three parts including funding policy, equal opportunity policy and social integration policy. Each part of the policy has specific goals and characteristics. And each policy may be affected by specific factors. The third section of the chapter will discuss hypothecation and its impact on funding provision. The fourth section will be focused on high stakes testing in the education system and its impact on the implementation of equal opportunity policy. The last section will focus on intergroup relations and their impact on the implementation of social integration policy.

## **Part One Generic Factors**

### **3.1 Policy Goals, Room for Discretion and Policy Implementation**

This section discusses the preconditional factors and their impacts on policy implementation. There are two preconditional factors to be discussed in this section, namely policy goals and room for discretion. The former factor relates to the design of the policy by the central government, while the latter refers to the space that policy implementers can have to make decisions by themselves.

#### **3.1.1 Policy Goals and Implementation**

When policy implementation is equated with the achievement of policy goals (Chapter 1), the design of the policy is a decisive factor in deciding whether or not a policy can be effectively implemented. It can be argued that the basic characteristics of the policy goals have a significant impact on policy implementation. The "basic characteristics" here mainly include two aspects: the clarity and the feasibility of the policy goals.

First of all, policy goals should be clear. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) pointed out that policy makers should "elaborate on the overall goals of the policy decision ... to provide concrete and more specific standards for assessing performance" (p.464). With clear policy objectives, policy implementers can know exactly what they are supposed to do. They can have a clear target in mind and then work towards that target.

Clear policy goals also facilitate the monitoring activities of policy implementation. A government that formulates the policy goals clearly can easily find out if the policy is being implemented by comparing the actions and/or outcomes of implementation and

the goals. Moreover, if the policy goals are clear and accessible to the public, policy implementation can also be effectively monitored by the public. Simply put, clear policy goals enhance policy transparency. As Sabatier (1979) summarised in his second condition of effective policy implementation:

Statutory objectives that are precise and clearly ranked in importance serve as an important aid in program evaluation, as unambiguous directives to implementing officials...clear objectives can also serve as a resource to the actors outside implementation institutions who perceive discrepancies between agency outputs and these objectives...(pp.487-488)

Matland (1995) summarised this point in a similar vein:

...[G]oal clarity is an important independent variables that directly affects policy success. Goal ambiguity is seen as leading misunderstanding and uncertainty and therefore is culpable in implementation failure. (pp.157-158)

Second, policy goals should be feasible. Some scholars argued that feasibility of policy goals means that the policy goals are based on “sound theories” (Sabatier, 1979, p.486). Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) pointed out that “[p]olicies imply theory...[and] point to a chain of causation between initial conditions and consequences” (p.xxiii). The policy makers believe that if the policy is announced, it will have certain impact or bring about certain results in reality. Or put it another way, the policy formulators usually foresee or predict what is going to happen when making policies. If the prediction is not correct or too different from the reality, the policy will not take effect as planned and the goals will not be achieved. Policies without sound theories are infeasible and it will be difficult for these policies to be implemented. As Bardach (1977) pointed out:

Any policy or program implies an economic, and probably also a sociological, theory about the way the world works. If this theory is fundamentally incorrect, the policy will probably fail no matter how well it is implemented. (pp.251-252)

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) held a similar point of view:

Policies are sometimes ineffective not because they are badly implemented, but because they are bad policies. That is, the policy may be based upon an inadequate understanding of a problem to be solved, its causes and cure; or of an opportunity, its nature, and what is needed to exploit it. (p.201)

Some other scholars held that the policy goals are more feasible if it does not bring about major changes to existing policies. For example, Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) argued that “implementation will be most successful where only marginal change is required and goal consensus is high” (p.461). The greater the changes are, the less likely it is for different parties involved in policy implementation to reach a consensus. Effective implementation is thus less feasible. In other words, major changes in policy goals are more likely to incur resistance or boycott from the parties with vested interests. It is more difficult to achieve the goals which bring about a significant reform to the current systems than those which indicate only incremental change (Sabatier, 1986).

The analysis above suggests that effective implementation depends heavily upon the goals set out in the policy (i.e. the policy design). In Section 5.2, I will carry out a systematic review of migrant children’s education policy. In particular, I will discuss whether the policy goals relating to education for migrant children are clear and feasible. I will also discuss the implications of policy clarity and feasibility to the implementation of migrant children’s education policy.

Before the analysis moves on to the next subsection, it must be stressed that the theories relating policy goals to effective implementation have their own limitations. In particular, such a theoretical perspective is based on the assumption of implementer compliance: the entire bureaucratic system is highly centralised and subordinated governments as policy implementers must obey the orders from higher level governments as policy makers (Hill, 2005). While top-down compliance seems to be a plausible assumption in the theoretical framework, it should also be noted that complete compliance seems to be very rare in reality (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 175; Elmore, 1980, pp.603-604). Policy implementers are not pure order takers. They can also make their own choices or decisions. This implies that although policy clarity and feasibility might be important factors affecting policy implementation, they are far from

the whole story. In particular, the choices and decisions of policy implementers are also important factors affecting policy implementation. This will be the focus of discussion in the next subsection.

### **3.1.2 Room for Discretion**

Room for discretion is the second preconditional factor affecting policy implementation. It refers to the space or ability that policy implementers have to make choices and decisions on their own. It can also be called discretionary power. Discretionary behaviours are independent of the requirements and goals of the policy formulated by superior governments. Lipsky (1980) gave some examples of discretionary behaviours in policy implementation:

Policemen decide who to arrest and whose behaviour to overlook. Judges decide who shall receive a suspended sentence and who shall receive maximum punishment. Teachers decide who will be suspended and who will remain in school...prison guards... file injurious reports on inmates whom they judge to be guilty of “silent insolence”. (pp.13-14)

Policy implementers have room for discretion first because of the complexity and uncertainty of reality. The government bodies that formulate the policy usually do not have detailed information on what is happening at the local level. No matter how detailed and clear the government policy might be, it is impossible to cover all the circumstances that are going to arise in reality (Thompson, 1982; Burke, 1987). Once something unexpected happens, policy implementers have no choice but to make decisions on their own. This is particularly the case when it comes to the front-line staff of policy implementation whom Lipsky (1980) called “street-level bureaucrats”. These people have to work in very complicated situations and interact with services users or clients on a daily basis. This daily interaction with complicated situations and clients can hardly be “reduced to programmatic formats” (Lipsky, 1980, p.15). Or as Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) put it, “[u]nless one is willing to assume that policies spring full armed from the forehead of an omniscient policy maker, discretion is both inevitable and necessary” (p.175) .

Second, policy implementers have room for discretion because superior level governments deliberately grant some discretionary power to lower level governments

or street level bureaucrats. Higher level governments or managers of implementing agencies might be well aware of their inability to control the complicated implementation process and their lack of local knowledge to guarantee effective implementation. They then let policy implementers make their own decisions as long as the discretionary behaviours are in line with predefined boundaries (Goodsell, 1981; Keiser et al., 2004). In fact, policy formulators or superior governments normally expect policy implementers to use their own discretion to complete some highly demanding tasks. "...Street-level bureaucrats are professionals..., [they] are expected to exercise discretionary judgement... [and] are regularly deferred to in their specialized areas of work." (Lipsky, 1980, p.14)

Discretionary power may undermine the achievement of policy goals set out by superior governments and thus results in non-implementation. Street-level bureaucrats or implementing agencies are not order-taking machines, but have their own goals, values, interests and preferences. If their goals and interests are different from, or in conflict with those of superior governments, they might take advantage of their discretionary power to pursue their own interests or goals. This will possibly leave the policy unimplemented.

Discretionary power also blurs the boundary between policy making and policy implementation (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, p.198). The policy goal represents the decisions made by policy makers (Haywood, 2000, p.31). If policy making is roughly equated with decision making, as suggested by Barrett and Fudge (1981), it is not a task monopolized by superior governments. As long as street-level bureaucrats or lower level governments exercise discretionary power in policy implementation, they are making decisions and thus are making policies on their own terms. In the course of implementing policies, lower-level government and street-level bureaucrats are redefining and reshaping the policy goals. In this sense, they are both policy implementers and makers. As Lipsky (1980) argued:

... public policy is not best understood as made in legislation or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers. I point out that policy conflict is not only expressed as the

contention of interest groups but is also located in the struggles between individual workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing. (p.xii)

On the basis of the above analysis, I will discuss how much discretionary power policy implementers in China have in Section 5.1. Specifically, I will examine inter-governmental relationships between central and local governments. This is to identify how much control that the central government in China has on policy implementers and how much room policy implementers have to make their own decisions.

### **3.2 Institutional Factors and Policy Implementation**

This section discusses the second type of generic factors: institutional factors. There are two institutional factors at the centre of discussion in this section, namely self-interested behaviour and habitual behaviour. I call self-interest and habits institutional factors, because they are arguably the two main factors driving institutional change. The first subsection discusses the concept of the institution. The second subsection discusses the relationship between institutional change and policy implementation. This subsection will also discuss the roles that self-interest and habits play in driving institutional change. The last subsection discusses institutional inertia and its implications for causality of policy implementation.

#### **3.2.1 The Concept of Institution**

Menard and Shirley (2008) defined the institution as: “written and unwritten rules, norms and constraints that humans devise to reduce uncertainty and control their environment” (p.1). Sociologists Nee and Swedberg (2008) provided a similar definition: “[the] institution is conceptualised as a dominant system of interrelated informal and formal elements - customs, shared beliefs, norms and rules-which actors orient their actions to when they pursue their interests” (p.797).

What has been broadly agreed upon for the definition is that institutions may be classified into two groups: formal institutions and informal institutions (North, 1990). Formal institution refers to those laws and regulations which are known to the general public. Informal institution refers to commonly followed habits, widely accepted customs and beliefs, all of which are not legally binding but are adopted by most of the

social members. Following such definitions, institutions are often equated with “the rules of the game” (North, 1990, p.4).

One issue in relation to the concept of the institution should be highlighted to avoid misunderstanding. The rules of the game should not be understood as something external to individuals. Instead, the rules include both individuals’ collectively formatted behaviours and the framework that structures and orders individuals’ behaviour. Collectively formatted behaviours and behavioural frameworks are two sides of the same coin and constitute the duality of the institution. Change of either side automatically means the change of the other side and thus by definition means institutional change. Due to this duality, behaviours and rules are inseparable in the analysis. Giddens (1979, 1984) provided a succinct summary of this duality in his theory of structuration, although he used the more generalised terms “individuals” and “systems”, which may be seen to map on to the terms “behaviours” and “behavioural frameworks”:

According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. Structure is not “external” to individuals... it is in a certain sense more “internal” than exterior to their activities in a Durkheimian sense. Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling. (Giddens, 1984, p.25)

### **3.2.2 Self-Interest, Habitual Behaviour and Policy Implementation**

Institutions and policy are closely related concepts. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the policy takes the form of laws and regulations drafted by the government. Because laws and regulations are formal rules governing individuals’ behaviour, the policies are actually formal institutions. Based on this logic, policy formulation is the announcement of new rules, because it inevitably requires the policy actors to collectively change behaviours and strategies as set out in the policy (Sabatier, 1979, p.481). Put differently, policy formulation is the introduction of new institutions. For example, the central government in China required that migrant children be educated by urban public schools. This set out both a requirement and an objective (Chapter 1). Meanwhile, this was also the announcement of a new rule/institution to be adopted by

urban public schools – whenever there are migrant children applying for study places, these schools should provide educational services to the children.

Policy implementation, on the other hand, aims to ensure that the new rules are being adopted. It is a process whereby the government tries to change individual behaviours by imposing new rules. Effective implementation means that the new rules and institutions successfully replace old ones, and individuals indeed change their behaviour accordingly. Non-implementation means that the new institutions fail to do so. In this sense, effective implementation is a successful change in institution, and non-implementation appears to be resistance to the desired changes. Strong inertia and resistance to changes lead to non-implementation.

The existing literature suggests that two factors may contribute to institutional change or inertia, namely self-interest and habits. Given that institutional change and effective policy implementation are seen in this analysis as being the same thing, these two factors can also explain effective implementation.

The first factor driving institutional change is self-interest. This is the central argument of new institutionalism<sup>17</sup>. New institutionalism, following the logic of so called “mainstream economics”, places self-interest at the core of individual behaviours. Mainstream economics assumed that individuals were “human computers” with perfect information, flawless computation and decision-making ability (Colander et al., 2004). Individuals’ choices and behaviours are based on complex computation of benefits and costs. Based on this assumption, new institutional theorists used bounded rationality (Simon, 1972) to analyse individual behaviour and institutional change (Williamson, 1979, p.241; Ostrom, 2008, p.828). They maintained that the interaction between individuals and institutions was characterised by strategic processes which could be reduced to a collection of computation activities. First, individuals’ decisions or behaviours were in conformity to institutions because those who break laws, customs or

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<sup>17</sup> Hodgson (1998) distinguishes between old and new institutionalism. The two schools of thought held different views on three issues: (1) how institutions came into existence; (2) how individual behaviour is influenced by institutions; and (3) how individual behaviour in return alters or stabilizes institutions. There are also other ways to divide institutional theories into different schools of thought. For example, Hall and Taylor (1996) distinguished among historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. The thesis adopted Hodgson’s method because of its relevance to the analysis.

common beliefs will be punished or sanctioned. Second, institutions provided incentive frameworks for decisions or behaviours within which individuals could take advantage of or even manipulate the rules to serve their own purposes. By manipulating the rules of the game, institutions are altered.

The implications of new institutionalism for policy implementation are that policy implementers and target groups are not “slaves” to the policy. They actively predict the outcome of different strategies such as implementing the policy as required, ignoring the policy or publicly boycotting the policy (Ostrom, 1994, 1999, 2008). “...[a]n individual’s choice of strategy in any particular situation depends on how he or she perceives and weights the benefits of and costs of various strategies and their likely outcomes.” (Ostrom, 1999, p.44) The strategies policy implementers finally choose depend upon which strategy they believe will bring forth the maximum net benefit.

The second factor driving institutional change is the habitual behaviour of individuals. This is the central argument of old institutionalism. Old institutional theories, which can be traced back to the works of economists such as Veblen and Commons a century ago, criticised the pursuit of self-interest as the foundation of institutional theories altogether and maintained that institutional change is the result of social interaction. Old institutional theorists, such as Hodgson (1997, 2004) agreed that institutions are equated with the rules of the game. However, he maintained that the rules are the results of individuals’ habits, as opposed to interest-oriented behaviours. Habits here refer to repeated rule-following behaviours or thinking activities. Habits are not always to serve individuals’ best interests, since there are “good” habits as well as “bad” habits (Hodgson, 1997, pp.664-665). But habits can change. One individual can influence another to adopt the same habit. An individual can also imitate others’ habits. The influence, adoption and imitation of habits take place on a daily basis by means of inter-personal interactions. Those habits adopted by a group of people eventually turn into institutions (Hodgson, 1998). In this sense, institutions are no more than collective habitual behaviours or thinking activities and the change of institutions is simply the collective change of habits.

In the “old” institutional economics, cognition and habit have a central place. Knowledge and learning are stressed... (T)he perception of

information is not possible without prior habits of thought to endow it with meaning. Without such habits, agents cannot perceive or make use of the data received by their senses. Such habits are acquired through involvement in institutions. (Hodgeson, 1998, p.183)

The implication of old institutional theories is that policy implementation takes place gradually and incrementally. It is a trial and error process where implementers stick to habits when they implement the policy. As Lindblom (1959) argued, a policy actor is comfortable with “a succession of incremental changes” rather than “big jumps towards his goals that would require predictions beyond his or anyone else’s knowledge” (p.86). Such a style of policy implementation involves “a sequence of trials, errors and revised trials” within a few “familiar policy alternatives” (Lindblom, 1979, p.517). On the basis of this argument, whether the policy goals can be achieved or whether the policy can be implemented depends on whether the actions required are in line with the habitual behaviours (or thinking) of policy actors and whether the goals to be achieved are familiar to policy implementers. The policies which require policy actors to change their habits too much may look strange or “unfamiliar” and are less likely to be implemented as required.

In sum, new and old institutional theories have different explanations for institutional change and policy implementation. New institutional theories hold that effective policy implementation is determined by the costs and benefits attached to the policy. If the sanctions attached to non-implementation are high, effective policy implementation is more likely to happen. Old institutional theories hold that policy actors follow their habits when making decisions and undertaking actions. If the policy does not require the policy actors to change their habitual behaviour too much, effective policy implementation is more likely to happen.

New and old institutional theories are not competing theories. Instead, interests and habits can take effect in different situations. Drawing on the findings in cognitive science, North (2005) pointed out that cost-benefit analysis dominates the decision making process mostly when individuals are faced with simple and repetitive choices (p.23). As the situation becomes more complicated, individuals are more reliant on habits (or past knowledge) to execute calculation or predict consequences of decisions.

The implication of this is that the factor that can best explain effective implementation or non-implementation is dependent upon the cost-benefit structure of the policy. If clear rewards and sanctions are attached to the policy, the policy actors will know more clearly what the consequences are when they choose different strategies. In this case, policy actors will implement or respond to the policy on the basis of maximum net benefit. If there are no clear rewards and sanctions attached to the policy and the consequences of implementing the policy are very uncertain, habitual behaviours will dominate policy implementation.

### **3.2.3 Institutional Inertia and Causality of Policy Implementation**

The issue of institutional inertia needs further elaboration, not only because it causes non-implementation of the policy and thus is directly related to the research question, but also because it presents a different perspective from that of conventional implementation theories.

Mainstream and new institutional economists (Arthur, 1989; North, 1990; Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995) used the term “path dependence” to describe the inertia of institutions. Levi (1998) provided a concise summary of the concept of path dependence:

Path dependency has to mean...that once a country or region has started down a track, the cost of reversal is very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangement obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice. (p.28)

An often quoted example of path dependency is the configuration of typewriter keyboard. On the basis of surveying the history of typewriter keyboard, David (1985) argued that users are locked in “QWERTY” keyboard arrangement (i.e. users all choose QWERTY keyboard), even though it was inferior to “Dvorak” keyboard arrangement. There is a feedback effect here. Dvorak keyboard users were rare, because the machine with Dvorak arrangement is difficult to find. Because Dvorak machines are rare, there are very few Dvorak keyboard users (Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995, p.213). To adopt the Dvorak keyboard arrangement, typewriters need to be trained or retrained, and this would incur a huge amount of cost. In other words, even though Dvorak keyboard is better, it is impossible to reverse the whole process and let

the two arrangements compete for users or let the users choose between the two arrangements again. Therefore, Dvorak typewrite was never adopted<sup>18</sup>. The most striking feature of path dependence is that individuals tend to make the same choices again and again due to the choices they made earlier.

Pierson (2000) introduced the concept of path dependence to political science and policy studies. He pointed out that path dependence is an important concept in understanding political and policy process. On the one hand, many political phenomena are characterised by increasing return, so the feedback effect as demonstrated in the typewriter example is common. On the other hand, because political actors often face many uncertainties on a day-to-day basis (cf. Lipsky (1980)), they are reliant on the choices they made in the past to make decisions for the future. On the basis of this, he suggested that the concept of path dependence may help explain how and why political institutions (including both basic constitutional arrangements and public policy frameworks) develop or evolve in a certain pattern (p.264).

Institution inertia is a special case of path dependence where an institution remains unchanged for a period of time. As long as an institution is stable, individuals' choices and decisions are repetitive. The same patterns of behaviours are systematically produced and reproduced by the stable institution. In return, the repetitive behavioural patterns maintain the stability or the inertia of the institutions, given that the institutions are defined as uniformed behaviours adopted by a certain group of people in this thesis.

After a policy is implemented, it will have an impact on how people make decisions and take actions (see the previous subsection). Such an impact can be difficult to be reversed by later policies, because the external shock generated by the earlier policy may have memories and lead to a stable institution (Pierson, 2000). Because of the dialectical nature of path dependence, this institution may be resistant to later interventions. For example, there is a government policy which proves not to be

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<sup>18</sup> In this example, there is a positive feedback for the QWERTY keyboard arrangement. As it produces more keyboards and has more users, the average cost of production is lower. Such a positive feedback is also known as increasing returns, which is one of the reasons for path dependence. For a more detailed discussion on positive feedback, increasing returns and path dependence, please see David (1985) and Liebowitz and Margolis (1995)

working and has unintended negative effect, and the government wants to formulate a new policy to reverse its negative impact. Because of path dependence, it is very likely that the impact of the earlier policy will remain and the new policy will not generate its intended results immediately. Put differently, it may take some time before the new policy can be effectively implemented.

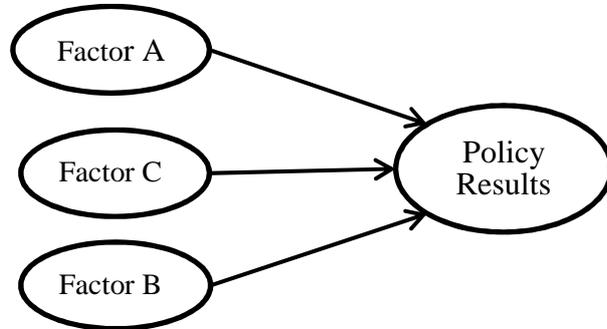
The decisions that people make, and the actions that people undertake are the results of institutions rather than a single factor. At least two factors constitute an institution. These factors mutually interact with each other. The first factor affects the second one, while the second one provides feedback on the first factor. For example, in the case of increasing returns, the adoption of a certain set of rules decreases the cost of rule adoption, while the decrease of the cost will attract more people to adopt the rules. The two variables are mutually reinforcing. The same logic applies to habitual behaviour. Individuals' habits are based on past experiences and social interaction. As long as the habits have proven to work well in decision-making and problem-solving in the past, the individuals will follow the same habits. And following the habits in the present will further reinforce the dependence of those habits in the future (Hodgson, 1997).

Effective implementation or non-implementation of the policy may also be systematically produced and reproduced. Policy implementation may be affected by several inter-related factors simultaneously. This is the theoretical contribution that this thesis can make to existing studies on policy implementation. This thesis posits that the causality of policy implementation based on institutional perspective is sharply different from that of conventional perspective in existing literature on policy implementation.

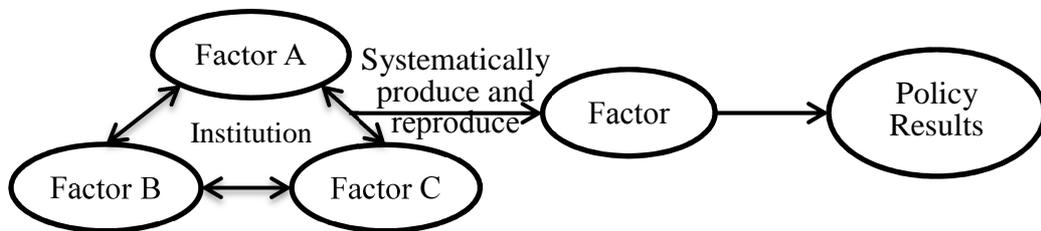
An institutional perspective proposes multiple causalities (i.e. many-to-one causalities), while a conventional perspective proposes a one-to-one causality. Figure 3.1 compares these two perspectives. The conventional perspective assumes that the policy results are attributable to separate factors. The impact of each factor on policy implementation is independent of the other factors. In contrast, the institutional perspective sees policy implementation as the results of rule-following behaviours (factor D in figure 3.1) generated within the institutions. Whether the policy can be implemented is determined

by whether the rule-following behaviour is in line with, or in contradiction with the policy goals.

Figure 3.1 Two Perspectives of Policy Implementation



Policy Implementation in Public Policy Process



Policy Implementation Based on Institutional Theories

Identifying the differences between the two perspectives is important, because they point to different directions in understanding policy implementation and in solving non-implementation of policies. Implementation theories based on conventional perspective attribute non-implementation to separate factors. This means that non-implementation can be solved by eliminating the factors that prevent effective implementation. For example, if ambiguity of policy goals is the reason for non-implementation of policy, effective implementation can be achieved simply through the clarification of policy goals (Section 3.1).

In contrast, the institutional perspective posits that non-implementation is directly caused by the rule-following behaviours that go against the policy goals. Such rule-following behaviours are generated by the system and unalterable within a stable institution. Put differently, the rule-following behaviour is just an intermediary, brokering the causal link between the institution and the policy results. To solve the problem of non-implementation, it is necessary to understand the constitution of the

institution and to break down the institution so that it will not constantly produce the behaviours that go against policy implementation.

In chapter 6, I will examine how self-interest and habits affect funding allocation decisions of local governments. I will discuss the role of self-interest in Section 6.2 and the role of habits in Section 6.3. In Chapter 9, I will return to the discussion on causality of policy implementation. In particular, I will summarise whether implementation of migrant children's education policy is determined by one-to-one causality or many-to-one causality.

## **Part Two Policy-Specific Factors**

### **3.3 Funding Policy**

This section discusses the implementation of funding policy. Funding policy refers to government decisions or requirements that sufficient funding should be available and directed to specific policies. Funding policy can be a separate policy formulated by the government to ensure implementation of other policies. It can also be part of a specific policy which ensures the achievement of other policy goals in the same policy.

#### **3.3.1 Funding Hypothecation**

The funding for policy implementation is normally provided by superior governments or donated by non-government entities. When policy implementers receive the funding, they are also informed of how the funding should be used. In some cases, superior governments or funding donors state clearly which specific policy area or project the funding should be used for. In this case, policy implementers have little freedom in deciding how to spend the money on their own. This type of funding is often known as earmarked funding or hypothecated funding.

The EDA program which Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) described and studied in their book titled *Implementation* is a good example of policy with hypothecated funding. In order to promote the employment opportunities of minorities, the US congress in the 1960s established an agency called the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The agency was responsible for incentivising local business to hire minorities, and create jobs for minorities. The American government chose

Oakland as an experimental site and provided the funding to the agency in Oakland to implement the EDA program. The agency was not allowed to spend the money for any purposes other than for helping local minorities to get jobs (Pressman and Wildavsky, p.xx).

In other cases, superior governments or funding donors do not state clearly which policy areas the funding is used for. They grant the funding to policy implementers as a lump-sum and expect policy implementers to spend the funding on a number of different policy areas and achieve a number of sharply different policy goals. In this case, the funding is not hypothecated and policy implementers are left with discretionary power to allocate the funding among different policy areas or goals.

Funding for education via the Revenue Support Grant in England provides a good example of non-hypothecated funding. The central government provides funding to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant<sup>19</sup> on an annual basis. As West et al. (2000) observed, local authorities' expenditure on education via the Revenue Support Grant is not hypothecated. After receiving the grant from central government, "local authorities are not forced to spend a specific amount money on education" (p.61).

### **3.3.2 The Impact of Hypothecation on the Implementation of Funding Policy**

Insufficient funding is a common problem in the process of policy implementation (Bardach, 1977; Sabatier, 1979; Lipsky, 1980; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). It means funding policy is not effectively implemented (Chapter 1) and often results in a failure to achieve other policy goals. With regard to education policy, insufficient funding may bring about a series of problems in relation to delivery of education services. For example, insufficient funding may cause a shortage of teaching staff and a high student-teacher ratio, which results in poor teaching services in the classrooms.

For teachers, overcrowded classrooms mean that they are unable to give the kind of personal attention good teaching requires. High student-teacher ratios also mean that teacher must attend to maintain order and have less attention for learning activities. (Lipsky, 1980, p.30)

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<sup>19</sup> It should be pointed out that the Revenue Support Grant is only one of the two main channels through which education system in England is funded by the government. For more details, please see West et al. (2000)

There may be two reasons for insufficient funding. The first is the unavailability of funding at the local level. This refers to the situation in which the central government does not allocate sufficient funding to policy implementers and policy implementers themselves do not have any other sources of funding.

The second reason is that there is funding available at the local level, but the funding is somehow redirected by local governments or policy implementers for other uses. As mentioned above, non-hypothecation of funding gives rise to the discretionary power of policy implementers. Discretionary power, in turn, can cause insufficient funding for the policy. If the interests and goals of policy implementers are different from those of funding donors, implementers can use their discretion and spend the money in a way that serves their own interests and goals. Suppose that central government provides the funding to implementers and expects implementers to evenly allocate the money between health and education sectors. However, implementers somehow believe that health policy is much more important than education policy and thus spend all the money on the former. This will then leave education policy underfunded. In other words, non-hypothecation can result in non-implementation of funding policy.

But hypothecated funding does not guarantee sufficient funding or effective implementation of funding policy either. The key issue is that central government or funding donors may not have the ability or incentives to effectively monitor how the funding is used by policy implementers. In particular, after the funding is allocated to policy implementers, it is very likely that funding providers lose control on funding usage at the local level (Bardach, 1977, p.73). In this case, implementers again will be left with discretionary power and will be able to make use of discretion to serve their own purposes. This means that hypothecated funding, if not well-monitored, will also result in insufficient funding of policy or non-implementation of funding policy.

In summary, financial resources are vitally important to guarantee that the policy goals are achieved. In order to make sure that implementation agencies are well-functioning and services are being delivered, there must be sufficient funding at the local level. However, even though the implementation agencies are granted sufficient funding,

there is still a chance that funding is diverted by policy implementers for other uses, particularly if the funding is not hypothecated or the funding is indeed hypothecated but not well-monitored.

As mentioned at the end of previous section, I will examine how self-interest and habits affect funding allocation in Section 6.2 and 6.3. But before that, in Section 6.1, I will begin by basing my analysis on the theories outlined in this section to examine whether there is sufficient funding at the local level and whether funding for migrant children's education policy is hypothecated. In Section 6.4, I will discuss the consequences of funding allocation on school access for migrant children.

### **3.4 Equal Opportunity policy**

This section discusses the implementation of equal opportunity policy. The first subsection explains the concept of high stakes testing and how it works in different countries. The second subsection discusses the impact of high stakes testing on equal opportunity policy.

#### **3.4.1 The Concept of High Stakes Testing**

Examinations play a vital role in the education system. The examination score is one of the most important indicators used by the governments to gauge schools' overall performance and educational outcomes (Rumberge and Palard, 2005, pp.3-5). In many countries, examination results have serious consequences for students, teachers and schools. Exams like these are sometimes also known as high stakes tests (Schrag, 2004, p.255).

In England, the academic future of students heavily depends upon the results of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced (GCEA) level examinations. Schools that can demonstrate strong academic performance in exams are more likely to get additional funding from the government, while the poorer performers would face warnings, reform or even closure in extreme cases (West, 2010, pp. 24-26).

In the US, there had been a general trend among the states since the No Children Left

Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 that financial rewards were granted to schools with high or improved exam results. Schools with low exam scores could be closed and teachers or administrators with low performance could be replaced (Amrein and Berliner, 2002, pp.5-6).

School examinations in China can also be regarded as high stakes tests, because they are closely related to the interests of schools, parents and students (Chapter 2). As a matter of fact, school examinations are so important in China that the entire education system is widely known as an “exam-oriented education system” (*yingshi jiaoyu zhidu*). Almost every activity carried out in schools revolves around getting better examination scores.

### **3.4.2 The Impact of High Stakes Testing on the Implementation of Equal Opportunity Policy**

High stakes testing is used by the government or education authorities to improve educational equality. The supporters of such a policy argue that high stakes testing can “increase assessment objectivity” (Hurse, 2005, p.606). More specifically, it is argued that the tests “provide a kind of level playing field, an equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge, and are good measures of an individual’s performance, little affected by different students’ motivation, emotionality, language and social status” (Amrein and Berliner, 2002, p.5).

In spite of these good intentions, high stakes testing can bring about unintended consequences. School activities may be biased in response to governmental pressure on schools to achieve high exam scores. For example, schools and teachers might overemphasise helping students get better examination results but ignore the improvement of students’ practical skills (Siegel, 2004, pp.226-227; West, 2010, pp.26-27). In some cases, schools only focus on the knowledge that is to be tested. In extreme cases, school may choose to ignore altogether those subjects and knowledge which are not relevant to the examinations (Hursh, 2005, p.613).

More importantly, high stakes testing with the aim of improving educational equality may end up creating new educational inequality. This means that high stakes testing

may become a self-contradictory policy. The negative impact of high stakes testing on educational equality is twofold. First, high stakes testing brings about the problem of unequal school admission criteria which means that some students are more likely than others to be selected to attend certain schools. In order to “improve raw score examination results”, schools tend to select students by ability and aptitude (Fitz and Chris, 2002, p.390), which is also known as cream-skimming. In particular, those schools which can decide their own admission criteria are more likely to apply unequal criteria to skim the cream. “[T]he evidence suggests negative consequences for equity and social justice once schools become responsible for school admissions” (West, 2006, p.28).

Second, high stakes testing also brings about the problem of student retaining, which refers to the fact that some students are more likely than others to be retained by schools. For example, Smith and Fey (2000) found that the students retained by schools were more likely to be those from ethnic minority families which were at a disadvantage in education opportunities. The implication of this was that high stakes testing could “further disadvantage already disadvantaged students” (p.334). Meanwhile, in the US, it was also found that the schools intentionally retain the students who are not doing well in their studies and thus are less likely to pass the exams. This is to make sure that only those good performers take part in the examinations so that school’s performance can improve. The result is that some of those retained students ended up dropping out of schools (Smith and Fey, 2000; Hursh, 2005).

High stakes testing can have a negative impact on educational equality in China as well. In 2001, the Chinese government started to reform the basic education system. The overarching objective of the reform was to reduce educational inequality in China so that children in different regions of the country could receive education services of a similar quality. There were a number of government policies and measures to promote educational equality such as the catchment area policy, discouraging school selection, the cancellation of entrance exams to junior secondary school, helping out disadvantaged schools and reducing education stratification (Chapter 2).

Existing literature suggests that most of these policies and measures have failed. For example, the government had been formulating a policy to reduce school selection (a type of unequal school admission criteria<sup>20</sup>) since the beginning of 1990s (Chai and Cheng, 2008). But constant government efforts did not achieve the intended objective. The number of students attending schools via school selection increased rapidly each year (Zeng and Ma, 2009). It is pointed out by the researchers that school selection has now become a “fever” among the public (Wu and Shen, 2006; Zeng and Ma, 2009). The issue of education stratification is the same. Based on empirical evidence in the city of Nanjing, Ye (2007) found that the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged schools were still huge. This suggests that little has changed even if the government has used policy measures to reduce education stratification.

Some scholars (Zhou, 2001; Shangguan, 2003; Chen, 2004; Wu and Shen, 2006; Lu, 2007; Liu, 2008) argued that high stakes testing (or exam-oriented system) was the main reason for the failure of equal education reform. They pointed out that the exam-oriented education system was based on the ideology of elite education. This was in contradiction to the objective of equal education reform. As Liu (2008) summarised:

...The exam-oriented education system in our country is an elite education system and focuses on the development of elite students who are in the minority in society... The priority of elite education is efficiency not equality. This severely harms the achievement of educational equality. (p.7)

Based on the theories above, I will discuss the impact of the exam-oriented education system on the implementation of equal opportunity policy relating to migrant children in Chapter 7. I will explain how the exam-oriented education system affects the decisions of urban public schools and migrant parents at the local level in Section 7.1 and 7.2. I will also examine how exam-oriented education system affects the achievement of the three goals of equal opportunity policy including equal school admission, non-segregation and equalization of academic performance in Section 7.4.

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<sup>20</sup> For more details, please see Chapter 2 and 6.

### **3.5 Social Integration Policy**

This section discusses the implementation of social integration policy. The focus of discussion will be on the role of intergroup relations in policy implementation. The first subsection discusses the concepts of social integration and intergroup relations. The second subsection discusses how intergroup relations affect social integration both in the society and in schools.

#### **3.5.1 The Concept of Social Integration and Intergroup Relations**

Martinovic et al. (2009) defined social integration as “the extent to which immigrants engage in social interaction with natives” (p.870). Social interaction is a good starting point of understanding social integration and perhaps is the most important dimension of this concept, but it does not capture all of the connotations of social integration. Existing research suggests that the concept of social integration can be examined from four dimensions including the knowledge of language (Dalgard and Thapa, 2007), friendship with natives (Gordon, 1964; UNRISD, 1994; Berry, 1997; Dalgard and Thapa, 2007; Rubin et al., 2012), adjustment to the norms and social rules of natives (Berry, 1997), and absence of discrimination (Gordon, 1964).

With regard to this thesis, social integration of the children of migrants into urban life can be examined in a similar fashion. It can be assessed by looking at the following aspects: (1) children’s knowledge of Mandarin Chinese which is used in schools and most official settings in urban life; (2) migrant children’s friendship with urban residents (including both children and adults); (3) adjustment to urban rules; (4) the extent to which migrants’ children are discriminated against by urban residents.

Existing literature suggests that one of the most important factors that affect social integration policy is intergroup relations. Intergroup relations are the basis for social interaction. The relations between two groups of people can determine the pattern and intensity of their daily interactions (Martinovic, et al, 2009). The study of intergroup relations in social science involves examining the collective behaviours, thinking and attitude among different social groups (Brewer and Kramer, 1985). Simply put, it is the attitude and behaviour of people in one group towards those in another. “When people are judged, either singly or together, on the basis of group memberships, intergroup

processes are involved” (Messick and Mackie, 1989, p.45). The concept of intergroup relations includes two dimensions: intergroup hierarchy and intergroup contact.

The first dimension of intergroup relations is intergroup hierarchy. It refers to the fact that different groups have different status. Some groups may be economically wealthy, enjoy a widespread social reputation, possess political power or receive social welfare, while others may be poor, disrespectful, politically powerless or deprived of social welfare. The former groups are often termed dominant, higher status or superior groups, while the latter are termed subordinate, lower status or inferior groups in the research (Tajfel, 1974; Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The second dimension of intergroup relations is intergroup contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) defined intergroup contact as: “actual face-to-face interaction between members of clearly distinguishable and defined groups” (p.95).

### **3.5.2 The Impact of Intergroup Relations on the Implementation of Social Integration Policy**

Intergroup hierarchy is a barrier to social integration. First, intergroup group hierarchy brings about discrimination. People make sense of the “reality” by categorization – putting people into different categories (Tajfel, 1974, p.69). However, in many cases, such a categorization process is seriously flawed. People may develop strong stereotypes towards people in other groups if they do not possess sufficient knowledge which enables them to fully assess the characteristics of people in other groups. Stereotypes thus result in intergroup misunderstandings. As Hogg and Abrams (1988) elaborated:

Stereotypes are generalisation about people based on category membership. They are beliefs that all members of a particular group have the same qualities...A specific group member is assumed to be, or is treated as, essentially identical to other members of the group, and the group as a whole is perceived and treated as being homogenous (p.65).

Prejudice is stereotypes with a negative attitude. The behavioural manifestation of prejudice results in discrimination – unequal treatment of people in different groups

(Fiske, 1998)<sup>21</sup>.

Second, intergroup hierarchy may result in low self-esteem and lack of confidence (Dalgard and Thapa, 2007, p.2; Rubin et al., 2012, p.2). People keep comparing themselves with others, and their self-esteem emerges out of such a social comparison process (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008, p.370). Myers (2007) defined self-esteem as “the overall sense of self-worth we use to appraise our traits and abilities” (p.51). That is to say, people appraise their own worth by looking at others as mirrors. The feeling of low self-worth is likely to appear when people in lower groups compare themselves with the people in superior groups.

Intergroup contact facilitates social integration. First, intergroup contact can reduce negative attitudes and discrimination between two groups of people. By means of intergroup contact, people from different groups can get to know each other better and gradually realize the naivety and oversimplification of social categorization. This can uncover the illusionary veil of stereotypes and help people in one group better understand the differences and similarities of people from other groups. Negative attitudes and discrimination are then reduced as a result of this (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

The second effect of intergroup contact on social integration relates to language, social norms and rules. Researchers pointed out that if people in one group want to learn the language or adopt the norms and rules of another, the best way of achieving this is to talk to the latter in different settings as frequently as possible. This is the main channel to absorb the information necessary for social integration (Berry, 1997, p.27; Martinovic et al., 2009, p.870).

### Social integration policy and its implementation

Social integration in some countries is an important policy issue. In order to promote

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<sup>21</sup> There is no one-to-one correlation between prejudice and discrimination. If a person for some reason withholds the negative attitude and does not express it in public, there will be no discriminatory behaviour. Moreover, prejudice is only one of many factors that result in discrimination. Apart from psychological reasons, they are also institutional reasons for discrimination. For example, the *hukou* system discussed in Chapter 2 is a type of institutional discrimination having nothing to do with intergroup attitude.

social integration and reduce intergroup discrimination, the government uses policy measures to foster intergroup contact and understanding. For example, in order to improve intergroup relations in the city of Dubuque located in Iowa of the US, the city council announced a policy plan which provided incentives for local business to hire ethnic minorities. It was hoped that mutual understanding would arise if people from different ethnic backgrounds were mixed at work and could engage in more frequent social interaction (Brewer, 1997, pp.197-198).

As intergroup contact facilitates the implementation of social integration policy, intergroup hierarchy can be a big obstacle to policy implementation. This is often found in immigration policies which aim to assist social integration of minority groups into the new life in their host countries. For example, Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden adopted a generally inclusive immigration policy. The governments in these countries assist and encourage immigrants to engage in social interaction with natives and integrate themselves into mainstream society. They open labour markets to immigrants and promote scattered patterns of residence areas for immigrants so that the immigrants can more easily acquire social capital and achieve self-development (Velenta and Bunar, 2010). However, it is quite difficult to fully achieve the policy objectives laid out by the governments. In most cases, there are huge gaps between the immigrants and the natives in terms of economic, social and cultural characteristics. The group status of some immigrants is so much lower and intergroup hierarchy is so evident that government assistance seems to be unable to achieve its intended goals. As Velenta and Bunar (2010) pointed out:

...[E]xtensive integration assistance has only a limited effect on equalising the initial differences between refugees and the rest of the population. Differences between immigrants and the rest of the population in all aspects of everyday life are large, which should trigger discussions relating to the ambitions and focus of integration policies. This...implies that policy makers need to revise their expectations. (P.479)

#### Student integration policy and its implementation

To some extent, school integration, or student integration at school, is an integral part of social integration. Schools have been increasingly assigned by the government with

the task of promoting social integration and helping students adjust to the school life (Khmelkov and Hallinan, 1999, p.627). School is like a “little society” and socialisation activities taking place at school mirror the behaviours happening in wider society (Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009, p.219).

There has been research into the implementation of student integration policy both in the US (Moody, 2001, Goldsmith, 2004) and in the Europe (Leman, 1991; Driessen, 2000; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009), but the number of studies on this topic seems to be very limited so far (Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009, p.233). Existing research suggests that the factors affecting student integration policy are very much similar to those affecting social integration in wider society. In particular, intergroup relations play a pivotal role. On the one hand, governments support the idea of putting students of different origins into the same schools, because it is argued that this will increase intergroup contact and improve social integration of minority or immigrant students. As Van Houtte and Stevens (2009) reported, “policy-makers strive for the dispersal of immigrant students, believing that the mixing of students from different ethnic groups will enhance their integration into society.” Empirical evidence seems to support this policy belief. It has been consistently found that in those schools where native students and minority students are mixed, the two groups of students can form good friendships due to frequent intergroup contact (Driessen, 2000; Moody, 2001; Goldsmith, 2004; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009). On the other hand, intergroup hierarchy was found to be a main obstacle of social integration of minority students at school. For example, Van Houtte and Stevens (2009) reported that lower socioeconomic status (SES) prevented immigrant children from making friends with native students.

It was also found that school can play a very active and constructive role in the course of implementation of student integration policy. A common practice to help minority students with social integration is that schools include intercultural elements in their policies and translate these policies into daily school activities (Driessen, 2000, pp.63-64). Existing research suggests that integrated extracurricular activities seem to be the most effective school policy and activity to promote social integration at school. Those schools which regularly organised integrated extracurricular activities and let different groups of children work or play in the same team did better than other schools in

fostering intergroup friendships (Khmelkov and Hallinan, 1999; Goldsmith, 2004; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009).

Based on the discussion above, I will examine intergroup relations and their impact on social integration policy relating to migrant children in Chapter 8. More specifically, I will discuss the intergroup relations between urban and migrant families in Section 8.1. Then I will discuss school policies which aim to cultivate good intergroup relations between migrant and urban children in Section 8.2. Finally, in Section 8.3, I will assess whether school support and intergroup relationships between the two groups of children affect social integration of migrant children in urban schools.

## **Conclusion**

This Chapter reviews the literature on policy implementation and tries to identify the possible factors affecting implementation of migrant children's education policy. Drawing on discussions and debates in existing literature, this chapter identifies two groups of factors. The first group is generic while the second is policy-specific.

Generic factors have universal impact on different types of policies. There are two types of generic factors: preconditional factors and institutional factors. Two preconditional factors were identified in this chapter. The first is the design of policy goals. Policy goals should be clear and feasible. The more ambiguous the policy goals are, the more difficult it will be for the policy to be effectively implemented. Meanwhile, the policy formulated by the government should be based on valid theories which correctly reflect the causal relations between the actions to be taken and the predicted results of those actions. Otherwise, the policy goals will not be achieved as intended, even if the implementers carry out the actions as required by the policy formulators. The policy goals should also be changing incrementally compared to previous policies so that implementers are more able to feasibly put the changes into practice.

The second preconditional factor is room for discretion or the discretionary power of policy implementers. The policy formulated by central government cannot cover every detail in implementation. Policy implementers and street-level bureaucrats have to deal

with random clients and unexpected events on a daily basis. The central government only has a limited ability to monitor the implementation process. All these issues imply that policy implementers, to varying degrees, can make their own decisions and exercise discretionary power when they implement the policy. If the policy goals are different from, or go against the interests, values and objectives of the implementers, the latter may pursue their own goals. This can bring about non-implementation of the policy.

Two institutional factors were identified in this chapter. They are self-interest and habits. Policies are formal institutions by definition, and effective policy implementation means institutional change. Self-interested behaviour and habitual behaviour of individuals drive institutional change and thus affect policy implementation. Those policies which bring about net benefit to implementers will be implemented. Those policies which require policy implementers to change their habitual behaviour too much will not be implemented. The institutional perspective posits that the results of policy implementation are systematically produced and reproduced. This perspective is characterised by many-to-one causality in explaining non-implementation of the policy. Such an institutional perspective differs from the conventional perspective which assumes one-to-one causality and is the theoretical contribution that this thesis can make to existing literature on policy implementation.

Policy-specific factors only affect the implementation of a specific policy or a certain type of policy. Migrant children's education policy consists of three parts including funding policy, equal opportunity policy and social integration policy. This chapter reviewed the literature on each policy issue and discussed the factors that only affect these policies.

Funding policy is affected by hypothecation of the funding. If the policy funding is not hypothecated, there is the possibility that policy implementers may use their discretionary power and leave certain policies underfunded. However, hypothecation alone does not guarantee sufficient funding to implement the policy. If the use of funding is not well monitored by funding providers, policy implementers will still have the chance to use their discretion and redirect the funding for a designated policy for

other uses. This will also leave the designated policy underfunded.

High stakes testing is one of the most important factors affecting the implementation of equal opportunity policy. High stakes testing is used by the government or education authorities in different countries to assess school performance. High stakes testing brings about a series of policy consequences related to educational inequality. In order to pursue better exam results, schools may select certain groups of students while excluding others. This leads to the problem of unequal school admissions. Schools may also retain certain groups of students which may finally end up dropping out of school. In particular, the literature shows that minority students and students with poor academic performance are more likely than others to be retained by schools.

Social integration can be examined from four dimensions: the knowledge of native language, friendship with natives, adjustment to the norms and social rules of natives, and an absence of discrimination. Existing literature suggests that implementation of social integration policy is affected by intergroup relations, a concept with two dimensions including intergroup contact and intergroup hierarchy. Intergroup contact facilitates social integration, while intergroup hierarchy constitutes the main barrier to social integration. The government and policy makers cultivate intergroup contact to promote social integration of immigrants in society. However, such policy efforts may not be very effective if the intergroup hierarchy is too predominant in society. Likewise, school can play an active and constructive role in cultivating intergroup relations and in helping minority students with school integration. But it is more difficult for minority students with lower SES to integrate themselves into school life due to the effect of intergroup hierarchy.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodology of the thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this thesis mainly uses qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions. This is because the qualitative approach is more suitable to “provide a great deal of descriptive details...emphasizes on process...[and] is concerned with explanations” (Bryman, 2004, pp.280-281), which is essential to examine the process and results of implementation of migrant children’s education policy. Data recorded in government and school documents and quantitative data are also collected and used in the research, but they play a supporting role and do not independently answer any research questions.

This chapter starts by revisiting the research questions of the thesis. Earlier chapters defined the concept of policy implementation (Chapter 1) and discussed the factors that affect policy implementation (Chapter 3). On the basis of these conceptual and theoretical discussions, the first section maps out the data needed to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The second section presents an overview of the fieldwork. The focus of discussion is placed upon the timeline and fieldwork locations. The third section discusses the collection of qualitative data via semi-structured interviews. The fourth section discusses the collection of secondary data. The fifth section describes the methods of data analyses. The focus is placed upon the procedures of thematic analysis which are used in the thesis to analyse and interpret qualitative data. Issues related to research quality and ethics are discussed in the last two sections of the chapter.

### **4.1 Revisiting Research Questions and Identifying the Data Needed to Answer the Questions**

As stated in Chapter 1, the main research question of the thesis can be formulated as follows: to what extent is education policy for migrant children implemented and why? There are two issues in the main research question. The first is to examine whether

migrant children's education policy is implemented, while the second is to explain why migrant children's education policy is implemented or not implemented.

Migrant children's education policy consists of three parts including funding and school access policy, equal opportunity policy and school support and social integration policy. To answer the main research question, three groups of subquestions were posed. Each group of subquestions addresses a specific part of migrant children's education policy and aims to examine whether this specific part of the policy is implemented and why.

The first group of subquestions addresses funding and school access policy:

- Q1.1 Is there sufficient funding to provide education for migrant children in urban public schools?
- Q1.2 Who is responsible for allocating the funding of education for migrant children at the local level?
- Q1.3 What are the factors affecting the decisions of funding allocation?
- Q1.4 What is the impact of funding allocation on access to urban public schools?
- Q1.5 Do migrant children have access to urban public schools?

The second group of subquestions addresses equal opportunity policy:

- Q2.1 What are the factors that affect the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.2 What is the impact of these factors on the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.3 To what extent is equal opportunity policy effectively implemented? That is, do urban schools apply equal admission criteria, follow the principle of non-segregation and help out migrant children in study as required by the central government in practice?

The third group of subquestions addresses school support and social integration:

- Q3.1 What support is provided by urban schools to help migrant children adjust to a new study environment?

Q3.2 Is the policy goal of social integration successfully achieved?

Q3.3 What are the factors affecting the achievement or non-achievement of the policy goal of social integration?

To answer the research questions concerning whether migrant children's education policy is implemented, it is necessary to collect data at the local level in relation to the funding of migrant children's education policy (Q1.1), school access of migrant children (Q2.5), equal opportunity for migrant children in urban public schools (Q2.3), support provided to migrant children by urban public schools (Q3.1) and social integration of migrant children (Q3.3). These data provides information on the current situation in terms of the results of policy implementation. Then by comparing what is happening in reality with what is stipulated in the policy (Chapter 1 and 5), I am able to assess whether each part of the policy is effectively implemented.

To answer the research questions concerning why migrant children's education policy is or is not being implemented, I need the data on the factors that affect the implementation of this policy. Chapter 3 identified seven factors that may potentially affect policy implementation. On the basis of this, it is necessary to collect data on these seven factors and test if they have an impact on the implementation of migrant children's education policy.

As discussed in Chapter 3, policy implementation may be affected by a series of generic factors. First, policy implementation may be affected by discretionary power of implementers and the clarity and feasibility of policy goals (Section 3.1). To test these theories, I need to collect information on the discretionary power of implementers in China and the goals of migrant children's education policy. In particular, I need to know how much discretionary power implementers in China have and whether the goals of migrant children's education policy are clear and feasible. Second, decisions made in the process of policy implementation are affected by self-interest and habits (Section 3.2). To test whether these two behavioural factors affect implementation of migrant children's education policy, I need to collect data to examine whether they are the factors that local governments and urban public schools consider when they implement migrant children's education policy.

It was also pointed out in Chapter 3 that different policy issues may be affected by policy-specific factors. First, implementation of funding policy may be affected by the hypothecation of funding (Section 3.3). Based on this theory, Q1.2 is to examine whether the funding for migrant children's education policy is hypothecated and how this affects decisions on funding allocation. Second, it is found that high stakes testing affects equal opportunity policy (Section 3.4). Based on this theory, Q2.1 is to test whether exam-oriented education system in China affects the implementation of equal admission, non-segregation and academic performance policies. Q2.2 aims to examine the impact of the exam-oriented education system on implementation of equal opportunity policy for migrant children. Finally, existing literature suggests that intergroup relations affect the implementation of social integration policy (Section 3.5). Following this logic, Q3.3 tests whether intergroup relations between migrant and urban children affect the implementation of social integration policy for migrant children in urban public schools.

## **4.2 Overview of Fieldwork**

I spent nine months in China doing fieldwork. The purpose was to collect first hand and secondary data outlined in the previous section. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the fieldwork. The fieldwork had two stages. The first stage, spanning July and October 2009, focused on collecting first hand qualitative data via semi-structured interviews. This is the major source of empirical evidence reported in the thesis. The second stage of the fieldwork started at the end of January 2010 and finished in May 2010. In this stage, the fieldwork focused on collecting secondary data. The data sources ranged from national and local statistical yearbooks, online database and local government documents to public reports.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the support of Development Research Centre of the State Council (DRC) which is a comprehensive policy research and consulting institution affiliated to the State Council in China. In July 2009, DRC started the research project titled "Integration of Rural-Urban Migrants into Cities" (*nongmingong rongyu chengshi*) which was financially sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The research project consisted of several

separate modules. Education for migrant children was one of them.

A research team worked on the project with me. The research team was composed of eight researchers. The leader of the team was responsible for deciding which cities would be used for data collection, contacting local government officials for assistance, making overall schedules for data collection, assigning tasks to the team members and hosting internal meetings for exchange of views and experiences on a regular basis.

I joined in the research team as a project researcher and was in charge of the module of education for migrant children. My main responsibilities included: (1) sample selection, i.e. identifying the policy actors to be interviewed; (2) designing the semi-structured questionnaires; (3) conducting in-depth interviews with policy actors in accordance with the semi-structured questionnaires. Since I was responsible for designing the semi-structured questionnaires, I was able to include all of the questions relating to the implementation of migrant children's education policy in the questionnaires. This enabled me to get all the data I needed for my Ph.D. research.

The in-depth interviews took place in cities C and H<sup>22</sup>. There were three reasons for choosing these two cities as locations for interviews. The first reason was data availability. The access to first-hand qualitative data is a big challenge to researchers in China. It is even more difficult for policy studies researchers who want to collect information regarding the public sector. Usually, potential interviewees are reluctant to take part in interviews if they are not acquainted with the researchers. Local governments in cities C and H had been keeping up good formal and informal relationships with DRC and were willing to help with the research. They helped the research team get in touch with the potential interviewees. Functioning as an agent, they brought the research team and the interviewees together so that the latter were willing to participate in the interviews. Moreover, they also provided valuable local information to the research team.

The second reason relates to the relevance to the research. Both cities C and H are provincial capitals, with a large number of migrant families migrating to these two

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<sup>22</sup> Following Li (2009), the two cities are anonymised.

cities each year. As more and more migrants chose to bring their families to big cities (Chapter 1), the numbers of migrant children in these two cities were correspondingly large. Implementation of migrant children's education policy has been a serious policy issue in these two cities (Chapter 6).

Finally, collecting data in two cities not only ensures a larger sample, but also facilitates comparative analyses. The two cities are not entirely the same with regard to their social and economic development. This enables me to compare whether the two cities have differences in terms of their implementation of migrant children's education policy.

City C is located in central-south China. In 2009, its total territory amounted to 12,000 square kilometres and the total population was 6.4 million. There are five urban districts which are clustered at the centre of the city. In 2010, the residents living in these five urban districts amounted to 2.3 million, accounting for 37% of the city population (MBSC, 2010). City C is the economic centre of the province. In 2009, its gross regional product (GRP) reached ¥37.4 billion (£3.74 billion), accounting for 1/3 of the total GRP of the province. The second and the third sectors accounted for 97.9% of the total GRP of the city. Meanwhile, the disposable income per capita in urban C is more than twice as large as that of rural areas of city C and more than four times as large as the average income of rural residents across the province (Table 4.1). This makes urban C a very attractive place to work and live. At the end of 2008, there were 0.5 million residents with rural *hukou* in five urban districts of city C, which accounted for more than one fifth of the total urban population (MBSC, 2010). A majority of migrants came from within the same province.

City H is a coastal city as well as a provincial city in south-east China. By the end of 2009, the total area of city H was 16,600 square kilometres and the total population was 8.9 million. The urban area which is composed of eight districts is situated in the north-east of the city. There were 5.5 million people in these eight urban districts, accounting for 69% of city's total population (MBSH, 2010). City H is the economic centre of the province. In 2008, its GRP was ¥47.8 billion (£4.78 billion), accounting for 22% of the provincial GRP (MBSH, 2010) and ranking 8<sup>th</sup> among all the capital cities in China.

The economic structure of city H is very much like that of city C, with the second and third sectors accounting for 96.3% of city's GRP (MBSH, 2010).

Table 4.1 Disposable Annual Income per capita in the Two Cities (in ¥)

| Year | Urban C | Rural Areas<br>in C | Urban H | Rural Areas<br>in H |
|------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|
| 2004 | 11,020  | 4,315               | 14,565  | 6,950               |
| 2005 | 12,354  | 4,735               | 16,601  | 7,655               |
| 2006 | 13,924  | 5,653               | 19,026  | 8,515               |
| 2007 | 17,669  | 6,613               | 21,689  | 9,549               |
| 2008 | 18,790  | 8,003               | 24,101  | 10,692              |

Sources: Municipal Bureau of Statistics of City C (2005-2009); Municipal Bureau of Statistics of City H (2005-2009)

### 4.3 Collecting First Hand Data

This section will focus on the procedures of collecting first hand data. The first subsection will describe the rationale and procedures of purposive sampling method, whereas the second subsection will describe the selection of interviewees and the open-ended questions asked in the interviews.

#### 4.3.1 Sampling Method

There are two commonly used approaches to sampling in qualitative research. The first is theoretical sampling. It refers to the sampling method that was first advanced by Glaser and Strauss (1968) and later refined by Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). It is a well-established data collection method in grounded theory which is one of the most commonly adopted methodologies in qualitative research. Theoretical sampling emphasises the importance of combining data collection with data analysis. The sample for interviews keeps on changing and expanding as new categories emerge in the process of analysing interview data. Data collection stops when no more new categories are found in the interviews, namely data collection reaches the point of theoretical saturation. As Glaser and Strauss (1968) put it:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides which data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. (p.45)

The second approach is purposive sampling. According to Silverman (2010), “purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested...[and] demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on this basis” (p.141). Theoretical sampling and purposive sampling are different in the sense that the latter is more cost-effective but requires more planning and critical thinking of sample selection before the fieldwork starts (Silverman, 2010, pp.142-143).

I used purposive sampling to select interviewees. This was out of a consideration of cost-effectiveness. The research team had little local knowledge in both cities, and thus was almost solely reliant on local governments to supply them with local knowledge. However, asking local governments for help is very costly. Searching and contacting suitable candidates for interviews would add to the workload of the staff in local governments who were already preoccupied with daily administrative tasks. It was most cost-effective if a clear and feasible plan was handed over to the local governments in advance so that the latter could know exactly what they were being asked to do and make arrangement accordingly. If theoretical sampling was to be employed, it meant that local officials had to accompany and assist the research team throughout the process. This was infeasible in practice since it would be too disruptive to the work of the local government staff.

The procedures used for purposive sampling in the fieldwork can be described as follows. First, the interviewees were selected on the basis that they were most likely to provide the information I needed to answer my research questions (Section 4.1). For example, in order to examine school admission criteria of urban public schools, I selected school principals as interviewees, because they are most likely to provide the information relevant to this issue. Second, I set out a series of interviewee parameters or characteristics which included age, gender, *hukou* status, location of school and etc. This was to improve the representativeness of interviewees (see the next subsection). Finally, the research team asked local government officials to help contact interviewees in accordance with these parameters.

It must be stressed that purposive sampling used in the fieldwork should not be confused with convenience sampling. “A convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of accessibility” (Bryman, 2004, p.100). Accessibility is just one of the criteria to select interviewees in my research. This was to increase the chances that interviewees were willing to participate in the research and make sure that the sample size was large enough. However, apart from accessibility, other factors such as relevance, suitability and representativeness of interviewees were also considered when the interviewees were being selected for my research.

#### **4.3.2 Interviewees and Open-Ended Questions**

Originally the list of interviewees consisted of seven groups of policy actors, including government officials, principals, school teachers, migrant children, urban children, migrant parents and urban parents. They were considered to be the most relevant interviewees to my thesis. However, while I was in the field, I found it very difficult to find suitable urban parents for interviews. Hence, only six groups of interviewees were interviewed in the end. With regard to the inaccessibility of urban parents, remedial measures were taken. Because school teachers normally kept close contact with parents, they had deep understanding and wide knowledge of the views held by parents. I indirectly got the information in relation to urban parents by asking school teachers to describe urban parents’ attitudes and responses towards the policy.

69 people participated in semi-structured interviews (Table 4.2). The length of interview time varied. Normally speaking, the interviews with adult interviewees (i.e. officials, principals, teachers and migrant parents) took 1 to 2.5 hours, whereas the interviews with children lasted between 0.5 and 1 hour on average. Adult interviewees were usually much more talkative in the interviews. They not only answered the questions being asked, but also provided additional information. For example, adult interviewees were willing to express their attitudes, elaborate on their answers, cited examples or talk about some other issues in which they were interested. The interviewers often found very interesting information in these additional points made by adult interviewees. Sometimes the interviewers would follow these additional points and further pursue the enquiries. In comparison, children did not provide as much additional information as the adult interviewees. Perhaps because they were nervous or

shy, in many cases children only answered the questions and did not talk about anything else. The answers they provided were often quite short. For this reason, the interviews with children were often finished within an hour.

Table 4.2 Number of Interviewees in Different Groups

| Interviewees               | City C | City H | Total |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Local Government Officials | 5      | 4      | 9     |
| Principals                 | 3      | 3      | 6     |
| Teachers                   | 4      | 2      | 6     |
| Students                   | 27     | 15     | 42    |
| Migrant Parents            | 3      | 3      | 6     |
| Total                      | 42     | 27     | 69    |

The research team first had interviews with local government officials. Nine local government officials were interviewed in two cities. The leader of the research team conducted interviews with government officials. I attended all the interviews with government officials but did not ask questions. The interviews with local government officials aimed to find out who was responsible for providing funding for migrant children's education policy (Q1.1 and Q1.2) and identify the factors that the government considered when the funding was being allocated (Q1.3). Even though local government officials interviewed came from four government departments including finance, statistics, public security and education bureaus (Appendix 1), the information provided by local education bureaus were most relevant to the thesis. Due to limited space, this thesis only presents the findings based on the interviews with three officials from local education bureaus. The following questions were asked in the interviews<sup>23</sup>.

- Which government agency is responsible for allocation of education funding?
- How does the government distribute the funding to local schools?
- Are there local policies to address the issue of providing funding for migrant children's education? What are they?

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<sup>23</sup> The open-ended questions listed here are guiding questions. They aim to get information directly relevant to the research questions of the thesis. In addition to these guiding questions, the interviewers also asked closed questions and spontaneous questions in the conversation. Given limited space, these closed questions will not be listed in the main text of the thesis, but they are listed in Appendix 2.

After interviewing the government officials, the research team conducted interviews with schools. Knowing little about local schools, the research team asked the officials in local education bureaus to contact suitable schools for the interviews. The suitable schools were supposed to satisfy three conditions: (1) they should be public schools where there were a significant proportion of migrants' children; (2) in each city there must be at least one primary school and one junior secondary school; (3) in each city there must be at least one school located in the centre and one in the fringe areas between the urban and rural areas (*chengxiang jiehebu*). Criteria (2) and (3) were supposed to improve the representativeness of the sample.

Five schools were willing to participate in the interviews. There were three schools in city C. They were Primary School FO, Middle School TS and Middle School TW. There were two schools in city H. They were Primary School YC and Middle School QT. The principals of these five schools all participated in the interviews. The leader of the research team conducted face-to-face interviews with principals in the meeting rooms of schools. I attended all the interviews but did not ask questions. The principals were in charge of the daily operation of schools and were responsible for implementing education policies passed down from local education bureaus. The interviews with principals aimed to collect information on access to urban public schools for migrant children (Q1.4 and Q1.5), the exam-oriented education system at the local level (Q2.1), implementation of equal opportunity policy (Q2.2 and Q2.3) and school support available to help migrant children with school integration (Q3.1). The following questions were asked in the interviews.

- How many migrant children are there in your school?
- Does the school take in all migrant applicants?
- How are migrant children recruited in your school?
- How are migrant children allocated to classes?
- What does the school do to help migrant children with social integration?
- Can migrant children adjust to the new environment?
- Do migrant children and urban children get along well?

- What is the attitude of urban parents towards rural-urban migrants and the policy?

Six teachers were interviewed. All of these teachers were teaching or had experience of teaching migrant children. Four of them were also class tutors (*banzhuren*) who were responsible for taking care of students' general well-being in life and study. I conducted the interviews with all the teachers in school classrooms. The interviews aimed to collect information on the exam-oriented education system at the local level (Q2.1), the implementation of equal opportunity policy (Q2.2 and Q2.3), school support available to help migrant children with school integration (Q3.1), social integration of migrant children (Q3.2) and intergroup relations between migrant and urban children (Q3.3). The following questions were asked in the interviews.

- How are migrant children recruited in your school?
- How are migrant children allocated to class?
- What did the school do to help migrant children with social integration?
- Can migrant children adjust to the new environment?
- What are the virtues and weaknesses of migrant children?
- Do migrant children and urban children get along well?
- What is the attitude of urban parents towards rural-urban migrants and the policy?

42 students were interviewed. When the fieldwork took place, the students were on summer vacation. Hence, the teachers who participated in the interviews were asked to contact their students by phone and invite those who were available for the interviews to schools. Finally, 36 migrant students and six urban students were available to participate in the interviews. There were 18 male students and 24 female students (Table 4.3).

The primary school students interviewed were in Grade Five. These students were 10 to 11 years old. Junior secondary school students were in Grade One (General Grade Seven) or Grade Two (General Grade Eight). These students were 12 to 14 years old. The reasons for choosing students in these grades were twofold. First, it was considered

that the students below Grade Five might not be able to fully understand the interview questions, due to the lack of sufficient language and literary abilities. Second, the students in Grade Six and Junior Grade Three (General Grade Nine) were approaching the end of primary and junior secondary education. They were under huge academic pressure due to upcoming graduation and entrance examinations (Chapter 2). The research team did not want to interrupt their studies.

I conducted interviews with six students and the other members in the research team conducted interviews with the remaining 36 students. Everyone in the research team asked these students the same guiding questions. The interviews with the students mostly took the form of one-to-one conversations in classrooms or school offices. There were only two exceptions where the interviewers had interviews with one migrant child and one urban child simultaneously. During the conversation, the interviewers observed whether and how the two children talked with each other.

The interviews with the students aimed to collect information on the exam-oriented education system at the local level (Q2.1), equal opportunity for migrant children in urban public schools (Q2.2 and Q2.3), the school support available to help migrant children with social integration (Q3.1), social integration of migrant children in urban public schools (Q3.2) and intergroup relations between migrant and urban children (Q3.3). The following questions were asked in the interviews.

- How long do you work every day?
- What was the result of your last exam?
- Are your parents strict on your study?
- How are students allocated to each class?
- Do you have any difficulties in study?
- Do migrant students or urban students get better exam results?
- (For migrant children) Are you used to the new life in this school now? Do you have any difficulties in communicating with other people?
- (For migrant children) Do you receive any support from the school to help you get used to your new life?
- Can you tell me who your best friends are? Are they migrant or urban students?

Table 4.3 Characteristics of the Students Interviewed in the Fieldwork

|                     | City C | City H | Total |
|---------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| <b>Gender</b>       |        |        |       |
| Male                | 12     | 6      | 18    |
| Female              | 15     | 9      | 24    |
| <b>Hukou Status</b> |        |        |       |
| Rural <i>Hukou</i>  | 23     | 13     | 36    |
| Urban <i>Hukou</i>  | 4      | 2      | 6     |
| <b>Grade</b>        |        |        |       |
| 5(age:10-11)        | 8      | 7      | 15    |
| 7(age: 12-13)       | 8      | 5      | 13    |
| 8(age:13-14)        | 11     | 3      | 14    |
| Total               | 27     | 15     | 42    |

I had interviews with six migrant parents whose children studied in urban public schools. These migrant parents had nothing to do with migrant children described above. They were selected separately. Two of the migrant parents worked in factories. Again, local government officials helped contact them. Among the other four migrant parents, three worked in markets and one worked in a hotel. They were chosen randomly while I was in the field. The interviews with migrant parents aimed to collect information on access to urban public schools (Q1.5), their attitude towards education within an exam-oriented system (Q2.1) and intergroup relations between migrant and urban families (Q3.3). The following questions were asked.

- Is it difficult to find study places in urban public schools? What happened?
- Do you think education is important?
- What are your expectations for your children in the future?
- Do you have friends who are urban residents?
- If you run into difficulties, would you ask urban residents for help?

During the fieldwork, I also interviewed the principal of College T in city H. This interviewee was not initially included in the research plan, because he did not seem to be a relevant policy actor in my research. The interview turned out to be fruitful in the sense that I was able to get some useful information relating to the local education system, the formulation of education policy, and school selection fees, due to his wide

social networks and close relationships with local government officials in the education bureaus.

#### **4.4 Collecting Secondary data**

The secondary data collected in the fieldwork could be classified into two categories: (1) legal documents and reports, (2) official statistics. As mentioned in Chapter 1, secondary data play an assisting role in the research. They help to triangulate the findings, strengthen the arguments and provide additional information to answer research questions. However, they do not independently answer any research questions.

The first category of secondary data is legal documents and reports. Legal documents refer to the texts of laws and regulations announced by Chinese government. They are public policies in textual format (Ball, 1994). Legal documents were collected from the internet, library archives and local governments. They provide information on what is stipulated in the policy for migrant children. Meanwhile, by examining these legal documents in detail, I am also able to assess the clarity and feasibility of policy goals (Chapter 3). Finally, legal documents provide information on how the government system in China is designed and how much discretionary power policy implementers have within such a system (Section 4.1).

Aside from legal documents, I collected reports produced by urban public schools. These reports provide useful information on the number of students, school events and codes of conduct in different schools. Such information enables me to get a clearer picture of what is happening in the school.

The second category of secondary data is quantitative data published by the government. I collected these data from the internet and statistical yearbooks. They were aggregated data which presented information on policy implementation at the macro level. Official government websites provided useful data for the research. I retrieved data from the following websites: official website of Ministry of Education ([www.moe.edu.cn](http://www.moe.edu.cn)), official website of Ministry of Finance ([www.mof.edu.cn](http://www.mof.edu.cn)), official website of Municipal Government of City C and official website of Municipal Government of City H. The data retrieved from the website of Ministry of Education

included: the number of teachers, students (broken down by grade, gender and age), schools and education facilities all across China. Ministry of Finance published data of total government expenditure in different sectors. The websites of municipal governments published data on local populations, economic growth, social development and government expenditure.

I also collected data from China Education and Research Network (CERNET, [www.edu.cn](http://www.edu.cn)). CERNET is the largest online education information database in China. One important function of CERNET is to provide an online service to students applying for secondary and higher education. For this reason, it stores integrated and comprehensive data and information in relation to school enrolment at different levels of education.

Statistical yearbooks were another important source of quantitative data. These data provide more detailed information on funding for education in cities C and H. The statistical yearbooks used in this study included: China Statistical Yearbooks (NBSC, 2000-2009), China Statistical Yearbooks of Education (2000-2009), Statistical Yearbooks of City C (2000-2009) and Statistical Yearbooks of City H (2000-2009). The data retrieved from these yearbooks included: education expenditure by the Chinese government, the total revenue of the Chinese government, education expenditure by municipal governments in cities C and H, infrastructure investment by municipal governments in cities C and H, public expenditure and revenue in cities C and H, revenue maintained by municipal governments in cities C and H, disposable income levels of local residents, populations with rural *hukou* in urban C and H and net migration population levels in urban C and H.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data collected via in-depth interviews and documents collected from the governments and schools. Thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998), is “a process for encoding qualitative information”, where “a theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p.4). Guest et al. (2012) summarised the general procedure of thematic

analysis.

Thematic analyses...focus on identification and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. (p.10)

Thematic analysis consisted of three stages in my research. The first stage was to transcribe in-depth interview recordings into written texts. The second stage was coding interview texts and documents. The coding of texts included two steps and was carried out using the Nvivo software package (Bazeley, 2007).

First, I read the interview texts and documents line by line and encoded every theme that was relevant to education for migrant children and policy implementation. This was executed in a fashion similar to that proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), called “open coding”.

Second, I categorised these themes into different groups. This followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) “selective coding” approach. The categorisation of themes was based on the discussion in Section 4.1. More specifically, there are two groups of themes, which include the results of policy implementation and the factors affecting policy implementation. These two groups correspond to the two issues in the main research question. The former group of themes is divided into different subgroups including funding allocation, school access, school admission criteria, student allocation, academic performance, school support and social integration of migrant children. The latter group of themes includes discretionary power, policy design, self-interested behaviour, habits, hypothecation of funding, exam-oriented education system and intergroup relations.

The third stage of thematic analysis involved interpreting the codes. With regard to the first group of codes (i.e. the results of policy implementation), the strategy during interpretation was to compare the codes in the interview texts with those in legal documents. This was to assess whether each policy goal relating to migrant children’s education policy is being effectively implemented. With regard to the second group of

codes (i.e. the factors that affect policy implementation), the aim of data analysis was to find out whether these codes had any impact on the results of policy implementation. The general strategy was to constantly compare the codes in different categories to find the patterns, associations and explanations among the themes. For example, I noted that migrant parents were different in terms of strictness towards their children's studies. After comparing migrant children whose parents were strict with those migrant children whose parents were less strict, I found that the former got better exam results. On the basis of this, I would argue that the strictness of migrant parents might affect the academic performance of migrant children (Chapter 7).

With regard to the quantitative data, regression analysis and principal component analysis (PCA) were used in this thesis. First, I built up a panel data regression model to examine the impact of local economic development and government investment on education funding for migrant children (Chapter 6). The panel data model includes both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. The main reason to use the panel data model in this thesis lies in that the analysis can be conducted in a larger sample and thus can generate less biased parameters in the results (Wooldridge, 2003). The regression analysis was undertaken using the STATA software package.

Second, I used principal component analysis to examine how school capacity, school facility and city infrastructure had changed between 2000 and 2008, and to discuss how local governments distribute the policy funding between education and business sectors (Chapter 6). The main reason to use PCA is for conciseness and convenience of reporting. School capacity, school facility and city infrastructure can be respectively measured by a number of different indicators. By using PCA, I combined these indicators into three comprehensive ones. This greatly reduced the complexity of the dataset. Meanwhile, it was also easier to report and discuss the findings based on these comprehensive indicators (Chatfield and Collins, 2000). Principal component analysis was undertaken using the Microsoft Excel and the STATA software packages.

#### **4.6 Quality Issues: Reliability and Validity**

Rigorous research is supposed to meet a set of good practical criteria (Bryman, 2004, p.24). A majority of research findings in later empirical chapters are based on

qualitative data collected via in-depth interviews, so particular focus was placed upon ensuring that qualitative methods used in the thesis are rigorous and of high quality. In general, qualitative researchers are mostly concerned with two quality issues, namely the validity and reliability of the research.

Qualitative researchers have maintained that validity is “another word for truth” (Silverman, 2010, p.275). According to Hammersley (1990), validity means the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers (p.57). This means that research findings should reflect what is happening in the field as accurately as possible. I took a set of measures in the course of data collection and analysis to improve the validity of the research (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Measures Used in the Fieldwork to Improve Validity and Reliability of the Thesis

|                    | <b>Data Collection</b>     | <b>Data Analysis</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Validity</b>    | Better Communication       | Triangulation        |
| <b>Reliability</b> | Avoiding Leading Questions | Minimum Inference    |

Regarding the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, the key issue was to improve the probability that the interviewees were telling the truth<sup>24</sup>. This is a particularly important issue when the research team was conducting interviews with government officials, principals and teachers. If these interviewees presented a lot of official lines or concealed some key facts in the interviews, the validity of the data would be severely undermined. The interviewees are likely to use official lines or conceal key facts for two reasons. First, the interviewees may aim to present themselves in the best light, either consciously or unconsciously during the course of the interviews. This would surely distort the facts. However, it may not pose serious problems to the validity of the data as long as the distortion took place at more trivial points. The second threat to validity is more serious. Interviewees might think that some of the topics are sensitive or controversial (even though this is not the case), thus feeling uncertain about the consequences of discussing what they genuinely knew. For example, the government officials might be afraid that the revelation of certain

<sup>24</sup> Before entering in field, the whole research team held discussions on the issue of validity. Every researcher in the team followed the same practice.

information would harm their political career. In this case, interviewees might give no substantial content when interviewed.

The researchers took two measures to tackle this issue. Both measures aimed at better communication with the interviewees (Left top cell, Table 4.4). The first was to let the interviewees know that the interviews would be used for academic purposes only, and that none of interviewees' identity-related information would be revealed to the public if the research findings were to be published. This was to dispel any fear or doubt that interviewees might have in participating in the interviews. The second method was to briefly talk with the interviewees about some local facts that interviewers already knew. This was to convey such a signal to the interviewees: the interviewer was aware of what was happening in reality and thus false information provided by the interviewees would be suspected and challenged.

With regard to data analysis, I used triangulation to improve the validity of the research (Right top cell, Table 4.4). According to Hammersley (1992), the validity of data is judged "on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them" (p.69). This means that the validity of findings can be improved by presenting more evidence to support them. This is the main purpose of triangulation. I used two strategies of triangulation. The first was triangulation of data sources. This refers to triangulating the findings based on qualitative data with those based on quantitative data. For example, in-depth interview data was triangulated with statistical data to strengthen the findings in relation to funding allocation (Chapter 6). The second strategy was triangulation of interviewees. For a claim or point made by the interviews, I counted the number of interviewees in the same group that made this claim or point. The more interviewees there were, the stronger the point was. Meanwhile, I also triangulated the points made by different groups of interviewees. For example, I asked principals, teachers and the students about intergroup relationships between the two groups of children (Section 4.3). This enabled me to cross-check their words and assess the validity of their points. As will be seen in later empirical chapters, I present the evidence derived from more than one group of interviewees before making the argument or arriving at conclusions.

The second quality criterion in the research is reliability. This refers to the degree of

consistency of the research if it were done by different researchers or by the same researcher on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992, p.67). A key issue in this regard is to make sure that personal values do not “contaminate” the research. In other words, the research should be conducted objectively<sup>25</sup>. To improve the reliability and objectivity of the findings, two measures were taken in the course of data collection and analysis.

First, with regard to data collection, the interviewers paid special attention not to ask leading questions (Left bottom cell, Table 4.4). The interviewees were encouraged to speak freely on any topics in the interviews. The interviewers played the role of listeners, tried to avoid imposing their own values into the discussion, and made sure that the interviewers did not interrupt the thoughts or the responses of the interviewees (Seidman, 2006, pp.85-88).

Second, with regard to data analysis, I followed the principle of minimum inference (Right bottom cell, Table 3.4) suggested by Seale (1999). Minimum inference requires that the reporting of research findings should be “as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say..., rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting” (p.148). Silverman (2010) also pointed out that “...detailed data presentations which make minimal inferences are always preferable to researchers’ presentation of their own summaries of their data” (p.287). Following this principle, when reporting research findings, I will quote the exact words said by the interviewees as evidence supporting the arguments of the thesis. The purpose of this is not only to avoid too much reconstruction or reinterpretation of reality, but also to let the readers have a clearer view of what was happening in the field.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Two ethical issues were given particular attention in the research. The first was

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that there is still a lot of debate revolving around whether reliability or objectivity is a useful standard to qualitative research. Some scholars argued that this criterion is only relevant to the research based on a positivist view which assumes a singular reality (Richards, 2005, pp.191-192). Though using mixed methods, this thesis takes the position of an existence of a singular reality. In this sense, reliability or objectivity is a very important issue to the quality of the thesis.

informed consent. The research team made sure that the interviewees participated in the interviews of their own will and had been given full information about the research. The interviews started with the interviewers introducing themselves. Then the interviewers explained to the interviewees that the interviews were to be used for academic purposes only and the interviewees would be anonymised if the research was to be published. After the interviewees confirmed their willingness to be interviewed, the interviewer briefly stated the outline of the research and told the interviewees that the interviews would be recorded by digital recorder. If the interviewees did not have any objection, the interviews formally started. In the course of the interviews, the interviewees could withdraw at any time if they wanted to. None of the interviewees withdrew from the interview. After finishing all of the questions, the interviewers asked the interviewees whether they wanted to add anything else. If not, the interviewers announced that the interviews were over and expressed the gratitude to the interviewees for participating in the research.

The informed consent of children in the research is especially important. According to the ethics guidance of LSE, if the research projects involve interviews with children under the age of 16, the researchers are supposed to seek informed consent from children's parents or guardians (LSE, 2003). As mentioned in Section 4.3, I did not contact the children for interviews directly, but asked school teachers to contact them. The teachers phoned children's parents and explain in detail the main purposes of the research project. If the parents agreed that their children could participate in the research, these children were then invited to schools for interviews. These procedures were followed to ensure informed consent of both parents and school teachers before the children were being interviewed.

The second issue is anonymity. At the data collection stage, anonymity is a part of the procedure to gain informed consent. At the data analysis stage, I strictly ensured anonymity so that the research would not bring about any adverse impacts for the interviewees. As shown earlier, the location of the fieldwork had been anonymised. The names of the cities where the fieldwork took places were not to be revealed to the public. Moreover, all the interviewees are also anonymised. Each interviewee was assigned with a code in the course of data analysis (Appendix 1). As will be shown in

later chapters, it is the codes rather than the names of the interviewees that are reported in the findings.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the methodology of the thesis. The data needed to answer the research questions is based on the conceptual discussion in Chapter 1 and theoretical discussion in Chapter 3. The thesis adopts mixed approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Sources of evidence include semi-structured interviews, government documents, school reports and statistical data. Since semi-structured interviews were a more suitable method to answer the research questions, qualitative data constitutes the main source of evidence in the thesis. Government documents, school reports and statistical data play a supporting role in the thesis and do not independently answer any research questions.

The fieldwork took place in cities C and H. In total, 69 interviews were conducted in the two cities. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees. There were six groups of interviewees including government officials, school principals, school teachers, migrant parents, migrant children and urban children. The interviews with adult interviewees normally took between 1 and 2.5 hours, whereas the interviews with children interviewees took 0.5 to 1 hour on average. I conducted interviews with teachers, migrant parents, migrant children and urban children. The leader of the research team conducted interviews with government officials and principals. I attended these interviews but did not ask questions.

I used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret qualitative data. The data analysis process consisted of three stages including transcription, coding and data interpretation. I used regression analysis and principal component analysis to analyse quantitative data.

Special attention was paid to data quality and the ethical practices in the research. I sought better communication in the interviews and carried out data triangulation to improve the validity of the research. I also tried to avoid asking leading questions and maintained minimum levels of inference in order to improve the reliability of the

research. The thesis followed the principles of informed consent and anonymity to ensure that the research was being conducted ethically.

## **Chapter 5 Room for Discretion, Policy Goals and Implementation of Migrant Children's Education Policy**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to examine the impact that room for discretion and the design of policy goals have on the implementation of migrant children's education policy. As discussed in Chapter 3, these two preconditional factors are thought to have a significant effect on policy implementation. Room for implementer discretion is also called the discretionary power of implementers. It refers to the space or scope that policy implementers have to make their own decisions when implementing policy. Implementers can exercise discretionary power due to two reasons. First, higher level governments permit or expect them to do so. Second, those higher level governments do not have detailed information on policy implementation and thus are unable to give implementers instructions on everything that is happening in the course of policy implementation. Room for discretion will undermine policy implementation, because implementers tend to take advantage of discretionary power to pursue their own goals or interests (Section 3.1).

The basic characteristics of policy goals can also affect policy implementation. Existing literature suggests that the clarity and feasibility of policy goals have a significant impact on the results of implementation. First, if policy goals are not clear, implementers may reinterpret them to suit their own needs. This often results in non-implementation of the policy. Second, if a new policy aims to bring about too much change to existing policies, the goals of this policy are usually not feasible. In this case, it would be difficult for different parties to reach a consensus and therefore the policies are often not effectively implemented (Section 3.1).

On the basis of these theories, this chapter addresses the following two questions:

- How much discretionary power do policy implementers have in China and what is the implication of this for implementation?
- Are policy goals relating to education for migrant children clear and feasible?

And what is the implication of this for the implementation of migrant children's education policy?

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section addresses the first question. It examines inter-governmental relationships in China and the discretionary powers of policy implementers within these relationships. The second section addresses the second question. It presents a systematic review of migrant children's education policy and analyses whether policy goals relating to education for migrant children are clear and feasible. The evidence presented in this chapter was gathered from legal documents collected during fieldwork (Chapter 4).

## **5.1 Inter-Governmental Relationships, Discretion and Policy Implementation**

This section discusses inter-governmental relationships in China and their implications for policy implementation. The importance of inter-governmental relationships is that they define how much discretionary power policy implementers can have within the Chinese government system. This section is divided into four subsections. The first three subsections will discuss inter-governmental relationships from three dimensions including administrative relationships, financial relationships and personnel relationships. The last subsection will discuss the impact of inter-governmental relationships on policy implementation. The discussion will be focused on central control and local discretion derived from those three types of relationship.

### **5.1.1 Administrative Relationship**

The term "administrative relationship" refers to the roles and functions of various government agencies when administrative directives are transmitted within the government system. It defines whether one government agency has the authority to issue directives to, or is supposed to take directives from, another agency. According to *the Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, the government system in China is made up of five levels of governments (NPC, 2005b, Article 30). Apart from the central government led by the State Council, there are four layers of local governments: i.e. provincial governments, municipal (prefecture) governments, county governments, and township governments.

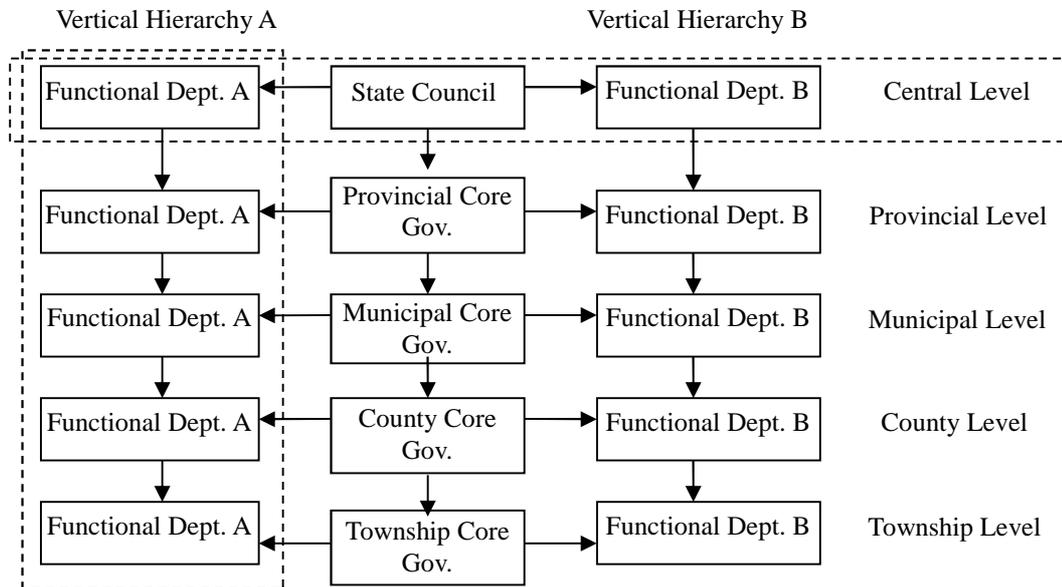
As shown in Figure 5.1 below, the government structure in China has two dimensions: the vertical dimension (*tiaotiao xitong*) and the horizontal dimension (*kuaikuai xitong*). First, each horizontal level of government is homogeneous in design and has the same structure, consisting of a core government<sup>26</sup> and its functional departments. For example, there is the Ministry of Education (ME) at the central level as one of the functional departments of the State Council. Correspondingly, there are bureaus of education affiliated with core governments at each level of local government. Second, each functional department vertically organizes its own hierarchy within the government system. For example, the ME directly controls the education bureaus of provincial governments, which in turn issue directives to the education bureaus of municipal governments, and so on.

The concept of government rank (*zhengfu jibie*) (Jin et al., 2005) is very important within the Chinese government system. The core governments and their functional departments constitute a web-shaped organizational system where administrative directives flow from higher to lower rank governments (Figure 5.1). The State Council (SC) is located at the top of the government hierarchy and is the unchallenged order-emitting body. It directly issue directives to both its affiliated functional departments (e.g. the Ministry of Education) and the core governments at the provincial level. Below that, the core governments at each level issue directives to the functional departments at their own level and the core governments at lower levels (Figure 5.1). This process of transmitting administrative directives from higher to lower levels of governments constitutes the process of implementing policy. In principle, when the contents of administrative directives and policy are settled, the decisions are final. Apart from certain exceptional circumstances, lower rank governments must accept the directives unconditionally. Lower rank governments are not allowed to lodge any complaints or negotiate with superior governments. In other words, lower level governments must unconditionally implement the policy formulated by superior governments (Zhu, 2002).

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<sup>26</sup> The core government is also known as the People's Government (*renmin zhengfu*), whereas functional departments are normally known as "*zhineng bumen*".

Figure 5.1 Government Structure in China



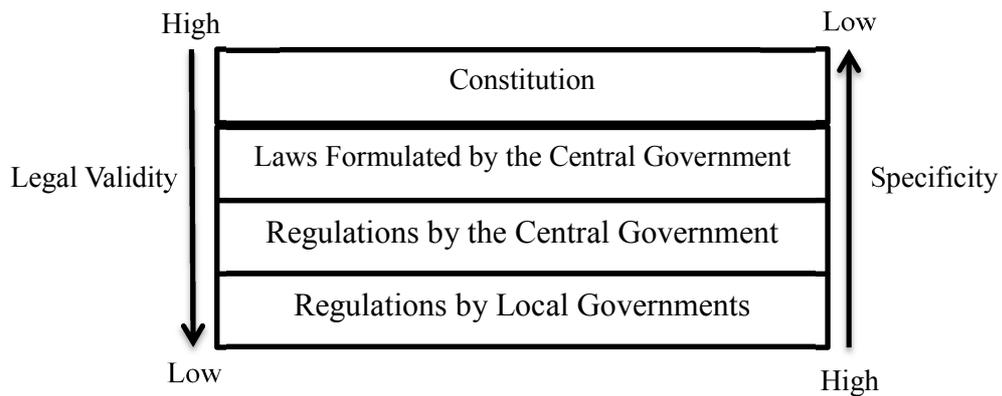
Note: The directions of arrows are the directions of government directives.

Administrative directives are transmitted in the form of legal documents. There are two types of legal documents being transmitted within the Chinese government system. The first type is often known as “red heading documents” (*hongtou wenjian*). These documents have red headings on the top and stamps at the end of the documents, indicating that they are drafted by the government. Any government agency can make red heading documents. The documents give very specific directives to the staff within the government system and are not published to the public.

The second type of legal documents is legislation which includes the Constitution, laws and regulations. In contrast to red heading documents which are “internal rules” in the government, legislation is published to the public via newspapers, booklets or official government websites. Not all government bodies are entitled to make or enact legislation. The supreme legislative organization in China is National People’s Congress (NPC, 2000, Article 7). NPC was originally founded by the Communist Party and a majority of the positions within the NPC are held by Communist Party members. In this sense, it is the Communist Party, and not the NPC per se, that steers the overarching legislative process and governs the whole country (Zhu, 2002).

The NPC is responsible for drafting, revising and enacting the Constitution and vows to comply with the Constitution. However, because the Constitution only set out the most fundamental principles in governing the country, its practical usefulness in daily public administration is limited. In comparison, various formal laws formulated by the NPC are more relevant to the political, social and economic life of the public.

Figure 5.2 Legal Validity and Legislation Specificity



The State Council and its functional departments are required to implement the laws formulated by the NPC. Meanwhile, they are also granted with separate powers to legislate by the NPC. However, their legislation is lower in legal validity (*falv xiaoli*) than the Constitution and the formal laws in the sense that they are not allowed to be in conflict with the latter and are usually entitled “Notification” (*tongzhi*), “Recommendation” (*yijian*) or “Regulation” (*guifan*). If they are found to be conflicting, it is the rules stipulated in the Constitution and the formal laws that should be regarded as valid and thus must be followed (NPC, 2000, Article 78).

At the local level, provincial governments are granted with legislative powers. The municipal governments of big cities can also develop regulations. Because provincial and municipal governments have more local information and knowledge, the legislation is more specific and problem-oriented (Figure 5.2). But the legal validity of provincial legislation is the lowest of all the legislation mentioned so far (NPC, 2000, Article 63).

The government bodies mentioned above form a cluster of public organizations that

jointly formulate laws and regulations which are the underlying textual guidelines of public policy. As individual rules, they are written references for rewarding and sanctioning individual behaviour and thus constitute a complicated web that establishes, adjusts and even controls public order. As collective discourse, they represent the guiding principles that the central government adheres to in the course of public administration<sup>27</sup>.

### **5.1.2 Financial Relationship**

The financial relationship defines the extent to which central or local governments can decide how to spend public money. The financial relationship depends on the general workings of a country's fiscal system. The financial system in post-reform China is characterized by fiscal decentralisation (Hussein et al., 1991, p.146). Both central and local governments can make their own decisions as to how to spend public money.

The decentralised fiscal system was first established in the *Notification on Executing the Fiscal System of Dividing Revenue and Expenditure and Managing at Different Levels* published by the State Council in 1980. Local governments were granted the power to manage local budgets at their own discretion. Under the decentralised fiscal system, central and local governments shared public revenues. To be more specific, revenues collected from state-owned enterprises (SOEs), duties and other tax revenues, were kept by central government as fixed central revenue, while all the other revenues streams were kept by local governments. With regard to expenditure, apart from national military and defence expenses which were undertaken by central government, most of the other responsibilities including capital investment, education, public health, social security, etc. were jointly shouldered by the central and local governments (SC, 1980). The decentralised fiscal system is also known as "the fiscal contracting system", since the division of revenues and expense responsibilities were reviewed and revised every five years, just like renewable short-term contracts (Zhou, 2006).

The *1980 notification* was followed by two additional regulations issued in 1985 and

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, since 1978, the Chinese government announced a series of principles that were later reflected in laws and regulations at different levels, such as adhering to the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of Communist Party of China and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (also known as four cardinal principles) and persevere in the economic reforms and opening up policy.

1988 respectively. These regulations did not change the fundamental idea behind the fiscal contracting system, but just further elaborated the way in which central and local governments divided public revenue and expenditure.

The results of fiscal decentralization were twofold. First, it succeeded in stimulating local economies. Since local revenue depended heavily on local economic performance, local government officials were very keen to explore and design new ways to promote local economic growth (Chapter 6). Meanwhile, decentralisation changed the fiscal balance between central and local governments. In particular, the proportion of central revenue had shrunk dramatically since the 1980s (Lin et al, 1997; Zhang, 1997).

In response to the shrinking of central revenue, the State Council published the *Decisions on Executing the Tax-sharing System* in 1993. The reform did not dictate too many alterations in terms of the division of spending responsibilities between the central and local governments. The most fundamental change was the rearrangement of the division of revenues. After the reform, central government started to keep some public revenue which had previously been kept by local governments.

Two points are worth noting from the discussion above. First, local governments are responsible for collecting the taxes as public revenue which is to be split between central and local governments. In this case, local governments have their own fiscal budgets and can therefore make decisions about how to spend that money. Second, even though local governments have the financial autonomy to spend the money in their budgets, the limits of the fiscal budgets are decided by central government. Central government can, by means of legislation, define how to split public revenues with local governments. As demonstrated above, the central government can alter the degree of decentralisation of the fiscal system (i.e. the proportion of public revenue kept by local governments) whenever it thinks it necessary. This means that the financial autonomy of local governments to some extent is still under the control of central government (Zhou, 2006).

### 5.1.3 Personnel Appointment

In China, all government agencies, as important actors of policy implementation, are made up of civil servants. The civil servants are not independent of political parties and a majority of them are members of the Communist Party.

At each level of government, civil servants are divided into two categories: leader staff (cadres or government officials) and non-leader staff (NPC, 2005a, Article 16). For civil servants who are members of the Communist Party, promotion from non-leader to leader staff, or from lower to higher levels, should follow the procedures set out in *the Regulations on Promotion and Appointment of Cadres in the Communist Party and the Government* (CCPCC, 2005). In principle, candidates are recommended by a panel of Communist Party members at the same level of government, before they are assessed and selected by the Committee of the Communist Party at higher levels (CCPCC, 2005, Article 10 and Article 20) .

The most striking difference of official (i.e. cadre staff) selection in China from countries with democratic governments lies in the fact that Chinese officials are appointed by central or higher level governments, rather than elected by voters in the constituencies. Satisfying the conditions set out in the *Cadres Promotion Regulations* is very important, because it is the yardstick for candidate assessment and thus could directly lead to promotion and appointment. The first condition of the appointment of civil servant and the promotion of government officials is that they must persistently work to implement the policies formulated by the Communist Party and central government.

...[Cadres are supposed to] decisively implement the basic line and various strategies and policy of the Community Party, be determined to execute reform and opening up policies, devote themselves to state modernisation... (CCPCC, 2005, Article 6.2)

On the basis of this criterion, candidates are assessed and selected through their work achievements. *Ceteris paribus*, the candidates who are considered as most competent in work will be promoted or appointed (CCPCC, 2005, Article 49, 51).

#### **5.1.4 Local Discretion, Central Control and Policy Implementation in China**

Policy implementation is affected by how much discretionary power implementers have. A concept that is closely related to local discretion is central control. Indeed, the two concepts are two dimensions of the same issue. By tightening central control, the central government can better steer the behaviour of local governments and make sure the policy is implemented as planned (Burke, 1987, p.223). On the other hand, the discretionary power of local governments tends to compromise central control and result in policy objectives not being achieved. This is especially likely to happen when central and local governments have conflicting objectives (Chapter 3). The results of policy implementation thus heavily depend upon the relative balance between central control and local discretion, both of which are shaped by the inter-governmental relationships discussed above.

Both the government structure and personnel appointment system aim to strengthen central control and reduce discretion. The functional departments of central government organize their own hierarchy in local government. This means that central government can monitor the policy implementation of functional departments at the local level. Because the former can directly issue directives to the latter, the central government can require local functional departments to implement policy without the interference of local core governments.

Personnel appointments are another important instrument to control the process of policy implementation. The superior level governments promote or appoint civil servants who effectively implement policy. The implications of this are twofold. First, the civil servants must be supportive towards the policy goals of the superior government and willing to implement the policy. In other words, the civil servants that support the policy goals of the superior government are selected into the government agencies, while unsupportive civil servants are not involved in policy implementation in the first place. Second, the civil servants should be competent at implementing policies. This can make sure the government agencies are well-functioning when implementing policies.

Discretionary power of local governments derives from low specificity of legislation,

financial autonomy and top-down personnel appointments. The laws and regulations drafted by the central government are the lowest in specificity. This gives local governments plenty of freedom to further interpret central government policy. As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, central government policies related to education for migrant children are very ambiguous. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain what the exact policy objectives are. In this case, local governments can easily add new regulations to existing policies or explain existing policies in a way that is in their own interests. If these added or reinterpreted policies are in contradiction with central government policies, policy implementation can be severely undermined.

The Chinese government is politically centralised but financially decentralised. Local governments have great freedom to decide how to spend the public revenues. Such financial autonomy at the local level seems to be especially problematic to policy implementation within the Chinese web-shaped government structure. If the central government requires local government agencies to implement a policy, but the core governments at local level refuse to allocate the funding needed for policy implementation, this policy will not be implemented.

Top-down appointment of government officials aims to tighten central control and improve effective policy implementation. Paradoxically, top-down appointment also gives policy implementers room for local discretion. The main problem is that top-down monitoring is very costly. The central government needs to mobilise a lot of resources in order to find out whether policy implementers are taking actions and making decisions as required. For example, special inspection teams have to be established to visit local governments and assess whether local governments implement the policies. In order to carry out these inspections, the central government has to pay inspectors' wages and their travelling costs. China's government structure is very complicated and the territory of China is vast. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for central government to effectively monitor policy implementation at local level. If local governments do not implement policy and the central government remains unaware of this, local governments may escape sanctions. This implies that local governments sometimes can choose not to take orders from central government if they do not want to. Put differently, local governments can have considerable room for

discretion in the course of implementation.

## **5.2 Policy Goals of Education for Migrant Children and Policy Implementation**

This section presents a review and analysis of migrant children's education policy. The first subsection reviews the pre-2001 policies, while the second subsection reviews the post-2001 policies. The year 2001 is treated as a splitting point in the history of migrant children policies, because the attitude of the central government towards education for migrant children changed significantly after that year. The two periods represents totally different policy orientations for the central government. On the basis of this policy review, the third subsection analyses the main features of migrant children's education policy and discusses their implications for policy implementation.

### **5.2.1 Central Government Policy before 2001**

In response to the widespread concern that migrant children could not receive equal education in cities or that they had no access to urban public schools, the ME published the *Measures of Education for School-age Migrant Children in Cities (Trial Version)* in 1996. This was the first legislation aiming to tackle the issue of education for migrant children (Table 5.1). Two years later, in 1998, the ME and the MPS jointly published the *Temporary Measures of Education for Migrant Children*.

The general stance of these two regulations towards education for migrant children was both restrictive and discriminatory. First, the central government required local governments to closely monitor and control the outflow and inflow of children in order to minimise the number of migrant children in cities. "Local governments should build up a strict administration system monitoring migrant children. A child who has legal guardian(s) in the *hukou* zone where that child's *hukou* was originally registered must be educated in that *hukou* zone"(ME, 1996, Article 6).

Table 5.1 Laws and Regulations Relating to Migrant Children's Education

| Year | Publishing Agencies                                      | Document Name  |
|------|--|--|
| 1996 | Ministry of Education                                    | Measures of Education for School-age Migrant Children in Cities (Trial Version)        |
| 1998 | Ministry of Education and<br>Ministry of Public Security | Temporary Measures of Education for Migrant Children                                   |
| 2001 | State Council  | Decision on Reform and Development of Preliminary Education                            |
| 2003 | State Council  | Notification on Further Improving Management and Service Related to Migrants           |
| 2003 | State Council  | Advice on Improving Education of Rural to Urban Migrant Children                       |
| 2003 | State Council  | Decision on Further Strengthening Rural Education Tasks                                |
| 2003 | Ministry of Finance                                      | Notification on the Issue of Incorporating Migrants Management Funding into the Budget |
| 2004 | Ministry of Finance                                      | Notification on Regulation of Charging Fees and Promotion of Farmers' income           |
| 2005 | Ministry of Education                                    | Some Advice on Further Promoting Balanced Development of Compulsory Education          |
| 2006 | State Council  | Some Advice on Solving the Problems related to Rural to Urban Migrants                 |
| 2006 | Ministry of Education                                    | Implementing Advice on "Some Advice on Solving the Problems related to Migrants"       |
| 2006 | Ministry of Education                                    | Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China                                 |
| 2008 | State Council  | Notification of State Council on Tasks of Tuition Waiver in Preliminary Education      |
| 2010 | State Council  | National Guidelines for Medium and Long term Reform and Development of Education       |

Sources: Official websites of the State Council, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance

Second, the central government required local governments to offer study places for the children who were already in cities, but these children were supposed to be in a separate education system. In other words, these children could study in cities, but they would be treated differently from urban children in local schools. For example, the central government suggested local schools put migrant children in separate classes and invite retired teachers to teach them (ME, 1996, Article 12; ME and MPS, 1998, Article 10). The central government also suggested that local schools mark the exam papers of migrant children separately (ME, 1996, Article 19). This means that the academic performance of migrant children would not be counted as a part of the overall performance of local schools taking in these children. Finally, local schools were permitted to charge school selection fees from migrant children, which were not required in the case of urban children (ME, 1996, Article 15; ME and MPS, 1998, Article 11).

The central government did not provide funding for schools which recruited migrant children. Rather the central government called for migrant schools to share the financial burden with public schools. In particular, the central government encouraged various social groups to establish migrant schools and recruit migrant children.

If approved by local governments, the enterprises, social groups, other social organizations and individual citizens can establish schools...that recruit migrant children only. The founders of these schools are responsible of raising funds. (ME, 1996, Article 11)

...Local governments should support the establishment of private migrant schools...The criteria for establishing such schools could be lowered...it is permitted to use...rented houses as school buildings. (ME and MPS, 1998, Article 9)

### **5.2.2 Central Government Policy after 2001**

The general policy orientation towards migrant children started to change after 2001. In 2001, the State Council (SC, 2001a) published the *Decisions on Reform and Development of Basic Education*. This regulation is an outline of the general policy goals of the basic education system at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular, it set out to tackle the issue of educational inequality (Chapter 2). It was stated at the beginning of the regulation that: “the policy objectives of universalising basic

education and eliminating illiteracy have been achieved [in the last three decades]...but basic education is not making balanced development ...and the tasks of reform in basic education are still challenging”. In other words, the government thought that the issues in relation to the universalisation of basic education and the elimination of illiterates would not be a major problem, and it was time for the policy to turn to a new direction and focus on the issue of educational inequality.

The *2001 Decisions* stated that the reform on education for migrant children was part of government efforts to promote equal education. As a matter of fact, the regulation reflected a 180-degree turn in attitude regarding education for migrant children. The attitude of the central government changed from discrimination and prohibition to equalization and inclusion. This is demonstrated in the general principle set out by the government to address education for migrant children: “...the issue of education for migrant children should be principally administered by host governments, and migrant children should principally go to public schools...so that migrant students’ right to education can be legally protected” (SC, 2001a, Article 12). This principle was reiterated in later regulations and widely known as the principle of “two principals” (*liangweizhu*) in the literature (Zhou, 2006, 2007; Qu and Wang, 2008).

The overall principle in the *2001 Decisions* in relation to education for migrant children was summarised in only one sentence, but its importance should not be underestimated. First, it clarified that migrant children had the right to education in urban areas. As noted earlier, migrant students’ rights to education in cities were not recognized by the government before 2001. Urban public schools could refuse to accept them as they wished. But it would be against the law if these schools continued to do so after 2001.

Second, the *2001 Decisions* clarified that the host governments<sup>28</sup> (*liurudi zhengfu*) should assume the responsibility for providing education to migrant children. Before 2001, the responsibility of implementing migrant children’s education policy was not clearly defined. Neither host governments nor home governments<sup>29</sup> clearly knew what

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<sup>28</sup> The host governments refer to the local governments which received migrant children.

<sup>29</sup> The home governments refer to the local governments where migrant children originally come from.

they were supposed to do. The regulations required home governments to strictly monitor the migration of children to cities. But because there were no sanctions for home governments if they failed to control the migration of children, these regulations were poorly enforced. Meanwhile, because home governments were not doing their job to control the migration of children, host governments were not willing to take the responsibility of providing education to migrant children either (Qu and Wang, 2008). The result was that many children migrated to cities but found they could not attend urban public schools (Chapter 2). The *2001 Decisions* clearly defined that it was the responsibility of host governments in cities to provide education to migrant children. The implication of this is that if host governments failed to assume their responsibilities of taking in migrant children, they were violating the *Compulsory Education Law* (NPC, 1986) and would be sanctioned in accordance with the *Implementation Measures of Compulsory Education Law* (SC, 1992, Article 38).

In 2003, the State Council published the *Notification on Further Improving Management and Services Related to Migrants*. On the basis of reiterating the principle of “two principals”, the regulation required that local schools treat migrant and urban children equally in school admissions. “The host governments should take various measures to make sure migrant children can study in full-time urban public schools, and the school admission criteria should be the same as those of urban children” (SC, 2003a, Article 6).

In the same year, the State Council published the *Advice on Improving Education of Rural to Urban Migrant Children*. This is the only regulation so far which exclusively addressed the issue of education for migrant children. Apart from emphasising the principle of “two principals”, the regulation had three other main themes. First, the regulation required that local schools treat urban and migrant children equally when charging fees (SC, 2003b, Article 6). Second, the regulation suggested local schools pay more attention to the psychological issues faced by migrant children and help those children who might have difficulties in studies and in adjusting to urban life. “Local schools should provide good education to migrant children...[,] keep in frequent contact with migrant parents and get to know the psychological, academic and daily needs of migrant children, help migrant children overcome psychological

obstacles and enable them to adjust to the new study environment as soon as possible” (SC, 2003b, Article 4). Finally, the regulation clarified how to finance education for migrant children. It asked local governments to “arrange some funding from the education surtax<sup>30</sup> to provide compulsory education for migrant children” (SC, 2003b, Article 5).

The *Some Advice on Solving the Problems related to Rural to Urban Migrants* published by the State Council in 2006 further elaborated on the financing of education for migrant children. It was suggested that local governments “should allocate funding in accordance with the number of migrant children studying in urban public schools” (SC, 2006, Article 21). Equally important, the *2006 Some Advice* also required local schools to treat urban and migrant children equally in school management (SC, 2006, Article 21). In particular, migrant children should enjoy the same status as urban children. Local schools were not allowed to place migrant children in separate classes or assess the examination results of migrant children separately as they had done before 2001.

The new *Compulsory Education Law* enacted in 2006 did not address the issue of education for migrant children in particular, but it did nonetheless have important implications for this issue. As noted in Chapter 2, the new *Compulsory Education Law* stated that compulsory education would be totally free after 2006. Because the *2003 Advice* required local schools to treat migrant and urban children equally in charging fees, this means that urban education would also be totally free to migrant children. Meanwhile, the *2006 Compulsory Education Law* cancelled the entrance examinations to junior secondary education. Junior secondary schools were not allowed to use examinations to select children (Article, 12). The *2003 Notification* (SC, 2003a) required local schools to apply equal criteria in school admissions. This means that urban public schools were not allowed to use examinations to select migrant children.

### **5.2.3 Analysing Migrant Children’s Education policy**

This subsection analyses the policy goals of migrant children and discusses their

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<sup>30</sup> The definition of the education surtax and its implications for policy implementation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

implications for policy implementation. It should be stressed that the analysis and discussion in this section focuses on the policies announced after 2001. The reason for this relates to the legal validity of the policy. According to the *Legislation Law of People's Republic of China*, The laws and regulations announced later have higher legal validity (NPC, 2000, Article 83). As noted in the previous subsection, the policy goals after 2001 were totally different from or even contradicted those before 2001. The policy goals after 2001 had higher legal validity. This means that those policy goals before 2001 were automatically out of date if they contradicted those after 2001.

The general objective of education policy for migrant children is to make sure that migrant children can receive the same education as urban children. Such a holistic policy goal can be divided into three sub-goals. The first concerns sufficient funding and access to schools for migrant children. Local governments are supposed to provide sufficient funding so that the majority of migrant children can be educated in urban public schools.

The second sub-goal relates to equal opportunities in education. Migrant children are supposed to be accepted and treated in the same way as urban children. The schools are not allowed to hold entrance examinations or charge school selection fees. They are also prohibited from teaching migrant children in separate classes or from marking their examination papers separately. The policy does not have the expectation of equal academic performance between migrant and urban children. However, it does demand that the schools educate migrant children well, find out if they are having any difficulties in their studies and help them out whenever necessary. The implication is that central government policy aims to reduce the gaps in academic achievement between migrant and urban children. In other words, the central government wanted to promote the equalisation of academic achievement in urban public schools.

The last sub-goal is concerned with social integration. The central government requires urban public schools to provide help to migrant children so that they are able to integrate themselves into the new study environment. Social integration policy aims to ensure that migrant and urban children have the same educational experience. The key issue is that educational experience is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills

(the academic experience) but also includes developing a healthy personality and acceptable values, adopting good behavioural habits and learning how to actively interact with the social environment and other people (the non-academic experience) (Chitty, 2009). Social integration policy is more concerned with the non-academic than the academic educational experiences of migrant children.

It should be noted that different policy goals were not given balanced attention by the central government. Some were repeated in different laws and regulations, while others were only mentioned briefly. For example, the *2001 Decisions* first established the principle of “two principals” which was concerned with access to urban public schools. In the laws and regulations published in the following years, the principle of “two principals” was frequently reiterated. Equal opportunity policy and funding policy also regularly reappeared in different laws and regulations. The *2003 notification* equated equal education with equal school admissions. In later policies, school admissions, teaching activities and student assessments were also included in the concept of equal opportunity in education. The *2003 notification* asked host governments to provide funding for the education of migrant children. This point was reiterated and further elaborated in the *2003 Advice* and again in the *2006 Advice*. In comparison, the policy goal related to social integration appeared only in the *2003 Advice*. It was neither reiterated nor further elaborated in later policies.

The discussion in Chapter 3 suggested that the implementation of policy is affected by the “basic characteristics” of policy goals. More specifically, policy goals should be feasible and clear, to ensure that the policy can be effectively implemented. With regard to migrant children’s education policy, the policy goals are neither feasible nor clear.

First, the policies after 2001 represented a big change compared with the pre-2001 policies. The central government totally changed its attitude towards education for migrant children. This reduces the feasibility of achieving policy goals and is problematic for policy implementation. When policy goals change too much, it is very difficult for different policy actors to reach a consensus in policy implementation. Meanwhile, too much change in policy goals also introduces a lot of uncertainty into

policy implementation. Both uncertainty and a lack of consensus may result in the non-implementation of policy (Chapter 3). With regard to migrant children's education policy, local governments may not agree with an inclusive attitude towards education for migrant children and thus refuse to implement the policy. Or local governments may be worried about uncertainties and thus choose not to implement the policy.

Second, many policy goals are not clear. For example, in the principle of "two principals", the central government policy required local governments and urban public schools to assume the principal responsibility of providing education to migrant children. However, there remains debate over the meaning of the term "principal". Exactly how many migrant children are supposed to be enrolled by urban public schools? What is the proportion of migrant children in urban public schools? The central government has not clearly answered these questions. When policy goals are not clear, local governments and urban public schools have the chance to reinterpret the policy goals to suit their own interests and goals. This may result in the non-implementation of migrant children's education policy.

Apart from being infeasible and unclear, another problem with the central government policy remains. It can be argued that the policy goals are generally set in a way which is less decisive and mandatory. First, the majority of laws and regulations reviewed above were titled as "advice" or "notification". In some cases, the central government simply made recommendations as to how to address the issue of education for migrant children at the local level. Second, the incentive for effective policy implementation is not strong enough. The central government required local governments to take specific measures to achieve the policy goals. However, there were no sanctions or rewards attached to these policy goals. If local governments failed to follow the requirements or failed to achieve the policy goals, there are no negative consequences for them.

Being soft in policy goals may bring about non-implementation of the policy. It was suggested in Chapter 3 that individuals make decisions on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis. The implication of this is that local governments and urban public schools will be more likely to implement those "beneficial" policies. The policies attached to high rewards or sanctions will be prioritised in implementation, because policy

implementers want to reap the benefits and avoid the sanctions. Migrant children's education policy with no sanctions or rewards attached may not be taken seriously by local governments and urban public schools in the course of implementation.

Before concluding this chapter, I must stress again that the discussion in this chapter is based on the documentary evidence collected during fieldwork and focuses upon the two preconditional factors affecting policy implementation. It only analyses the possible results of policy implementation but does not examine what is actually happening in practice. More specifically, it simply points out that implementer discretion within intergovernmental relationships in China, and the problems with policy goals, leave the possibility of non-implementation wide open. As for the actual process and results of policy implementation, they will be addressed in the following three chapters.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed implementer discretion within intergovernmental relationships in China and the policy goals of migrant children's education policy. They are the preconditional factors and have important implications for the implementation of migrant children's education policy. Implementer discretion arises out of intergovernmental relationships in China. This chapter discussed inter-governmental relationships from three dimensions including administrative relationships, financial relationships and personnel appointments.

The government system in China is characterised by a web-shaped structure. The administrative directives are transmitted through two channels. The functional departments transmit administrative directives vertically, whereas the local governments transmit administrative directives horizontally. Both the central and provincial governments can send out directives via legislation. The legislation enacted by the central government is higher in legal validity, but lower in specificity.

The fiscal system in China is characterised by decentralization. Local governments collect taxes and turn in some of them to the central government. The central government determines how much tax revenue local governments should turn in and

how much tax revenue local governments can keep. Local governments are able to decide on the uses of tax revenues that they are able to keep.

Government officials in China are appointed by the higher-level governments. The people who want to work for the government or the government officials who want to be promoted in the government system have to compete with other candidates and demonstrate that they meet a series of criteria set out by the superior governments. One important criterion of appointment and promotion is that the officials must effectively implement the policies set out by the superior governments.

The three dimensions of the inter-governmental relationships have different implications for implementer discretion and policy implementation. The web-shaped government structure in China serves the purpose of tightening central control, which facilitates effective implementation. However, because the administrative directives of central government are always low in specificity, local governments can exercise discretionary power to reinterpret these directives. The reinterpretation of orders may compromise effective implementation. The tax sharing system grants local governments discretionary powers which may undermine effective policy implementation. Personnel promotion aims to tighten central control and thus facilitate effective policy implementation. However, because it is impossible to fully monitor the actions and decisions of local governments, such a top-down appointment system also gives implementers plenty of space to exercise discretionary powers.

The first regulation addressing education for migrant children appeared in 1996. The general attitude of the central government before 2001 was both prohibitive and discriminatory. Migration of children was controlled and discouraged by the central government. Migrant children often could not receive the same education as urban children.

Migrant children's education policy after 2001 represented a complete U-turn. The overarching objective of post-2001 policies was to promote the educational equality of migrant children in urban public schools. This was in line with the broader education policy strategy set out by the central government at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The policy goals relating to education for migrant children are threefold. First, local governments should provide sufficient funding so that a majority of migrant children are able to attend urban public schools. Second, local schools should apply equal admission criteria, teach migrant and urban children in the same classes and help reduce the academic gap between migrant and urban children. Finally, urban public schools should provide support to migrant children so that these children can adjust to the new study environment as quickly as possible.

Migrant children's education policy is not well-designed. The policy goals are infeasible (i.e. too much change of policy goals), unclear and soft. These three characteristics may lead to non-implementation of the policy. First, infeasible goals may lead to local governments and urban public school disagreeing with policy implementation. Too much change of policy goals may also introduce uncertainty into implementation. Local governments and urban public schools may be unwilling to implement the policy in the face of such uncertainty. Second, unclear goals give implementers the opportunity to reinterpret these goals to suit their own interests. This might also lead to non-implementation of migrant children's education policy. Finally, there are no strong rewards and sanctions attached to the policy. The implication of this is that the implementers may not be motivated to implement migrant children's education policy or may first give priority to other policies.

## **Chapter 6 Funding, Access to Urban Public Schools, Policy and Implementation**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the implementation of sufficient funding and school access policy (Chapter 1). As discussed in Chapter 5, central government requires local government to provide sufficient funding so that a majority of migrant children can attend urban public schools. There are two issues at play in this policy. First, central government does not provide any funding for the education of migrant children. Local governments are responsible for providing all the money needed to implement this policy (SC, 2006, Article 21). Education surtax is supposed to be the main source of policy funding (SC, 2003b, Article 5). Second, local governments and schools should make sure that a majority of migrant children can go to urban public schools rather than migrant schools (SC, 2001, Article 12; SC, 2003a, Article 6; SC, 2003b, Article 2).

This chapter aims to answer the first group of sub-questions of the thesis which are as follows (Chapter 1 and 4):

- Q1.1 Is there sufficient funding to provide education for migrant children in urban public schools?
- Q1.2 Who is responsible for allocating the funding for education of migrant children at the local level?
- Q1.3 What are the factors affecting the decisions of funding allocation?
- Q1.4 What is the impact of funding allocation on access to urban public schools?
- Q1.5 Do migrant children have access to urban public schools?

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section answers the first two sub-questions. It discusses the notion and scope of insufficient funding. It also identifies the responsibilities of local governments and schools in funding allocation. The second and third sections answer the third sub-question. As discussed in Chapter 3, self-interest and habitual behaviour are two factors that affect the decisions of policy

implementers. Based on these theories, the second section tests whether self-interest affects the implementation of funding policy, while the third section tests whether the habits of implementers affect the implementation of funding policy. The last section answers the last two sub-questions. It discusses the impact of funding allocation on school access and assesses whether the policy goals relating to it are being achieved.

This chapter applies both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative data used in the analysis comes from statistical yearbooks compiled by local statistical bureaus in cities C and H, while the qualitative data comes from in-depth interviews (three government officials, one principal, six teachers and one migrant parent) and legal documents collected in cities C and H.

### **6.1 Sources and Responsibilities of Funding**

As noted in Chapter 5, central government does not provide financial support for policy implementation relating to education for migrant children. Nor do the home governments provide any assistance to the host local governments that cater for migrant children. The host governments alone shoulder the cost of providing study places for migrant children. Unsurprisingly, providing sufficient funding for migrant children is a challenging issue for policy implementation in both cities C and H. In 2008, the Democracy League (*minzhu tongmeng*) of city H published the initiative entitled *Advice on Further Solving the Issue Regarding to Migrant Children's Difficult Access to Schools*. It pointed out that the most serious problem relating to education for migrant children in city H was “the tension between the increasing number of migrant children and the limited amount of education resources available”. Insufficient funding seemed to have become a major obstacle to policy implementation.

In the course of the interviews, all three officials in local education bureaus complain about insufficient funding in local governments. There appears to be a general view that local governments do not have enough money to implement the policy as required by central government.

We, as local education bureaus, are not well prepared for taking in such a large number of children [of migrants]...We believe that no policy should be formulated separately. There should be supporting policy with

it. None of the policies should be looked at in isolation. Sometimes, when a policy is passed down to us, it is difficult for us to implement it. (Local Government Official A, City C)

In our district, we increase the number of teachers employed each year. But the increase of new teachers cannot keep up with the increase of students... The [local] government only had limited financial capacities. (Local Government Official B, City C)

Until 2008, there were 79,000 migrant children in urban areas of city H, accounting for one third of the children in urban public schools. There was huge financial pressure in compulsory education. (Government Official I, City H)

The reasons for insufficient funding are worth scrutiny. As discussed in Section 3.3, insufficient funding can be either caused by no funding available or by diverted use of available funding. Having no money to implement the policy is one thing, while having money but being reluctant to spend the money on the designated policy is another. It is very important to distinguish between these two issues.

Table 6.1 shows the funding for education by local governments of cities C and H from 2001 to 2008. In 2001, local governments in urban city C devoted 16.2% of total expenditure to the education sector. The next few years witnessed tremendous decreases in the proportion of the budget used on education, with the figure reaching its nadir at 10.3% in 2006. While there was a significant increase in 2007, this upward trend appeared to have been reversed again in 2008, with the figure standing at 15.1%, 1.1% lower than the 2001 level. The governments of city H displayed a similar trend in terms of funding for education, although with less trend volatility. The initial level in 2001 stood at 20.3%. After that, the proportion of education funding decreased steadily, with only two exceptions in 2002 and 2003. The figure in 2008 was 15.8%, 0.7% higher than that of urban city C for the same year, but 4.5% lower than the 2001 level.

Data relating to funding for migrant children are not directly available. Once the children are accepted by urban education system, the funding for these children is managed altogether with urban children, rather than being separately audited (School Teacher C, City C; School Teacher E, City H). Nonetheless, there is an obvious implication from the data in Table 6.1. As a large number of migrant children moved to

cities, they constituted a colossal increase in demand for local education services. So it would be expected that the proportion of education funding, *ceteris paribus*, would be on the increase to meet the needs of these children. In reality, there was no such concomitant increase in funding. This seems to suggest that the money might have been diverted for other uses and the demand for education resources by migrant children had been ignored.

Table 6.1 Education Expenditure as a Proportion of Total Expenditure in Urban C and H

| Year | Urban C | Urban H |
|------|---------|---------|
| 2001 | 16.2%   | 20.3%   |
| 2002 | 18.0%   | 18.2%   |
| 2003 | 13.2%   | 19.4%   |
| 2004 | 12.0%   | 19.5%   |
| 2005 | 10.7%   | 18.5%   |
| 2006 | 10.3%   | 18.6%   |
| 2007 | 15.4%   | 16.8%   |
| 2008 | 15.1%   | 15.8%   |

Sources: Calculated based on MBSC (2002-2009) and MBSH (2002-2009)

The question is: why does education for migrant children appear to have been ignored, even though local governments have the money to implement the policy? To answer this question, first it is important to establish, within the government system, which government agencies make decisions on funding allocation and what factors are taken into account when deciding funding allocation.

The government system in China is characterised by its homogeneous structure at each horizontal level. Government directives are transmitted within the web-shaped government network. Within each horizontal level, whole governmental bodies are composed of a core government and its functional departments (Chapter 5). Core governments and functional departments have different responsibilities in implementing education policy.

As far as cities H and C are concerned, district level governments are in charge of policy implementation for compulsory education: "...in city C, all primary schools and junior secondary schools are managed by the district government... There is a "compulsory education division" (*yiwu jiaoyu ke*) in the district education bureau"

(Teacher F, School QT, City H).” “At present, compulsory education has been taken over by district governments” (Local Government Official B, City C).

District core governments do not have the authority to introduce legislation or formulate policy; rather their role is to implement the legislation drafted by, and passed down from, provincial core governments (Chapter 5). However, the district core government is a very important policy actor within the implementation network of compulsory education policy. In cities C and H, compulsory education is almost solely funded by district governments. The amount of funding to be allocated to local primary and junior secondary schools is completely at the discretion of district core governments.

During the interview, Teacher E in School YC described in detail the procedures of funding allocation<sup>31</sup>. The procedures apply to both urban and migrant children. District education bureaus first collect students’ information from schools within their respective administrative areas. The schools estimate headcount fees for each student in a whole academic year and report the aggregated numbers to local education bureaus. For example, in 2008 the estimated headcount fee for each student in School YC was 1200 Yuan (about £120). There were 1200 students in the school that year. This would amount to 1.4 million Yuan in education funding. Education bureaus then aggregate the funding needed in every school and apply for the funding from district core governments. On the basis of the information they have from education bureaus, district core governments decide how much funding is allocated to education bureaus.

Local government is required by central government to raise money via an ‘education surtax’ to fund the education of migrant children (Chapter 5). The education surtax is a type of tax additionally levied by local governments on top of product tax, value added tax and business tax. The rate of education surtax was set initially at the 1% level in 1986, and was increased to 3% in 2005 (SC, 1986, 2005b). However, in the case of cities C and H, education surtax does not provide an effective solution to implementing education policy for migrant children.

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<sup>31</sup> Teacher E is a management staff in the school. Although he did teach classes, he was mainly responsible of administration work including school funding.

First of all, education surtax is at most a type of quasi-hypothecated funding. Even though education surtax is kept and managed by local education bureaus, they must “propose funding allocation plans and seek approval from local financial bureaus before the money can be spent” (SC, 1986, Article 8). Local financial bureaus are not authorised to use government revenue, but have to take orders from core governments (Chapter 5). For this reason, district education bureaus do not have total autonomy in deciding how to spend the education surtax. If district core governments do not approve the use of the education surtax, the education bureaus can do nothing.

Second, the introduction of education surtax was not originally for the purpose of supporting migrant children, but for the improvement of school facilities. The cost to maintain the quality of school facilities is annually recurrent. It is not anticipated that it would be subject to significant change. Hence a significant and stable proportion of education surtax must be spent on the improvement of school facilities each year. As Local Government Official A described:

...The education expenses were divided into two categories. Teachers’ salaries are paid by district (core) governments...Expenses related to school construction and facilities mainly came from education surtax.... Central government did not state clearly where the money for school construction should come from...We are still heavily reliant on education surtax every year.

This implies that very little of the education surtax is left for implementing education policy for migrant children. For this reason, the education surtax can scarcely provide any help.

There were no private migrant schools in our district in the past. I agree that migrant children should go to public schools. We have the education surtax, but it is far from sufficient. (Local Government Official A, City C)

To sum up, in the cases of cities C and H, compulsory education is provided jointly by governments and schools at the district level. District core governments make decisions on funding allocation and the local schools deal with the children and

parents as the ‘consumers’ of education on a daily basis. District education bureaus are responsible for collecting information from local schools and reporting the data to core governments. Meanwhile, they are also supposed to be responsible for passing on the funding and conveying the administrative directives from superior governments to the local schools.

District education bureaus are not directly involved in funding allocation, and thus have little financial impact on policy implementation. Therefore, in order to examine the implementation difficulties from the perspective of policy funding, core governments need to be the focus of analysis. In particular, attention should be focused on the decision making process of core governments when allocating funding. This will be the task of the following two sections.

## **6.2 Funding Allocation: The Role of Self-Interest**

This section examines the role of self-interest in the implementation of migrant children’s education policy. In particular, it looks at how self-interest incentivises local core governments to allocate public revenue across different sectors. This section consists of two parts. The first part discusses the relationship between economic growth and social service provision. The existing literature suggests that insufficient funding is largely the consequence of local governments’ passion for economic growth. The second part uses a panel data model to test the extent to which these literature findings are applicable to the case of financing education for migrant children.

### **6.2.1 Economic Development and Education Provision**

When seeking theoretical explanations for the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, economists have increasingly realised the important role of institutions. More specifically, scholars started to pay tribute to China’s well-designed fiscal decentralisation system for the seemingly paradoxical miracle of China’s economic growth (Weingast, 1995; Chen et al., 2002; Jin et al., 2005), even though the success of China seemed to be an outlier by Davoodi and Zou (1998) in a comparative analysis among 46 developed and developing countries that were undergoing fiscal decentralisation.

There seems to be an economy-driven effect behind fiscal decentralization. Government revenue and economic growth are two mutually inclusive and reinforcing variables. Being granted with the autonomy to spend money, local governments are inclined to support local business. As long as local business is profitable, the economy will grow. Local governments were able to extract a satisfactory amount of profit as government revenue, which would then, in turn, be used to build up a more business-friendly environment and further promote the development of the local economy. The result is that a majority of public money flows into the business sector.

Meanwhile, the success of fiscal decentralization in China also hinges heavily on the fact that core government officials at local levels are not elected by the residents in their jurisdictions (Chapter 5). For this reason, government officials do not need to take local needs for social services (such as education, health and housing) into account when making decisions on the allocation of public resources, but instead can pursue their own interests which are embedded in the revenue-business cycle (Zhou, 2004; Li and Zhou, 2005; Zhou, 2007; Zou et al., 2010). This further strengthens local governments' inclination to pool public money into the business sector, without being distracted by other demands.

Because most of the money has been spent by local governments on business-related activities, social services such as health and education are generally underfunded. This has also been well-examined in the literature (Qiao et al., 2005; Ping and Bai, 2006; Fu and Zhang, 2007; Xu, 2009; Zou et al., 2010). In particular, Qiao et al (2005) and Xu (2009) found that fiscal federalism changed the incentives for local core government officials, who prefer to spend the money on profit-generating business activities but not on the education services. Put differently, there is a substitution effect between economic development and education provision.

The same logic applies to funding for migrant children's education as well. Out of self-interest, local governments are willing to spend money on promoting the business sector, but do not have the money to provide sufficient funding to education for migrant children. The following part of this section will use a panel data model to test

the hypothesis that public expenditure on economic development crowds out funding for migrant children's education.

### 6.2.2 Funding for Migrant Children: A Panel Data Model

In this section, a regression model with panel data (Chapter 4) is used to examine the following question: what are the impacts of local economic development on education funding for migrant children. The data at the district level in urban C comes from Statistical Yearbook of city C 2002-2009. The model is expressed as follows:

$$\ln eduex = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \ln pop(rural hukou) + \beta_2 \times \ln capex + \beta_3 \times \ln gdp + \beta_4 \times \ln netre + \beta_5 \times \ln decen + e$$

Where *ln eduex* is total spending on education by district governments, *ln pop* is the net migrant population, *rural hukou* is the population with rural *hukou*, *capex* is capital construction expenditure, *gdp* is Gross Regional Product (GRP) of the districts, *netre* is net revenue and *decen* is the degree of fiscal decentralisation.

The model design follows Ping and Bai's (2006) research. However, instead of using provincial level data, the panel data model in this thesis uses district level data. In addition, the variables used in this model are slightly different from Ping and Bai's (2006). In particular, here I include migrant populations as the independent variable and expenditure on education as the dependent variable.

Generally speaking, education expenditure, as the dependent variable in the regression model, increased during the period this model is concerned with. The only exception was in 2003 when the expenditure dropped by 40% compared with the 2002 level. In 2008, the five urban districts in total spent ¥1.2 billion (£120 million) on education (Table 6.2).

As for the independent variables, since currently there are no official data on the total number of migrant children in city C, the models employ two proxy variables in relation to the migrant population to capture different aspects of the impact imposed on the urban education system by migrant children. The underlying assumption is that

the migrant population is positively related to the total number of rural-urban migrant children.

Table 6.2 Government Expenditure, Migration and Fiscal Decentralization in Urban City C  
2001-2008<sup>(1), (2), (3)</sup>

|      | Total<br>Spending<br>on<br>Education | Net<br>Migrant<br>population | Population<br>with rural<br><i>hukou</i> | Capital<br>Construction<br>Expenditure | Net<br>Government<br>Revenue | Decentralization |
|------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| 2001 | 326                                  | 45                           | 318                                      | 152                                    | 940                          | 0.47             |
| 2002 | 426                                  | 72                           | 328                                      | 198                                    | 1,440                        | 0.70             |
| 2003 | 257                                  | 60                           | 338                                      | 188                                    | 1,405                        | 0.68             |
| 2004 | 351                                  | 61                           | 338                                      | 330                                    | 2,288                        | 0.56             |
| 2005 | 436                                  | 41                           | 313                                      | 630                                    | 3,453                        | 0.63             |
| 2006 | 556                                  | 53                           | 347                                      | 1,039                                  | 4,323                        | 0.62             |
| 2007 | 1,006                                | 27                           | 352                                      | 1,396                                  | 5,335                        | 0.62             |
| 2008 | 1,179                                | 18                           | 350                                      | 1,964                                  | 6,609                        | 0.59             |

Notes on table 6.2:

- (1) Due to limited space, the table only shows the data at the municipal level as opposed to district level.
- (2) Data on expenditure and population at the municipal level was calculated by summing up the figures at the district level, while data on decentralization in the last column was calculated by taking the average of district figures.
- (3) The figures on education expenditure, capital construction expenditure and net government revenue are in ¥million. The figures on net migrant population and population with the rural *hukou* are in thousand people.

Sources: Statistical Yearbook of City C, 2002-2009

The first proxy variable is the net migrant population in each district from outside urban areas of city C (*inpop*). It is calculated as the number of people migrating to city C minus the number of people leaving city C. As new families with school-age children settle down in city C, one thing they need to do immediately is to apply for education in local schools. Hence, this variable aims to capture new demand for local education resources each year. As shown in table 6.2, there were net inflows of population each year in urban C, but the number of new migrants was generally on the decline after 2002. In 2008, there were 18,000 new migrants, which was less than half of the 2001 level.

The second proxy variable is the population with the rural *hukou* in urban areas of city

C (*ruralhukou*). It is calculated as the number of residents with the rural *hukou* minus the number of residents changing from the rural to urban *hukou* in addition to the number of new residents with the rural *hukou*. The total number of residents with the rural *hukou* is an indicator of potential demand for compulsory education in urban C each year. This variable is incorporated into the models for the purpose of examining the extent to which potential demand for education is related to education funding.

The second independent variable in the models is the capital construction expenditure (*jiben jianshe zhichu*). It is the area of government spending with the purpose of developing urban infrastructure which plays a vitally important role in attracting business investment and thus promoting economic growth (Johnes, 1993, p.185). It can be noted in table 6.2 that expenditure on capital construction had increased rapidly since 2001. Within 8 years, it had increased 13-fold.

The models were estimated using the STATA software package. Table 6.3 summarises the regression results. To test the validity of the model design, both fixed effects and random effects models were tested. F-tests were used to test the fixed effects model. As shown in the table 5.3, the F-test statistic is significant at the 1% level, which means that the fixed effect model is valid. Breusch-Pagan LM Tests were carried out to test the suitability of random effects models. As shown in the table, the  $\chi^2$ -test statistic is significant at the 1% level, which means that random effects model is valid.

The estimated results of individual coefficients demonstrate the effect of each independent variable on education funding, while controlling for the other variables. First of all, none of the coefficients relating to migrant population are statistically significant. This is the case for both proxy variables. If all demand was met, change in the number of migrant children would be highly correlated with changes in education funding, given the large number of rural-urban migrant children. In the same vein, if no demand was met, the two variables would be completely uncorrelated. The implication is that the decision on funding allocation to local schools did not take local migrant population and migrant children into consideration. Or put another way, even though the number of migrant children and the potential demand for urban education keep imposing financial pressure on the local education system, district governments

do not respond to this pressure.

Table 6.3 Estimation Results of Panel Data Models <sup>(1), (2)</sup>

|                                    | Fixed-Effect Model               |                     | Random-Effect Model      |                     |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Net Migrant population             | 7.9e-06<br>(1.62) <sup>(3)</sup> |                     | 4.2e-06<br>(-0.80)       |                     |
| Population with rural <i>hukou</i> |                                  | -4.2e-06<br>(-1.56) |                          | -1.1e-06<br>(-1.10) |
| Capital Expenditure                | -0.2** <sup>(4)</sup><br>(-3.01) | -0.2**<br>(-2.88)   | -0.3***<br>(-4.86)       | -0.3***<br>(-4.93)  |
| Net Government Revenue             | 1.4*<br>(2.73)                   | 1.3*<br>(2.41)      | 1.2***<br>(7.04)         | 1.2***<br>(7.23)    |
| Decentralization                   | -0.6*<br>(-2.29)                 | -0.6*<br>(-2.40)    | -0.6*<br>(-1.88)         | -0.5*<br>(-1.68)    |
| R <sup>2</sup>                     | 0.94                             | 0.93                | 0.95                     | 0.96                |
| F-test                             | 6.2**                            | 5.9**               | n.a.                     | n.a.                |
|                                    | F <sub>0.05(4,31)</sub> =2.69    |                     | n.a.                     |                     |
| Breusch-Pagan LM Test              | n.a.                             | n.a.                | 6.87**                   | 7.83**              |
|                                    | n.a.                             |                     | $\chi^2_{0.05}(1)$ =3.84 |                     |

Notes on table 6.3

- (1) Log functions had been applied to education expenditure, capital expenditure, and decentralization to eliminate non-linearity of data within each time series.
- (2) Time fixed effects were also considered in the models, but due to limited space and the relevance to the analysis, the results were not included in the tables.
- (3) The numbers without parenthesis are estimated coefficients for each independent variable, while those in parenthesis are t or z values for each coefficient.
- (4) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Sources: Statistical Yearbook of City C 2002-2009

Second, expenditure on capital construction is negatively correlated with education funding. The result is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$  in the fixed effects model and  $p < 0.001$  in the random effects model). This suggests that instead of being used for education, funding is being used for capital construction. This confirms the hypothesis proposed in the previous section that capital expenditure crowds out expenditure on education for migrant children. Local governments are more interested in promoting economic development and thus spend more money on building city infrastructure. Even though both education and capital construction expenditure have been on the increase during the last few years, expenditure on the latter has played a much more significant role in governments' annual budgets and increased more rapidly than funding for education. Education has been given less priority than local economic

development.

Third, education funding and net government revenue are positively correlated. The result is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$  in fixed effects model and  $p < 0.001$  in random effects model). This suggests that increases in education funding mainly resulted from increases in government revenue. Put differently, how much local governments spend on education depends on how much money is available.

Fiscal decentralisation of district governments is negatively correlated with education funding ( $p < 0.05$  in both the fixed and random effects models). This implies that the greater fiscal autonomy local governments have, the less they are willing to spend on education. The results here are not unexpected. As discussed in the previous section, fiscal decentralization in China incentivises local governments to promote the local economy. As local governments choose to spend more money on business investment, less money is left for the education sector.

By and large, the estimation results here confirmed the hypothesis in the previous section. Education appears to fall victim to, rather than benefit from, local economic development, because business-related expenditure crowds out education funding. Local government is largely non-responsive to the demand of migrants for urban public education, leaving education for migrant children underfunded.

### **6.3 Funding Allocation: The Role of Habitual Behaviour**

Policy is implemented on the basis of balance of costs and benefits by various policy actors. However, policy actors are never able to be totally sure about the costs and the benefits attached to the policies due to bounded rationality. In other words, policy is implemented in the institutional environment where policy actors rely on past experience and social habits to make predictions and decisions (Chapter 3). Following this argument, this section will examine the special characteristics of migrant children and how these characteristics affect district governments' decisions in allocating funding for migrant children. In particular, it will look at the role of habitual behaviours when implementers need to implement the policy in uncertain situations.

### 6.3.1 Policy Uncertainty of Education for Migrant children

One of the main reasons why central government drafted the legislation in relation to education for migrant children in an ambiguous way was that local situations and environments varied considerably between different provinces and cities, and central government was uncertain about what the consequences of such a policy would be. As noted in Chapter 5, before 2001 the central government normally used words such as “interim” or “temporary” in the regulations it published. The policies formulated after 2001 were very ambiguous (Chapter 5). By means of ambiguous legislation, uncertainties in the policy are passed down to local governments. It is left to local governments to interpret the policy and exercise discretionary power in the course of policy implementation. However, migrant families have characteristics which are different from those of urban families. These differences give rise to additional uncertainty, which in turn may affect local implementation of education policy for migrant children.

The first characteristic of migrant families and their children is their *hukou* status. The *hukou* is a representation of social identity by which local governments distinguish between different groups of people (Chapter 2). During the interviews, government officials in both cities habitually and informally call the residents with urban *hukou* “local people” (*bendiren*) and migrant residents with rural *hukou* as “outside people” (*waidiren*). The two terms in Chinese have different implicit meanings, with the former indicating a sense of belonging to the local areas. As far as local officials are concerned, the distinction between local and outside people is meaningful in the context of local administration. They think only those local people with urban *hukou* belong to the administrative areas local governments are responsible for. Local governments are supposed to administer, support and serve “local people” with urban *hukou* first:

We are happy to open our doors to migrant children. City H has the ability to solve these problems [in relation to migrant children’s education]. If we were unable to solve them, we would not have provided so much help in the first place. We would have shut our doors tight. If we did not have enough education resources for children, migrants would be put on the waiting list while local people would be given priority for education. If local people of city H have difficulty in being educated, it is

impossible for this policy [of educating migrant children] to be implemented. (Local Government Official I, city H)

The administration of families with rural *hukou* poses two problems. Historically, due to institutional control of migration by the *hukou* system, administering and serving families with the urban *hukou* was what local governments had been doing in the last half century (Chapter 2). Exclusively serving local people had been taken for granted by local governments. However, the stability of this traditional mode of administration was shaken by the inflow of large numbers of migrants. This is especially obvious in cities C and H, where an increasing proportion of residents are those without the urban *hukou*. Local governments have suddenly realised that they were uncertain about their proper role vis-à-vis migrant children. The paragraph quoted above demonstrates that the local government regards provision of education to migrant children as a type of additional favour rather than a compulsory responsibility.

Meanwhile, local governments are also uncertain about the consequences of education provision for migrant children. They are unable to predict the response of urban residents and how to balance the inter-group relationships, because the migration of rural children on such a large scale had never happened before in either city<sup>32</sup>. The quote above suggests that the welfare of local people is the factor that local governments are not willing, and even cannot afford, to ignore.

Another characteristic of migrant families is that they are highly mobile. In order to find suitable jobs, migrant parents usually move from one catchment area, city or province to another. For this reason, migrant children have to change schools frequently. “Some migrants came to do business in city C. If their money ran out, they would have to go back to their hometowns and the children would also go with them” (Principal C, City C). “Rural-urban migrant children were originally peasants. Relatively speaking, they do not have stable jobs and thus are characterised by high mobility” (Local Government Official I, City H). The high mobility of migrant children poses a huge challenge to local governments who need to keep close track of

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<sup>32</sup> The response of urban parents toward education policy for migrant children will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

every registered child for the purpose of controlling the drop-out rate.

We have no idea how to tackle this problem because [migrant families] withdraw from the schools without giving us any notice. It is our responsibility to ensure that no child drops out of school. Municipal government closely monitors this issue [of drop-out rate] and investigates where the children have been. This problem is a big headache for both primary and secondary schools. (Local Government Official B, City C)

Since some migrant children keep moving around, it is difficult for schools and local education bureaus to track their whereabouts. They have to establish whether these children have moved to another school or have simply dropped out of school. This may incur additional costs for the local education system. Meanwhile, it is difficult to arrange funding for these children, because the funding is distributed annually among the schools in accordance with the number of students who are supposed to complete the whole academic year (Section 6.1).

Another issue that local governments feel unsure about is the need to build new schools. As the number of children of migrants increases rapidly, local governments need to build more schools. However, due to the high mobility of migrant families, it is very difficult for local governments to predict whether the huge demand by migrant children for places in urban public schools is going to persist. If it is not, these schools will be closed down and the teachers recruited will face unemployment. That will be a big waste of public resources. This is illustrated by the interview with local government official A:

We have our own considerations as well. We think the increase of students might just be a short-term issue which will only last for a few years. If the government builds new schools now but the student number declines afterwards, we will have to think about how to absorb these new schools and teachers.

Both cities are undergoing rapid urbanization and land is very expensive. As a consequence, it is very costly to build new schools. As estimated by local government official A:

There was an annual increase of 3000 migrant children on average in our district. The maximum capacity of a school is 1000 students. This means that 3 new schools will be needed each year, which amounts to nearly ¥500 million in additional funding.

In comparison, the total education expenditure by District Y was merely 300 million Yuan in the year 2008 (MBSC, 2009). Because of this, local governments are not motivated to build new schools.

### **6.3.2 Path Dependence on Funding Allocation**

Faced with policy uncertainty, district core governments in cities C and H are mostly very conservative in their funding allocation. They arrange funding which merely covers the headcount fees of migrant children. In practice, the headcount fees roughly cover the additional daily running cost of schools associated with new migrant children. No new teachers are employed and no new schools are built. Nor are existing schools expanded.

School expansion and construction is a fundamental and costly investment in the education sector. The unwillingness of local governments to build new schools or expand existing schools is most directly reflected in the annual investment in the education sector, which is shown in Table 6.4. Initially, investment in education in city H stood at the level of ¥4.4 billion in 2003. Annual investment decreased thereafter before increasing slightly to ¥3.2 billion in 2008. By contrast, government investment in infrastructure increased rapidly during the same period. This is especially obvious in public facility maintenance and city transportation. In 2003, education investment was roughly at the same level as transportation. However, five years later, education investment was the lowest compared with the three recorded types of infrastructure investment. Table 6.4 also confirmed the conclusion in Section 6.2 that local governments are more willing to spend the money in fostering local business than in the education sector which is increasingly under financial pressure to take in migrant children.

The unwillingness of local governments to build new schools or expand existing schools is also reflected in the fact that the overall quality of the education service has

been on the decline in the last decade. Investment in the education sector mainly serves two purposes. The first is to maintain existing school assets and properties after long-term and intensive use. Teaching facilities in schools may be broken or need replacement. The second is for the expansion and improvement of education services. This may include the expansion or construction of schools, teacher training or employment, and the purchase of more advanced equipment. The overall quality of education services depends upon the overall level of capital stock which is the result of the net effect of depreciation and new investment.

Table 6.4 Infrastructure and Education Investment in city H 2003-2008 (in ¥ million)

|      | Basic Supply<br>Facilities <sup>(1)</sup> | Transportation,<br>Storage and Post | Public Facility<br>Maintenance <sup>(2)</sup> | Education |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 2003 | 2,862                                     | 4,963                               | 3,908   | 4,438     |
| 2004 | 5,878                                     | 8,449                               | 11,006  | 4,502     |
| 2005 | 6,547                                     | 9,522                               | 12,870  | 4,167     |
| 2006 | 6,529                                     | 10,252                              | 5,138   | 3,594     |
| 2007 | 6,473                                     | 10,380                              | 7,485   | 2,610     |
| 2008 | 5,730                                     | 13,852                              | 7,425   | 3,228     |

Notes on table 6.4:

(1) The basic supply includes hot water, gas and power supply.

(2) The public facilities include the sewage system, road lamps, roads, bridges, tunnels, plazas and green fields.

Sources: Calculated Based on MBSH (2004-2009)

The overall quality of the education service is considered in this thesis to be a comprehensive concept consisting of a number of factors such as school buildings, facilities, staff numbers and expertise<sup>33</sup>. To simplify these factors, two comprehensive indicators, including school capacity and school facilities, are constructed by means of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Chatfield and Collins, 2000). The School Capacity Indicator is composed of three variables: the number of schools, the total areas occupied by schools and the number of professional teachers. The School

<sup>33</sup> The quality of education services or educational quality seems to be a contested concept and carries different meanings in different contexts. For example, Cheng and Tam (1997) pointed out that quality in education is a multi-dimensional concept and proposed seven different models to capture the concept. On the basis of Cheng and Tam's models (1997), this thesis distinguishes between input-based educational quality and outcome-based educational quality. The former measures the quality of education service by looking at the inputs to education (e.g. teaching staff and teaching facilities), while the latter measures the quality of education by looking at the exam results of students. This chapter focuses on input-based educational quality, while Chapter 7 focuses on out-come based educational quality.

Facility Indicator is composed of the number of computers, total number of books and total value of school equipment and instruments. The derivation of the indicators is detailed in Appendix 3 to the thesis.

The result of the PCA is shown in Figure 6.1. The indicators here measure the capital stock in the education sector. If the indicator in a given year is lower than the previous year, it means that the new investment by the government could not compensate for the depreciation of the existing capital and thus the overall quality of education service has deteriorated.

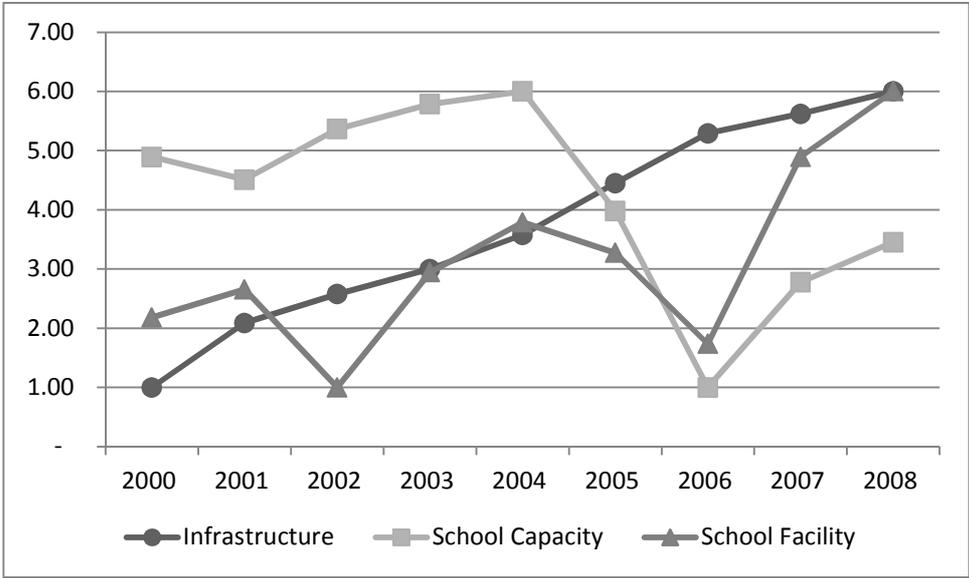
It can be noted that both School Capacity and School Facility Indicators in city H experienced volatile change during the period examined. Especially between 2004 and 2006, the education-related indicators reduced significantly, indicating that the quality of education services deteriorated seriously during the period. School facilities and capacity started to recover again from 2006. Nevertheless, in 2008 the school capacity of city H was still lower than its 2001 level. This means that the overall quality of education service in city H got worse after the education reforms of 2001 when the central government required local governments to ensure equal education for migrant children.

The indicators constructed through PCA are standardized, allowing for comparison of indicators from different sectors (Appendix 3). The infrastructure indicator was constructed to see how it changed in relation to education-related indicators. It can be noted in figure 6.1 that the capital stock of local infrastructure in city H increased steadily during the period examined. This is in stark contrast to what happened in the education sector. This indicates that the ability of local government to serve local business had been steadily improving due to constant and persistent efforts by local governments to invest in infrastructure, while the ability to serve the students fluctuated or declined in the face of increasing demand from migrant children.

The investment patterns displayed above demonstrate that district governments' responses towards the financial pressures imposed by migrant children are characterised by path dependency. Local governments choose to make as little change

as possible in order to keep the existing pattern of funding distribution largely unchanged. It should be noted that path dependence of this type has nothing to do with increasing returns, but rather is the result of decision makers retaining their existing practices (Chapter 3). This finding is important in the sense that it both confirms and complements the conclusion in Section 6.2. As noted earlier, district governments are largely nonresponsive to the dramatic increases in demand for education by migrant children. The analysis in this section suggests that this is taking place because local governments are actually non-responsive to the need to build new schools. This results in a deterioration in the quality of education services.

Figure 6.1 School Capacity and School Facility Indicators in City H



Sources: Calculated Based on MBSH (2001-2009) and MBSC (2001-2009)

As far as district governments are concerned, this path dependency (Chapter 3) strategy has its own rationale. It can effectively address the policy uncertainty brought about by migrant children. First, in the absence of financial support from the central government, migrant children are literally competing for local education resources with urban children. By means of path dependency in the allocation of funding for education, the problem of educating migrant children could to some extent be resolved without doing conspicuous harm to urban children with the urban *hukou*. Thus, district governments do not have to worry about any policy responses by urban residents.

Second, by making only marginal increases in funding for migrant children, district

governments could ensure their own financial confidence and flexibility of fiscal policy. By being cautious about building new schools, local governments could reduce the risk of waste of public resources to a minimal level. Being austere means that money can be spent when it is absolutely necessary, or when local governments are totally sure that the increasing demand for education resources by migrant children will not disappear in the foreseeable future.

## **6.4 Policy Consequences of Financing: Local Policy and Access to Urban Public Education**

This section examines the policy consequences of funding allocation. The focus is placed upon the consequences for access to urban public schools, which formed an important part of central government policy after 2001 (Chapter 5). Because local governments do not provide enough money to take in all migrant children, urban public education become highly selective. Some children are enrolled into urban public schools while others are left out. The first part of this section focuses on the administrative selection procedures set out by local governments which are used to facilitate funding allocation, while the second part discusses the mismatch between education funding and volume of migrant applicants in different regions of the cities.

### **6.4.1 Administrative Selection**

The funding policy by local governments analysed in the previous two sections would not be possible to implement without the assistance of additional selection procedures for migrant children. Local governments are not willing to build new schools, so migrant children can only be recruited by existing schools. As the spaces of existing schools are limited, local governments have to make sure the number of migrant children does not outnumber the study places available in existing schools.

Local governments set out a series of criteria via local government policy to exclude some migrant children from the urban public education system. Insufficient funding and the selection criteria are two sides of the same coin. By setting out these criteria, local governments are in effect delineating their own financial responsibility. The higher the eligibility requirements are, the more migrant children are excluded from the urban public education system, and the less local governments need to spend on

local education.

In 2004, city H published the *Temporary Administration Measures on Education for Rural-Urban Migrant Children*. In the same year, city C published the *Implementation Methods on Compulsory Education for Rural-Urban Migrant Children*. Generally speaking, local government policy supports and emphasises the basic principles advocated by central government, i.e. the principle of two “principals” and the principle of equal treatment (Chapter 5). However, on the basis of these two principles, the regulations in both cities set out additional criteria to exclude certain groups of migrant children from the urban public education system.

In the case of city H, migrant families must hand in seven certificates to district education bureaus in order to become eligible for school application. The seven certificates are: (1) a certificate issued by home governments acknowledging migration; (2) a rural *hukou* certificate; (3) a temporary residence certificate in city H; (4) a contract of employment; (5) an immunization certificate for school-age children; (6) proof of employment for more than one year; (7) proof of residence for more than one year in city H.

In practice, “it is very difficult for migrant families to acquire all these certificates” (Teacher E, School YC). For example, home governments in many cases are unaware of their responsibility for issuing certificates to host governments and usually refuse to do so. This is a pure matter of inter-governmental co-ordination. Even though some rural governments might be able to provide such evidence, it still means a huge amount of time and transportation costs for migrants to get back to their hometowns to collect the certificates. In addition, as noted earlier, migrants often do not have stable jobs. In many cases, their employment contracts are very informal in legal terms. All of these factors tend to compromise their children’s eligibility to study in urban public schools.

City C also sets out certificate requirements in its local policies to exclude some migrant children from the urban public education system. Originally, the certificate requirements for family eligibility were less strict than those of the local government

in city H. It did not require that migrant parents stay and work in the city for more than one year before their children could become qualified applicants of urban public schools (Municipal Government of City C, 2004). However, it stipulated that migrant children were not able to choose public schools in the same catchment area system as urban children. Instead, city C followed a ‘designated school’ (*dingdian xuexiao*) policy which put migrant children in a separate school system with separate enrolment procedures. In each administrative district in city C, there were several schools which were designated by local governments to take in migrant children. If a migrant child could provide evidence that the family satisfied all the conditions set out by the local governments in city C, the local education bureaus would allocate the applicant to one of the designated schools nearest to the child’s home. If migrant applicants wanted to study in another school, be it the designated school or another, they would have to pay school selection fees. This was still a catchment area system. But the availability of schools in which migrant and urban children could choose to study was different. In other words, the catchment areas were divided in different ways for the two groups of children.

In 2009, city C began reforming its policy due to criticisms from media reports and scholars that the designated school policy was discriminatory in nature (Local Government Official A). The post-reform policy in city C is very similar to that of city H. The designated school policy was gradually replaced, but the certificate requirements have become stricter than before. Migrant parents have to have lived in city C for more than one year before their children are eligible to apply for places in urban public schools.

Local government policy, regardless of certificate requirements or designated school policy, is highly selective. In effect, the policy presents huge barriers for migrant children hoping to study in urban public schools. Those without the required certificates are selected out of the urban public education system. Some of those migrant children who cannot attend public schools have to find study places in migrant schools. Those children who cannot go to migrant schools either then have to return to their home towns. For both groups of children, this means that the school access policy is not implemented.

#### **6.4.2 Mismatch of Education Demand and Supply**

Those migrant children who meet local governments' certificates requirements merely become eligible to apply for study places in urban public schools. This by no means guarantees that they will be accepted by local public schools. Whether they are finally able to study in urban public schools further depends upon whether study places are actually available in these schools.

The key point is that there is a mismatch between education demand and supply in cities C and H. Education demand is associated with the concentration of migrant families. In the places where migrant children are more concentrated, there are more demands for education. The supply of education is dependent on the funding allocated by the local governments. As the funding for education do not take migrant children into consideration and no new schools are built in the face of greater numbers of children migrating to cities each year (Section 6.2 and 6.3), in the regions in cities C and H where there are a large number of migrant children, the migrant applicants far exceed the study places available in local schools.

The consequences of the mismatch between the funding for education and concentration of migrant children are twofold. First, in those regions where there are a lot of migrant children, urban public schools are over-crowded. It is stipulated by the ME that the maximum numbers of students in primary schools and junior secondary schools are 45 and 50 respectively (ME, 2002). However, for all the five schools interviewed in my fieldwork, the average numbers of students in each class are above 50. In some extreme cases, there are up to 70 students in one class (Principal B, School FO).

Because the number of migrant applicants far exceeds the study places available, a large proportion of migrant children cannot study in urban public schools. A case in point is Primary School FO. In 2009, it planned to recruit 180 new students in four classes, but there were 300 applicants waiting in the queue. The result was that the school had to set up admissions criteria of its own (Chapter 7) and 220 students (55 students in each class) were recruited that year. The students who were not accepted by

the school had to pay school selection fees to study in other schools or pay tuition fees to study in migrant schools.

In those areas where migrant families are more concentrated, the proportions of migrant children in local public schools are higher. A comparison of Middle School TS located in the fringe area of city C and Middle School TW near the centre of city C can perhaps better illustrate the point. As shown in table 6.5, the proportions of migrant children in the two schools are sharply different. In 2008, the number of migrant children in Middle Schools TS was more than three times in number and nearly twice as large in percentage as that in Middle School TW. Moreover, Middle School TS was more crowded than Middle School TW. In 2008, Middle School TS had 24 classes in total, with 54 students on average in each class (Internal Statistics by School TS). Middle School TW had 22 classes, with 52 students on average in each class (Internal Statistics by School TW).

Table 6.5 Migrant children in Two Middle Schools in City C

| Year | Middle School TS |            | Middle School TW |            |
|------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
|      | Migrant children | Percentage | Migrant children | Percentage |
| 2004 | 906              | 34.8%      | n.a.             | n.a.       |
| 2005 | 1166             | 46.9%      | n.a.             | n.a.       |
| 2006 | 1035             | 42.7%      | 124              | 10.5%      |
| 2007 | 1220             | 54.0%      | 399              | 34.1%      |
| 2008 | 1448             | 64.1%      | 403              | 37.2%      |

Source: Internal Statistics by Middle School TS and TW

In those areas where migrant families are concentrated, the competition for study places is fierce and it is extremely difficult for migrant parents to secure study places for their children. Migrant parent C recalled his experience of school application in the interview. His child finally studied in urban public schools free of charge. But he went to the school three times before he could get the application form and formally start the application procedure.

There were a lot of children in the last three years. I arrived at school at around 8 pm that evening and waited in a queue (for application). The school would be open at 8 am the next morning. The weather was not good that day. It was raining. The principal told us not to worry and

suggested we come back again in the next morning. So we all went home. I went to school again at 12 pm that night, because my home is near the school. When I was there, I found there was a long queue of migrant parents again. I had no choice but to stand in the queue for my child. Then it started to thunder and rain again. The teachers persuaded us to go home again. I went to school for a third time at 6 am the next morning. Fortunately, it was not crowded. I handed in the certificates required. The teachers gave me an application form. (Migrant Parent C)

The second result of the mismatch between the funding for education and the concentration of migrant children relates to the fact that migrant children of different ages have different chances of being accepted by urban public schools. As education funding is limited, school places and access are restricted to children who are about to start school. Schools fill up to capacity and so there are far fewer places for students who are older. This transforms the school admission into a first come, first served situation. Take Primary School YC for instance. As an uncodified rule, each year the school only leaves four places for new students between Grades Two and Five, no matter how many applicants are waiting in the queue.

A breakdown of migrant children interviewed in the fieldwork further supports this argument. As shown in Table 6.6, a majority of the students interviewed (63.9%) started their urban education at the beginning of primary schools. Only one student interviewed was accepted by the school when he was half-way through secondary education. The implication of this is that a large proportion of the non-first year students are kept out of the urban education system. It would be very difficult for migrant children who are halfway through primary education to find a study place in an urban public school. And it would be even more difficult for students halfway through their junior secondary education to be accepted into the urban public education system.

To summarise, as education for migrant children is underfunded, not all migrant children can receive urban public education. The analysis in this section suggests that there is considerable variation within the group of migrant children. The selection mechanism is in favour of certain groups of students while against others. Put another way, it is more difficult for migrant children than urban children to study in urban public schools, but some migrant children are even more disadvantaged than others in

terms of access to urban public schools.

Table 6.6 Migrant children at Different Stages of Education

| Accepted by Urban Schools           | City C | City H | Total | Proportion |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|------------|
| Start Primary Education in Cities   | 13     | 10     | 23    | 63.9%      |
| Come to Primary Schools Later       | 6      | 2      | 8     | 22.2%      |
| Start Secondary Education in Cities | 2      | 2      | 4     | 11.1%      |
| Come to Secondary Schools Later     | 1      | 0      | 1     | 2.8%       |
| Total                               | 22     | 14     | 36    | 100%       |

Sources: Field interviews in cities C and H

Those migrant children with all the required certificates, living in areas where migrant families are less concentrated and applying for study places at the beginning of primary education can more easily find study places in urban public schools. In contrast, it is almost impossible for those migrant children without the required certificates, living in areas where migrant families are more concentrated and coming to cities when they are older to find study places in urban public schools.

## Conclusion

This chapter discussed the implementation of sufficient funding and school access policy. Sufficient funding policy is not effectively implemented. Local core governments in cities C and H do not provide sufficient funding to the local education systems, and local education bureaus are faced with huge financial pressures to meet the education demands of migrant students.

Non-implementation of sufficient funding policy is primarily due to non-hypothecation of funding for migrant children's education. According to the discussion in Chapter 3, this means that local governments can choose not to provide sufficient funding to the policy if they have other more important goals to achieve. In this case, the results of implementation of sufficient funding policy depend on the decisions made by local governments.

There are two factors underlying the decisions of local core governments regarding funding allocation. The first is self-interested behaviour. Local core governments are

interested in local economic growth rather than the development of the education sector. For this reason, more public money is spent on business investment which can bring about even more public revenue, while education for migrant children is left underfunded.

The second factor is habitual behaviour. Migrant children's education policy is full of uncertainties. To meet the education demands of migrant children, large sums of money are needed. Local governments have no prior experience in providing education for migrant children and are uncertain about the consequences of suddenly increasing the funding in education on a large scale. Faced with these uncertainties, local governments have become conservative in decision making and therefore follow their past habits. They are inclined to stick to conventional principles in funding allocation which have proved to have worked in the past. As a result, funding in education is merely increased incrementally. In particular, local governments are non-responsive to the demand that more schools should be built to accommodate migrant students. Instead, local governments only cover the expenses of headcount fees of migrant children in the existing urban public schools.

The consequence of insufficient funding is that it is very difficult for migrant children to find study places in urban public schools. This means that school access policy is not effectively implemented either. Because local governments are not willing to sharply increase the funding in education, they have to use policy instruments to disqualify some migrant children and exclude them from the urban public education system. The evidence in cities C and H shows that migrant families have to meet a number of strict certificate requirements before the children in these families can be accepted by urban public schools. Migrant children who cannot present the required certificates have no chance of studying in urban public schools.

Insufficient funding puts migrant children in a disadvantaged position in urban education. Beyond that, it is also found that migrant children differ in terms of access to public schools. Some migrant children are even more disadvantaged than others. Migrant families tend to be concentrated in fringe areas of the cities. The schools located in fringe areas are faced with greater numbers of migrant applicants than those

near the city centre. Although insufficient funding is a universal problem facing local schools, this issue is more serious when it comes to the schools in fringe areas. Because the study places available are far exceeded by demand, these schools are overcrowded and have to decline a large number of migrant children. This means that those migrant children living in fringe areas are more disadvantaged in terms of school access than those near the centre of the city. Meanwhile, because study places are limited, local schools fill up to capacity quickly in the first year. Those migrant children coming to the city aged eight or above have much less chance than their younger counterparts of being accepted into urban public schools. In this case, public education in the city becomes a first-come, first-served system.

## **Chapter 7 Exam-Oriented Education, Equal Opportunity in Education, Policy and Implementation**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the implementation of equal opportunity policy (Chapter 1). The central government requires urban schools to make sure that migrant children can have equal opportunity in education in urban public schools. As discussed in Chapter 5, equal opportunity in education refers to three issues: equal school admissions criteria, non-segregation and equalisation of academic performance. First, central government requires that urban schools apply the same school admissions criteria when they recruit urban children and migrant children. Second, migrant and urban children must study in the same classes: student segregation is not allowed. Finally, urban schools should reduce the gap in academic performance between urban and migrant children. They should provide help to those migrant children who have difficulties in their studies.

This chapter aims to answer the second group of sub-questions of the thesis which are as follows (Chapter 1 and 4):

- Q2.1 What are the factors that affect the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.2 What is the impact of these factors on the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.3 To what extent is equal opportunity policy effectively implemented? That is, do urban schools apply equal admission criteria, follow the principle of non-segregation and help out migrant children in study, as required by the central government in practice?

This chapter consists of four sections. The first two sections answer the first sub-question. As discussed in Chapter 3, the exam-oriented education system (i.e. high stakes testing) has a significant impact on educational equality and policy implementation. On the basis of this theory, the first two sections test whether the

exam-oriented education system affects implementation of equal opportunity policy. In particular, they look at how the exam-oriented education system affects the decisions made by urban public schools and migrant parents. The first section focuses on the exam-oriented activities in schools, while the second section focuses on the exam-oriented parenting style of migrant parents.

The third section puts exam-oriented schools and parents together and describes the workings of exam-oriented education system. It outlines the central hypothesis of the chapter: i.e. any policy that is not in accord with the objectives of the exam-oriented education system will not be effectively implemented. Such a hypothesis argues that the exam-oriented education system is the most important factor affecting the implementation of equal opportunity policy.

The final section tests the hypothesis in the third section and answers the latter two sub-questions. First, it discusses the impact of the exam-oriented education system on the implementation of equal opportunity policy. Second, it assesses whether each of the three policy goals relating to equal opportunity in education have been successfully achieved.

The analysis in this chapter is based on the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews (six principals, six teachers, 42 students and one migrant parent) and documentary evidence collected in cities C and H. It should be stressed at the outset that the findings being discussed in this chapter are based on a small sample. Some of the findings are confined to the five schools interviewed in the fieldwork, and may not be generalised to other schools.

### **7.1 Exam-Oriented Education and School Competition**

This section focuses on the incentives and goals that schools face and the decisions that schools make within an exam-oriented education system. Drawing on empirical evidence in cities C and H, the first subsection discusses the rewards and the sanctions attached to examination results, while the second explores competition measures developed by local schools in response to these rewards and sanctions.

### **7.1.1 Principal Promotion and School Reputation**

To local schools in cities C and H, examination results matter. The reasons are twofold. The first relates to the career of principals. As noted in Chapter 5, government officials, including those in the education system, are promoted by superior governments. The examination results are one of the most important indicators used by district education bureaus to assess the performance of local schools and school principals. In those schools where students attain better examination results, the principals are more likely to get promoted to official positions in local education bureaus.

The close relationship between examination results and the career prospects of school principals is reflected in the regulations published by local governments. The *Implementation Plan of School Leadership Assessment* published by the Education Bureau of District Y in City H (2007) lists a number of indicators which are used to assess the performance of schools. Among others issues, the document states that “the emphasis of assessment is placed upon the “substantive performance” (*gongzuo shiji*) of schools” (Article 2). The term “substantive performance” has two key elements: the enrolment rate and the examination results of students. The career prospects of principals are heavily reliant on the results of assessment. As stated in *Temporary Methods of Principal Management of District Y in City H*: “the results of school assessment are important standards for awards, sanctions, promotion or demotion of principals.” (Education Bureau of District Y in City H, 2008, Article 31)

The assessment and promotion standards in city C are very much the same. According to the *Assessment Plan of School Assessment of District Y in City C* (Education Bureau of District Y in City C, 2008), school performance is scored in accordance with the proportions of students in the schools that pass or excel in the examinations. In particular, Article 4 of the document set out the awards and sanctions corresponding to different assessment scores. Those school principals who are assessed as excellent or good will be “awarded with extra bonuses and praised publicly within the education system”. Those principals who fail the assessment will have their bonuses cut. The principals with the lowest scores in the assessment for two consecutive years will be subject to both economic and administrative sanctions.

The second reason relates to the reputation of the schools. As noted in Chapter 2, parents in China are very keen for their children to be well-educated. To achieve this goal, they hope their children will go to good primary and junior secondary schools and therefore lay strong foundations for their later studies.

There are no league tables in China which publish the overall performance of schools. District education bureaus carry out the assessments, but the results are only known by a small number of people who are directly involved in those assessments. The parents, therefore, do not have official information on the basis of which they can evaluate whether a school performs well or not in terms of examination results (Teacher A, Middle School TS; Teacher B, Middle School TW; Teacher F, Middle School QT).

However, this does not mean that the parents know nothing about the school performance. In effect, because the examination results are very important to the parents, they actively enquire about them in different schools through various unofficial channels or indicators. The schools, therefore, are differentiated by examination results. The schools with higher examination scores are labelled as good schools, while those with lower scores are labelled as bad schools. The reputation of a school is closely related to its examination results. This is exemplified in the interview with Teacher F:

Middle School HT is the best school in city H. Of course, whether it is good or not is subjective. The general public normally believes so. Everybody says so. It is the best school in their mind. Why does the general public believe it is the best? First of all, it has the highest school admission score. Second, the examination results that the students in that school can achieve are also quite good.

Principal D in School TW expressed similar views:

Every family wants their sons or daughters to be successful. If a school cannot guarantee good examination results for the students, who will study in this school? The point is still that too much attention is paid to academic results, while other qualities are ignored.

### 7.1.2 Exam-Oriented Activities in Schools

Since the examination results are associated with the career prospects of principals and the reputation of schools, schools compete with each other fiercely to help students get better results. School activities are very exam-oriented. In order to succeed in this competition, an overwhelming majority of school activities revolve around improving examination results. The fieldwork found that these exam-oriented school activities could be broadly classified into two categories: personnel management activities and teaching activities.

First, with regard to personnel management activities, the principal assessment system based on examination results applies to personnel policy in schools as well. It is conventional practice for schools to relate rewards, sanctions and promotion to the quality of teachers, which is measured by the examination results of the students.

For example, in 2008, Middle School TS published the *Measures on Awards and Sanctions related to Education Quality*, which explained various types of awards and sanctions related to examination results. “If the classes’ average scores in any subjects are ranked as the first, the second or the third in the same grade, the class teachers would be awarded with 200 Yuan, 100 Yuan and 80 Yuan respectively” (Article 4.1).

The teachers who can achieve higher examination scores are more likely to be promoted in schools. If a teacher wants to apply for teaching titles<sup>34</sup> (*jiaoshi zhicheng*), he or she has to be subject to an assessment of his or her teaching quality. “The applicants must first and foremost report their substantive performance in teaching in the application...” (Middle School TS, 2011, Article 2.2). In other words, if a class teacher wants to get higher teaching titles, his or her class must get better examination results.

Second, teaching activities revolve around examination results. Every year, education bureaus in cities C and H publish the *Guidelines on Entrance Examinations (kaoshi dagang)* which outline the key points to be examined in the entrance examinations. In

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<sup>34</sup> The most common teaching titles teaching staff applied for were intermediate teachers (*zhongji jiaoshi*) and senior teachers (*gaoji jiaoshi*)

order to get better academic results, schools and teachers strictly follow the *Guidelines*. Those subjects and knowledge mentioned in the *Guidelines* are classified as key subjects (*zhuke*) (e.g. mathematics, Chinese and English) or key points, while those that are outside the scope of the *Guidelines* (i.e. they will not be examined in the entrance examinations) will merely be briefly mentioned or may even be omitted in classes.

It is exam-oriented teaching after all. What I teach in classes depends on what you examine in the examinations. (Teacher E, School YC)

Maybe as you already know, education now is rather pragmatic... Especially for those teachers in charge of graduation classes (*biyeban*), we require their teaching to be conservative. What is taught in the classes will be strictly following what is expected to be examined. (Teacher F, School QT)

It is found in the interviews with the students at the five schools that it is normal practice to hold in-term examinations. The students must participate in these examinations. The frequency of in-term examinations varies from one school to another, and in-term examinations are much more frequent in middle schools than in primary schools. In some cases, “there are examinations every month”. (Teacher E, School YC)

The main reason for holding in-term examinations is to make sure that the students are well-prepared for the entrance examinations by sitting mock examinations. These in-term examinations are carefully designed by experienced school teachers who are familiar with the entrance examinations. For example, Middle School QT formed an Education Research Group (ERG) (*jiaoyanzu*) in order to improve students’ academic results in entrance examinations. An important part of ERG’s work was to analyse and predict entrance examination papers and then design mock examination papers. As Teacher E supervising the ERG explained in the interview:

Huge effort has been made to analyse the Entrance Examination for Senior Secondary Schools...We need to build up the ability to analyse the examination papers. ... We not only analyse the examination papers of the last year, but also the past few years and then work out the

regularities hidden behind the examination papers. Only in this way can we make sure our students are more confident in entrance examinations.

## **7.2 Migrant Parents with Exam-Oriented Minds**

This section discusses the involvement of migrant parents in their children's education. The focus is placed upon the parenting style of migrant parents: there is evidence that migrant parents are exam-oriented. This not only means that they press their children very hard to get better examination results, as is also the case among urban parents (Chapter 2), but also refers to the fact that they do almost nothing else in their children's education. Better education is narrowly defined by these parents as attaining higher examination scores. The first part of the section discusses the socioeconomic status of migrant parents and the support they provide to their children's education. The second part discusses the exam-oriented attitude and behaviour of migrant parents.

### **7.2.1 Family Background and Parental Support in Study**

The socioeconomic status of parents has a very important effect on the education of children. The concept of socioeconomic status is widely examined in social sciences and commonly includes three dimensions: educational attainment, occupation and income (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). The socioeconomic status of parents represents the family background of children and shapes children's opportunities and their educational results. There is evidence that children from disadvantaged families with parents who are less well-educated and who engage in poorly paid and less prestigious jobs may have limited learning resources at home (Evans, 2004) or have fewer opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities (Coleman et al., 1966; Coleman, 1988; Sirin, 2005).

Educational resources are not evenly distributed between different regions. In particular, there are far fewer educational resources in rural than in urban areas (Chapter 2). The result of this is that rural residents and rural-urban migrants in China receive less education than urban residents (Chai and Cheng, 2008, pp.88-89; Cao, 2001, p.78). The data collected in this thesis supports this point. The evidence suggests that many migrant parents are not well-educated.

36 migrant children and six urban children were interviewed in the fieldwork (Chapter

4). During the interviews, they were all asked about their parents' educational levels. As shown in table 7.1, only 3% had completed higher education. Two thirds of migrant parents had finished junior secondary education, and 15% of migrant parents had not completed compulsory education. There are migrant parents who had dropped out of school even before completing primary education (Student BG). In comparison, all twelve urban parents had completed compulsory education, according to the interviews with six urban children. Two urban parents had completed higher education, six had completed high school and four had completed junior secondary education.

Table 7.1 Education Background of Migrant and Urban Parents

| Education                  | Migrant Parents |            | Urban Parents |            |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                            | Number          | Proportion | Number        | Proportion |
| Primary Education          | 11              | 15.3%      | 0             | 0.0%       |
| Junior Secondary Education | 43              | 59.7%      | 4             | 33.3%      |
| Senior Secondary Education | 16              | 22.2%      | 6             | 50.0%      |
| Tertiary Education         | 2               | 2.8%       | 2             | 16.7%      |
| Total                      | 72              | 100%       | 12            | 100%       |

Sources: Interviews with 36 migrant and 6 urban children in cities C and H

Education and employment are interrelated. Since the onset of the economic reform, China has revived its meritocratic system which has had a history of more than 1300 years. Occupation and income are largely determined by the education that people have received and the skills they have learnt. Because migrants were not well-educated in their rural hometowns, it is very difficult for them to find stable and well-paid job opportunities after they arrive in cities (Chapter 6).

The interviewers also asked migrant children about both of their parents' occupations. As shown in Table 7.2, more than one fifth of migrant parents were self-employed. Most of them opened up small shops or market stalls, selling vegetables, repairing shoes, or fluffing cotton fillers. Factory or construction work, driving and making deliveries were also common forms of employment among migrant parents. Meanwhile, another one fifth of migrant parents were unemployed.

It should be noted that the table only lists the main occupations of migrant parents. It was also found in the interviews that some parents do more than one job to increase

their income. For example, migrant student BB reported that his parents fluffed cotton fillers as a main occupation. Apart from that, his parents also opened up a small stall and sold cold drinks during evenings in the summer. This finding confirms the interviews with government officials, who reported that migrant parents do not have stable jobs and are highly mobile (Chapter 6). Moreover, it also suggests that migrant parents do not have well-paid jobs. Otherwise they would not do two or more jobs at the same time.

I was unable to get information on the income of migrant families directly from the interviews. Instead, I use official data and existing research to estimate family incomes. The estimated income of migrant families in city H is derived by calculating the weighted average wage of migrants using the occupational distribution of migrants as the weights. The data for the occupational distribution is from a survey conducted by Yao and Yu (2006), while the data for wage in different occupations and the average family income is from the Statistical Yearbook 2007 of City H. These two sources are used because the occupational classifications they employ broadly match those shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Occupations of Parents of 36 Migrant Children Interviewed

| Occupation          | Number | Proportion |
|---------------------|--------|------------|
| Shop/Stall Owner    | 16     | 22.2%      |
| Factory Worker      | 9      | 12.5%      |
| Construction Worker | 7      | 9.7%       |
| Driver              | 7      | 9.7%       |
| Deliverer           | 7      | 9.7%       |
| Salesman/Saleswoman | 6      | 8.3%       |
| Waiter/Waitress     | 2      | 2.8%       |
| Other               | 4      | 5.6%       |
| Unemployed          | 14     | 19.4%      |
| Total               | 72     | 100%       |

Sources: Interviews with migrant children in cities C and H

As shown in Table 7.3, nearly half of the migrants in city H are manual workers in factories or construction companies. One fifth of them work as cleaners or waiters in hotels or restaurants. The weighted average annual wage of migrants is 26,729 Yuan (£2,700). This is 4/5 of the average wage of city H. On the basis of this, it is estimated

that the average annual income of migrant families is 15,677 Yuan (£ 1,500).

Table 7.3 Occupation Distribution and Family Income of Migrants in City H

| Occupation                                      | Average Wage | Proportion |
|---|--------------|------------|
| Low-Skill Service                               | 22,728       | 20.80%     |
| Manual Workers                                  | 23,427       | 45.30%     |
| Retail and Wholesale                            | 43,150       | 8.89%      |
| Company Employees                               | 39,092       | 13.60%     |
| Management and Professional Staff               | 61,143       | 11.39%     |
| Weighted Average Wage of Migrants               | 26,729       |            |
| Total Average Wage in City H                    | 32,440       |            |
| Average DI <sup>(1)</sup> of Families in City H | 19,027       |            |
| Estimated DI <sup>(2)</sup> of Migrant Families | 15,677       |            |

Notes on Table 7.3:

- (1) DI in the table refers to disposable income. It is the net income after the deduction items such as tax and insurance are excluded from annual wage.
- (2) DI of migrant families was estimated by assuming that the proportional gap of DI between migrant families and the average level of city H was the same as that of wage, i.e. migrant families'  $DI = 19027 * 26729 / 32440 = 15667$

Sources: Data of occupation distribution comes from Yao and Yu (2006); data of average income comes from MBSH (2007)

It was found in the interviews that low socioeconomic status posed considerable difficulties to the studies of migrant students. First, due to low income, migrant children generally live in very uncomfortable environments. In particular, most migrant students do not have their own space at home for study. According to an internal survey by school QT, 76.5% of migrant students do not have their own rooms for studying (Principal E, School QT). The teachers interviewed described in more detail the difficult living environments of some migrant children.

Take one of my students for example. His parents are street cleaners and the family live in a basement. I paid a visit to his home once and could find nowhere to sit when I was there. Except for a table and a bed, there was nothing else in his home. (Teacher A, School YC)

I know a lot of migrant students who are really suffering with their parents in cities. One of my students lives in a storage room with their parents. The whole family lives there. The family does all the washing and cooking there. (Teacher C, School FO)

The result of this is that migrant children find it difficult to concentrate on their studies and are frequently disrupted by daily living activities (e.g. washing up and cooking). As Teacher C in School FO pointed out, “you can’t let the children suffer with you. This is very bad for children’s education”.

Second, the teachers and principals reported that migrant parents could not provide basic educational support for their children. Both principals and teachers pointed out in the interviews that it is important for parents to guide their children in reading or to help their children with assignments at home. The schools also expect the parents to provide as much extra-curricular knowledge as possible to their children. But migrant parents can do neither of these things.

There is an economic reason behind such a lack of support from migrant parents. As noted earlier, migrant parents are not well-paid and thus often have to do two or more jobs at the same time to earn enough money. The result is that they have little spare time to help their children with reading or study.

Some teachers often require the parents to do something about their children’s education. But in fact, some migrant parents could not meet teachers’ requirements at all. One migrant parent in my class is a milkman and he has to get up as early as four or five o’clock in the morning. Meanwhile, he also takes up other jobs in the day time and evening, thus returning home very late. It is impossible for him to help with his child’s studies (Teacher A, School YC).

Compared with urban parents, many migrant parents cannot afford to buy extra-curricular books for their children and thus are unable to provide their children with extra-curricular knowledge<sup>35</sup>. According to the internal survey of Middle School QT, about one out of five migrant families had fewer than 10 books and 62% of migrant families had fewer than 30 books at home (Table 7.4). The average level of book ownership in urban families in China is 105<sup>36</sup>. This means that at least 80% of migrant

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<sup>35</sup> Of course, reading books is not the only way through which the students learn after-class knowledge. A visit to the museum, for example, can also provide after-class knowledge. Like extra-curricular books, such activities need parents to invest time and money.

<sup>36</sup> It refers to all kinds of books here, not only the textbooks or books for educational purpose.

families could not reach the average level of book ownership of urban families.

Some migrant families are so poor that every penny has to be spent on living expenses. For example, at the end of the 2008/09 academic year, the Municipal Government of City C granted every migrant student studying in urban public schools an education voucher valued 100 Yuan (£10) which presumably could be spent on anything. It turned out that some migrant parents did not spend the voucher on their children's education at all, but on purchasing life necessities (Student AI, School QT).

Table 7.4 Book Ownership of Migrant Families

| Book Ownership                      | Number of Students | Proportion |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Less than 10 Books                  | 185                | 22.6%      |
| 11-30 Books                         | 325                | 39.6%      |
| 31-50 Books                         | 142                | 17.3%      |
| More Than 50 Books                  | 168                | 20.5%      |
| Total                               | 820                | 100%       |
| Number of Books in Migrant Families |                    |            |
| on Average (Estimated)              | 24                 |            |
| Number of Books in Urban Families   |                    |            |
| on Average                          | 105                |            |

Sources: Data on migrant families comes from an internal survey of Middle School QT and data on average book ownership comes from News Publication Academy of China (2009).

Apart from the economic reasons, there are also educational reasons behind these migrant-urban children disparities. As migrant parents themselves had received little education, they are frequently unaware of the importance of helping their children with their studies. Even though some migrant parents do want to help their children with reading books or carrying out assignments, they do not know what to do or how to do it. As Principal E pointed out, “a lot of migrant parents did not know how to help their children foster good reading habits” (Principal E, Middle Schools QT). Teacher C described the inability of migrant parents to help their children in more detail:

Migrant parents in our school do not have the ability to help their children with their studies. Be it economic ability or knowledge ability, they do not have the ability themselves and they lack the ability to help their children either...including the children in our school, when they took their assignment home, their parents could not understand the assignment. It was just the assignment for students in Grade Five. The

parents could only check whether the assignment is tidy and finished. They do not know whether the children have done it correctly.

The interviews with migrant children confirmed this point:

I come from a rural village. My mother's educational level is low...My parents do not understand my homework. I wish I could ask for help with studying, but they are unable to help. (Student AJ)

Sometimes there are some difficult problems in the assignments. My parents do not know how to solve them. I cannot solve them by myself. (Student BG)

### 7.2.2 Parents' Attitudes towards Education

The interviews show that migrant parents provide little help in their children's education. However, this does not mean that migrant parents pay little attention to their children's education. The point is that even though most migrant parents are not well-educated, they want their children to receive a decent education and hold great expectations for them. Table 7.5 shows the expectations of migrant parents for their children's educational achievement on the basis of the interviews with 36 migrant children. It can be noted that more than 70% of migrant families (26 out of 36) hope that their children can access higher education. 22% (8 out of 36 families) hope that their children can study in good universities in China.

Table 7.5 Migrant Parents' Expectations for Their Children

| Expectation of Parents | Number of Parents | Percentage |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Do Your best           | 3                 | 8.3%       |
| Good High School       | 7                 | 19.4%      |
| University             | 18                | 50.0%      |
| Good University        | 8                 | 22.3%      |
| Total                  | 36                | 100%       |

Sources: Interviews with 36 migrant children in City C and H

Some migrant parents, because of their own lack of education, are keen to provide better educational opportunities for their children. Some migrant parents are aware of the link between education and employment in Chinese society. They attribute their poverty to lack of education and regard their children's educational achievement as the

only way to escape poverty. In order to prevent their children from living a life of poverty, these parents are willing to devote everything to their children's education. This point is supported by the interviews with the principals:

Some of the migrant parents take education very seriously. They did not want the children to follow their own path (referring to no education and no good jobs). They had a notion of wishing for dragon children (*wangzi chenglong*). (Principal B, Primary School FO)

In effect, peasants take education very seriously...They hope that the dream which was not fulfilled in their life can be fulfilled by their children. They hope to change their family conditions through education. (Principal D, Middle School TW)

The interview with Migrant Parent C confirms that some migrant parents consider education to be a very important issue:

[I expect my children to] go to university at least...Education is very important, because I myself did not have too much education. If I had more education, I believe I could have lived a better life. Due to lack of knowledge, I have a lot of difficulties in communicating and socialising with others. Because I did not read too many books, I felt a little bit unconfident when chatting with others.

Migrant Parent C also said: "...As long as [my children] have the ability, I will do everything I can to support them (with an ambitious tone)!" The quotations above show that some migrant parents have a strong sense of responsibility for their children's social and economic well-being. Meanwhile, it can be noted from the interview with Migrant Parent C that he regards it as a kind of collective glory for the entire family if his children could be well educated and find decent jobs in the future.

As some migrant parents care strongly about their children's education, these parents are strict with their children's study. The interviews with migrant children suggest that many migrant parents push their children very hard with their studies, even though they themselves could provide little help in their studies. Out of 36 migrant students interviewed, 29 students (83%) thought that their parents are very strict. Only three students (7%) reported that their parents are fairly strict and four students (10%)

reported that their parents are not strict. Meanwhile, it should be stressed that many urban parents are also strict on their children's studies (Chapter 2). The interviews with six urban children seem to support this point. Out of six urban children interviewed, five of them reported that their parents are strict on their studies, while one urban student (Student BA) said her parents are not strict.

When the students were asked what exactly they meant by being strict with their studies, most of the students said that their parents arrange their after-school time for them and require them to put academic work above everything else. The most typical answers are as follows. "They require me to do my homework first". (Student AQ) "Watching TV is not allowed unless the homework is finished first".(Student AU) "They allow me to watch TV for one hour only." (Student BL) "They do not allow me to go out and play; they force me to stay at home, read books and study." (Student AX)

The interviews suggest that the strictness of migrant parents is a reflection of the fact that these parents are very exam-oriented. In other words, they press their children very hard to get good examination results. First of all, some students reported that the parents are only concerned with the examination results. "They always ask me about my examination-results. They only care about examination results and pay little attention to how much effort I put into my work" (Student AN).

Second, migrant parents are supportive towards their children's hobbies such as dancing and singing. As long as the families can afford them, the parents are willing to financially support their children to further develop their hobbies. However, such support is not unconditional. If migrant parents find that these hobbies occupied too much study time and have negative impacts on their examination results, they will interfere with children's allocation of time and require them to spend less time on hobbies or to give them up completely (Student AC; Student BB).

Third, some migrant parents also send their children to supplementary schools in hope that the children can get better examination results. According to Principal F in College T, supplementary schools are very popular in H. They are founded by private investors who hire experienced teachers in urban schools to provide extra teaching to

the students. The sole purpose of these schools is to help students achieve better examination results. The average tuition fee is 1000-2000 Yuan (£100-£200) per semester (20 sessions) in city H (Principal E, School QT). The tuition fee of supplementary schools surely poses an extra financial burden on migrant families. However, some migrant parents are willing to pay the tuition fees charged by supplementary schools, even though this means that they have to be more frugal with their living expenses. “Some migrant parents would rather eat less and save more so that they could provide a better education to their children” (Principal C, Middle School TS).

Finally, some migrant parents reprimand or physically punish their children if they do not get good examination results. School teachers complained that migrant parents know little about how to communicate effectively with their children. They seldom think about how to help their children form positive and progressive attitudes towards education. If their children perform poorly in examinations, seldom do they try or bother to understand the reasons for poor academic performance by talking with their children. Student BD recalled that he was reprimanded because he did not do very well in examinations. “My parents are super strict on my study. I scored 80 [out of 100] in the mathematics test this time. They reprimanded me a lot.” In some cases, the parents simply beat their children if they found their children obtained poor examination results.

Some parents beat their children ... Maybe it is because they thought they put so much effort into their children’s education. If the children did not get good results, they would think the children were not working hard and would address this issue in a simple way. (School Teacher A, School YC)

We tell migrant parents how they should educate their children. Some of them simply beat their children. It is very simple and violent. (School Teacher B, School FO).

Some migrant parents came to schools and said: “teacher, if my child is not doing very well at school, you can just beat him”. (Principal D, School TW)

The evidence in this section suggests that migrant parents are exam-oriented. Their

attention is focused on the examination results of their children. The reason for being exam-oriented varies from one parent to another. Some parents are so poor that they cannot afford to be involved in non-academic activities. Some parents are not well-educated, so they do not know how to support their children in studying. Some parents narrow-mindedly equate good education with good examination results.

### **7.3 School Stratification in the Exam-Oriented Education System**

This section will put the exam-oriented behaviours of schools and parents discussed in the last two sections together and analyse the workings of the exam-oriented education system. The main purpose of the section is to underline that the exam-oriented education system is stable and has its own inertia. At the end of this section, I will pose the key argument of this chapter: the results of implementation of equal opportunity policy depend on whether the policy is in agreement with the objectives of the exam-oriented education system.

Traditionally, resources in basic education were allocated unevenly, strongly in favour of key schools (Chapter 2). Due to the advantage in access to education resources, key schools got better examination results. This led to a self-reinforcing process. Higher levels of education funding were injected into these schools to further their development. More money available for payroll enabled the schools to attract more highly qualified teachers. Better academic results attracted more applicants and put the schools in an advantageous position in selecting talented students. Qualified teachers and talented students, in turn, resulted in better academic results and more education funding. The result was that inequality in education resources between key schools and non-key schools was enlarged by this cycle.

The key point is that the competition can differentiate the competitors and impose rewards or punishments to the winners and losers. Favourable conditions such as sufficient funding, talented students and qualified teachers attract one another, helping strong schools maintain their academic strength, while unfavourable conditions also cluster together as well, achieving the opposite result. This is a type of path dependence based on increasing returns (Chapter 3). Once a school gains an initial advantage, it would be less and less costly for the school to further develop its

advantage. Talented students and experienced teachers will automatically join the school which spends less and less effort in attracting them.

Under the banner of promoting equalised development of compulsory education initiated in 2001, central government resorted to a wide range of effort to reduce educational inequality. The government advocated that more resources were to be channelled to rural and disadvantaged schools and the division between key schools and non-key schools was also prohibited (Chapter 2).

However, as shown below, the inequality among different schools is at least as large as before. There is no sign that the stratification among the schools has changed fundamentally. Table 7.6 shows the difference between former key schools and former non-key schools in city C in 2007. It can be noted that education funding and teachers with higher qualifications per student in former key primary schools were 2.8 times and 1.6 times higher than in former non-key primary schools, respectively. The figures for junior secondary schools were 1.6 and 1.2 respectively.

Table 7.6 Unequal Distribution of School Resources in City C

| Ratio of Education Resources of Former Key Schools to Former Non-Key Schools | Primary School | Junior Secondary School |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|
| Education Funding in Total   | 1.5            | 1.2                     |
| Education Funding per Student  | 2.8            | 1.6                     |
| Teachers with Bachelor Degree or above per Student                           | 1.6            | 1.2                     |
| Senior Teachers per Student  | n.a.           | 1.2                     |

Source: Development and Reform Committee of City C (CDRC, 2007)

In an interview, Teacher E also pointed out that education stratification was still in place following the central government reform to promote educational inequality:

There are still differences among the urban public schools...It was like a pyramid-shaped structure. In every district, there are one or two schools with a high reputation. Of course, the schools below them have their own specialties as well.

According to the interviews with Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher E, urban schools within the pyramid-shaped structure can be divided into three categories. At the top of

pyramid are four or five top prestigious schools (*mingxiao*). These schools attract the most talented and the best teachers. In the middle are former key schools. At the bottom are a large number of so-called normal schools (*putong xuexiao*).

There are four reasons behind the persistence of education stratification. First, a school's academic advantage (or disadvantage) has built up cumulatively and does not diminish simply by eliminating the label of key school or non-key school. Experienced teachers would maintain a school's advantage as long as they are employed by the same school.

Second, local education bureaus are still encouraging competition among the schools to boost the overall quality of education. "The localities are still doing this. This summer vacation, city H is still holding the competition for beacon schools (*shifanxiao*) and reputational schools (*mingxiao*)" (Teacher E, Primary School YC). No one now mentions key schools or non-key schools, but former key schools are relabelled as "beacon schools" (*shifanxiao*) which enjoy the same kinds of advantages as before (Chapter 2).

Third, the school selection fee is another factor that results in inequality between schools. The number of applicants to a school reflects the popularity and the demand for education resources in that school. There is a supply and demand principle in place. The top schools are most oversubscribed and charge higher school selection fees than any other schools in the pyramid. Take city H for example, the referenced school selection fee set by local education bureaus is ¥25,000 (£2,500)<sup>37</sup>. In practice, this becomes the minimum amount of school selection fee the schools normally charge. For top schools, the school selection fees can be as high as ¥80,000 (£8,000) - ¥100,000 (£10,000) (Principal F, College T).

Even though the schools with good examination results cannot get additional funding from the government for better examination results as they used to do (Chapter 2), they can get additional funding from the parents in the form of school selection fees. During

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<sup>37</sup> The school selection fee is usually a one-off fee.

the interviews, Teacher F in School YC revealed that the quota of students paying for school selection fees in each school is 15%. That is to say, for every 100 students the school recruits, 15 of them can be school selection students (*zhexiaosheng*). For a top school which recruits 180 students every year, the school can get ¥2.2 million - ¥3million<sup>38</sup> (£216,000 – £300,000) in additional funding by charging school selection fees. If the schools use additional funding to strengthen their academic advantage, the inequalities between urban public schools will be maintained or even deepened.

Finally, as long as competition remains, enduring school stratification will continue as before. As noted in Section 7.1, under the exam-oriented education system, schools are under huge pressure to compete. The leading schools are concerned with protecting their advantaged position, while disadvantaged schools will seize every opportunity available to shorten their gap with the leading schools. This competitive spirit maintains the gap between schools and thus largely offsets many external efforts aiming to promote educational equalities.

The analysis above demonstrates that the exam-oriented system, as an institution, is very stable. The result of such stability is that the decisions and behaviours of policy actors are systematically produced and reproduced. As long as the entire education system is exam-oriented, schools, parents and students will keep pursuing better examination results. In return, as they are pursuing good examination-results, they are maintaining the exam-oriented education system. In such an institution, pursuing good examination results is the only choice the individuals can make. Put differently, the institution and the individuals “lock in” each other.

The implications of the stability of the exam-oriented education system to policy implementation are that this system per se is very resistant to external interventions. Such an exam-oriented education system results from the education policy formulated at the beginning of 1980s, and demonstrate the characteristics of path dependence in the follow decades (Chapter 3). If the objective of a policy is to discourage individuals from pursuing good examination results, it is very likely that the policy will not be

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<sup>38</sup> The figures here are calculated as follows:  $180 \times 15\% \times 80000 = 2,160,000$ ;  $180 \times 15\% \times 100000 = 3,000,000$

implemented. Conversely, if the objective of a policy is to encourage individuals to pursue good examination results, this policy is likely to be easily implemented. In the next section, I will test this argument using equal opportunity policy (including school admissions, non-segregation and educational equalisation policies) as the example.

## **7.4 Implementing Migrant Children's Education Policy in an Exam-Oriented System**

This section discusses the policy results of the exam-oriented education system. Four issues are covered in this section: school admissions criteria; non-segregation and academic support in urban public schools; academic difficulties facing migrant children and equalisation of academic performance in urban public schools. All four issues are directly relevant to equal opportunity policy (Chapter 1 and 5). The focus of analysis will be on the extent to which the central government policy has been achieved and the extent to which the evidence supports the argument posed at the end of Section 7.3.

### **7.4.1 School Admission Criteria**

Due to school stratification, different schools have different numbers of applicants. When a school has more applicants than it can accommodate, urban public schools have three methods to select students. The first method is computer lottery (*weiji paiwei*). This is the most basic, and the only officially recognized, method of selection for school admissions. In other words, every applicant should in theory be accepted into urban public schools via a computer lottery (Education Bureau of City C, 2011; Education Bureau of City H, 2010). It should be stressed that this method only applies to those students who live within the catchment areas of schools. The students living outside the catchment area of the school will not be considered by the computer system (Principal C, School TS).

The second method is the use of school admission or entrance examinations (*ruxue kaoshi*). The school designs admission examinations and requires applicants to take them. The students with high examination scores are selected into the school. The purpose of setting up admission examinations is to select in students with high academic ability to maintain or strengthen the overall academic performance of the

schools.

The interviews with students and principals suggest that selecting students by examination scores is a common practice among the schools. “You can choose to be allocated by the computer system or apply for the school that you want to go to. Of course, whether or not you can attend that school depends on your examination scores.” (Student AE) “We can participate in computer lottery. But if we want to attend a specific school by ourselves, we have to take the examinations of that school.”(Student AU) “You have to take the examinations if you want to attend that school. As long as your examination scores are good, you can attend that school.” (Student BB)

The interviews with school teachers and principals suggest that some migrant children are behind with their studies. The school does not want to be overburdened helping these migrant children or to have its standards diminished by these children. So the school uses entrance examinations to exclude these children.

Only good students were enrolled...I do not mean they behave well or anything. It is just that they can catch up with their study and we do not have to worry about them too much. And they demonstrated good ability....It is because our school could not take in all the applicants. For instance, we had 10 study places left but there were 100 applicants. We would hold examinations and recruit some good students. We had no other choice but to select by academic merit. (Teacher C, School FO)

As long as they meet the certificate requirements<sup>39</sup>, they can apply [for study places in our school]. Then we will hold examinations to select those good students...We have no other choice. (Principal A, School TS)

One point is worth special attention. The fact that both the principal and the teacher reported having no other choice confirms the argument in the last section: the schools are “locked in” to the exam-oriented system. Almost everything that a school does has to serve the purpose of achieving good examination results. The central government forbids local schools at the compulsory education stage (i.e. primary schools and

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<sup>39</sup> See Section 6.4

junior secondary schools) from setting up entrance examinations or selecting students by examination scores (Chapter 2). So what the schools are doing is actually a breach of the *Compulsory Education Law* and a non-implementation of the equal opportunity policy. The law is being violated because following the law will harm the local schools' interests. The policy is not implemented because its goal runs counter to the exam-oriented education system.

The third method of student selection is through charging school selection fees. If a migrant student cannot find a study place via the computer lottery or school admission examinations, the parents of the student have to pay for school selection fees if they still want their child to study in an urban public school. As the central government forbids the schools from charging school selection fees (Chapter 2), school admission methods of this kind are also in breach of the law and represent a non-implementation of the equal opportunity policy.

The fieldwork suggested that most migrant families cannot afford the school selection fees. None of the students interviewed paid school selection fees when they applied for study places in cities. As noted earlier, a majority of rural-urban migrants are engaged in low-wage jobs. In city H, the annual disposable income (DI) of migrant families is estimated to be ¥15,678 (£1,500) on average (see Table 7.1). This means an ordinary migrant family will have to pay at least 1.5 years' disposable income in order to send their child to an urban public school which charges the minimum school selection fee of ¥25,000. This is a large sum of money for an ordinary migrant family. Moreover, even though some relatively wealthy migrant families are willing to pay or can afford school selection fees, the chances that they can send their children to top schools are extremely slim, because the school selection fees in those schools are equivalent to 5.3-6.6 times the annual income of an ordinary migrant family.

This discussion on school admission methods suggests that migrant children have to compete for study places if they want to attend an oversubscribed school. This is a consequence of the exam-oriented education system. Migrant students have to either demonstrate that they have strong academic abilities or come from wealthy families. Otherwise, their admissions will be determined by lottery.

#### **7.4.2 Non-Segregation and Academic Support**

Non-segregation is an important part of the equal opportunity policy. The central government policy requires that urban public schools put migrant children in the same classes. Segregation of students is not allowed. This is to ensure that migrant children can have the same opportunities as urban children in their learning (Chapter 5). None of the schools interviewed put migrant children in separate classes (Chapter 8). Equally, none of the students reported that there were classes (as far as they knew) consisting of only migrant or urban children. The proportion of migrant children varied from one class to another. In this thesis, the proportion of migrant children per class was higher in suburban schools (i.e. the schools in the fringe areas of the cities). For example, School TW is near the city centre. The interviews with the students in this school suggest that the proportions of migrant children in different classes ranged from 30% to 50%. In comparison, the interviews with the students in School TS in the fringe area show that the proportions of migrant children were often above 50%. In some extreme cases, there may be only four or five urban children in the class (Student BC).

The teachers in Middle School QT, TS and TW all reported that the examination scores are the only factor that the schools consider in the course of student allocation. This is common practice in junior secondary schools. After the students are accepted in the school, they are ranked in accordance with the scores they get in the examinations. The school then allocates the students to different classes in accordance with their rankings so that each class has students with different academic abilities. Moreover, the schools also endeavour to make sure that the proportions of students with different academic abilities in each class are roughly the same. Suppose there are 300 new students to be allocated to 5 classes. The school will make sure that each class has 20 students who are in the top 100 in the rankings, 20 students in the middle 100 and 20 students in the bottom 100. None of the principals and teachers interviewed said they allocate the students on the basis of the *hukou* status. But Teacher F in School QT did point out that it might be worthwhile to consider the role of the *hukou* status in the course of student allocation.

There are too many factors in place if we consider the factor of *hukou* status. Whether we should factor this in is a challenge to us. In the future, maybe we should consider whether to factor it in so that migrant students will not be too concentrated in some classes.

The central government requires local schools to help migrant children who have difficulties in their studies. This is to ensure that migrant children can catch up with urban children in their studies and the gap between two groups of children can be reduced (Chapter 1 and 5). It was found in the interviews that every school organises after-class sessions to help migrant children who are struggling with their studies. In some cases, the assistance in study takes the form of one-to-one tutoring between teachers or top-performing students and migrant children (Teacher C, School FO; Teacher F, School QT). In other cases, the schools will set up evening classes for all struggling migrant students. Both one-to-one tutoring and evening classes are free of charge. (Principal C, School TS)

The evidence above shows that the policy in relation to non-segregation and academic support is being effectively implemented. Even though migrant children have to face stringent selection procedures before they enter the schools, once they are accepted by the schools, they can study in a non-segregated and helpful environment.

It should be noted that the effective implementation of non-segregation and academic support policy is closely related to the exam-oriented education system. First, although the policy goal of non-segregation is achieved, this is not because local schools intentionally mixed urban and migrant children in the same classes, but rather because student allocation is solely based on examination results. As it happens, there is no segregation of students under such a student allocation method.

Second, it can be argued that the favourable measures aiming to help migrant children in study simply represent the exam-oriented behaviours of local schools. Before 2001, local schools were not accountable for the examination results of migrant children who were often placed in separate classes from urban students (Chapter 5). Whether or not migrant children could achieve good examination results was irrelevant to the overall measure of local schools' academic performance. At that time, there were no

favourable measures to help migrant children with their studies in urban public schools (Lv and Zhang, 2001). After 2001, central government policy required local schools to treat urban and migrant children equally. After migrant children are accepted by an urban public school, the examination results of these children are taken as part of the overall academic performance of that school. This means that the educational outcomes of migrant children and the reputations of urban schools are linked together. It is in the interests of local schools to help migrant children achieve better examination results.

The analysis above further confirms the argument in section 7.3. The exam-oriented education system is a very strong institution. Local schools are highly motivated to pursue better examination results. The policy relating to non-segregation and academic support is effectively implemented because the objectives of this policy are in line with the exam-oriented education system.

#### **7.4.3 Academic Difficulties of Migrant Children**

The interviews with migrant children show that these children do encounter difficulties in their studies while they are in urban schools. Some migrant children reported that they lag behind in their studies compared with urban children. This is especially the case for those migrant children who did not start their education in urban schools at the very beginning but came to cities when they were older.

This issue is caused by inequality in the standards of education between rural and urban schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, the educational standards in rural schools tend to be much lower than those in urban schools. Therefore, when rural children migrate to cities, some of them find that their academic abilities are below the average level of urban public schools. They tend to find that they do not have as good a foundation as urban students. In particular, some migrant children reported that they have difficulties in understanding what the teachers are talking about in class. “When I first came to school, my study was not good, because the knowledge that was being taught here was different from what I had learnt in the hometown school” (Student AG). Teacher B in School FO raised the same issue in the course of interview: “I have a student who came to this [primary] school when he was in Grade 3. He learnt very

little before he came here. In three years in rural schools, he had mastered very little knowledge.”

It was found that migrant children find themselves lagging behind most in English. “I could not speak English when I was here at first. I did not learn English in primary school, so I could not catch up at first.” (Student AX) Urban Student AT also reported this issue: “we started to learn English from Grade 1...Some of my migrant classmates started to learn English in Grade 3 or even later. They have to concentrate on English first”. Teacher C in School TS confirmed this during the interview:

The new term started in September. There was a migrant student who was not registered until October. He told me he had never learnt English in his rural school. The urban students in our school had been studying English for years since primary schools. At that time, he knew nothing about English other than a handful of letters. He had to start from zero. (Teacher C, School TS)

Catching up with peers is a challenge but does not necessarily constitute an insurmountable difficulty to migrant children. For those children who lag behind in their studies, it is often just a matter of spending more time and effort to work on the subjects in which they have trouble. Meanwhile, local schools are willing to help these children, as shown in the previous subsection. Therefore, most students are able to catch up with peers. None of the students reported they still lagged behind in their studies when they were being interviewed, but the time that the students had needed to catch up with peers varied. For example, Student AG reported that it took him one year to catch up with his fellow students, whereas Student AX spent three years before she finally could catch up with her peers. Nonetheless, the interviews suggest that lagging behind is a short-term issue.

The problem of a more complex nature is the academic pressure that migrant children have to face on a daily basis. When the students were asked about whether they had any difficulties in study, academic pressure was without exception the first answer they gave to the interviewers. Student AP’s answer was typical among the interviewees: “Not many [difficulties]. I just think the pressure to study is quite huge.” It seems that academic pressure is a long-term difficulty that follows migrant children throughout

the entire course of their compulsory education.

Within the exam-oriented education system, migrant children feel academic pressure from various sources. First, the schools ask migrant children to work hard in school and finish a large amount of homework after classes (Section 7.1). In cities C and H, there are normally six classes in primary schools and eight classes in junior secondary schools every weekday. Each class lasts between 40 and 45 minutes. After classes, migrant children then also have to work for hours to finish their homework (see below).

Moreover, the interviews with the students suggest that there is a notable difference in terms of workload between primary and junior secondary schools. Primary school students normally have less homework, while the workload rapidly piles up once migrant students enter into higher grades of study. The following quotation comes from the interview with a primary student when he was asked about his workload.

Not too much [of workload]. It is quite relaxing...I have more assignments to do before the examinations, normally working until nine or ten o'clock in the evening. At other time, I normally finish it at seven or eight o'clock. Sometimes, when I am productive, I can even finish it at school. I don't have time to play on weekdays... [But] I have time to play on weekends. (Student AC)

In comparison, the answers given by middle school students were typically as follows: "I usually finish my assignment at about ten o'clock." (Student AP) "I usually finish my assignment later than ten o'clock.... I do not have too much time to play, because I have to attend cram classes on weekends." (Student BN)

The majority of the primary school students interviewed do not think that their workload is heavy. "Relaxed" or "quite relaxed" are the most frequent answers (13 out of 15). In comparison, during the interviews, none of the junior secondary students claim that they are relaxed in their studies. They all report being assigned with a lot of homework and have little time for entertainment. Some even have to attend classes on weekends.

The second source of academic pressure comes from fellow students. The students are aware that examination results are very important to them, so they compete with each other intensely to get better results in examinations. “I think good students are very close in ability. When I compete with them, I feel some pressure” (Student AP).

Finally, the parents also impose pressure on their children. Migrant parents press their children very hard on study and ask their children to attend supplementary classes (see Section 7.2). The result is that migrant children feel stressed. As Student AN in Middle School QT recalled:

My father required my kid brother to stay in the top ten in the examinations...Sometimes my brother told me he felt huge pressure. He said he was doing his best, but our parents were still not satisfied.

Some migrant children complain that they feel huge pressure because their parents keep pressuring them about their studies.

Well, my parents would tell me: “if you do not study hard, you will not get a good job in the future. If you cannot find a good job, we will have no future. If we have no future, we will not have a good living.” They kept telling me this. I felt quite annoyed. I would ask them not to compare me with other students and force me to do anything (Student BJ, School TS).

The interviews with urban students suggest that these children also feel pressure in their studies. Within the same exam-oriented education system, the pressure comes from schools, fellow students and parents. However, the key point is that compared with urban children, migrant children are put in a more difficult situation. This is because they lack in financial support from their parents and in some cases grow up in families with inappropriate parenting styles (Section 7.2). This implies that migrant children have to work very hard, often even harder than urban children so that they can catch up with their fellow students or achieve better examination results than their peers.

The interviews show that migrant children do work very hard. This is the point where the parent-child relationship comes into play. As discussed in Chapter 2, the family

relationship in China tends to be characterised by a mutual agreement between parents and children. Parents press their children very hard in their studies, because they think it is for the children's own good. As far as the children are concerned, they understand and accept the intention of their parents. It is the same for migrant children. Even though they are under pressure, they agree with the parenting style of their parents and accept that they should work hard. "When I was studying, my mother is always there to monitor me. So I have no time to play... In my opinion, students should be in such a stretched state in study." (Student BP) "My father is very strict on me. I think it is good for me. It suits his role as my father." (Student BL)

Four out of six school teachers and three out of six principals mentioned in the interviews that some migrant children work harder than urban children. Migrant children are aware that their parents send them to urban public schools because the parents hold great expectations of them. They are aware that their parents invest a great deal of time, energy and even money so that they can have better educational opportunities in urban public schools. As Student AG said, "I understand my mother and father; they work very hard [to earn money] and living expenses here are very high". Such a mutual understanding between migrant parents and their children motivates migrant children to cherish the educational opportunities they have and to study harder than urban children. As Teacher D in Primary School YC described during the interview:

Relatively speaking, migrant children were more hard-working. They knew it was very difficult for their parents to earn money in cities, so they cherished every opportunity the school or their parents gave them. For example, we organized migrant students to participate in a poetry competition...we spent a lot of time rehearsing. If urban children were in such a situation and were required to rehearse time and time again, they would definitely have complained.

#### **7.4.4 Academic Performance of Migrant Children**

The central government policy only requires urban public schools to reduce the gap between urban and migrant children in academic performance. It expects the gap in academic performance to narrow, but does not expect migrant children to attain the same examination results as urban children (Chapter 5).

The academic performance of students is closely related to their socioeconomic status. For example, on average, students from families with lower socioeconomic status in the US and the UK tend to perform less well in examinations (Sirin, 2005; West, 2007). The interviews with the students, teachers and principals in a Chinese context do not seem to support this point. Most migrant families have lower socioeconomic status than their urban counterparts in cities C and H (Section 7.2). However, it appears that not only can migrant children catch up with urban children in their studies in urban public schools, but many of them also outperform urban students in the examinations.

During the interviews, both teachers and students in different schools gave some general comparisons between the migrant and urban children's examination results. Among the interviewees who touched upon this issue, none of them reported that the examination results of urban children were better, and only one interviewee (Student AV) reported that the two groups of children were roughly the same in academic performance. All the other interviewees reported that migrant children get better results in the examinations. "In our class there are many students who worked very hard after they came to city C, so they got very good academic results" (Student BG). "There is a conspicuous difference in terms of academic results. Sometimes migrant children did better in the examinations"(Principal C, School TS). "There is not too much difference between migrant and urban students, but it seems that migrant students generally get better examination results" (Student BB).

During the interviews, the interviewers also asked the students whether the top students in the classes were migrant or urban children. All of them reported that a majority of top students are migrant children. "There are more migrant students who are at the top of the class rankings in examination results" (Student AL). "The top ten students in our class are all from outside city C" (Student AP). "There are several migrant students in our class who are the top students in our year" (Student AY). "The best student in our class is a migrant student" (Student BI).

One explanation for such an unexpected result of policy implementation is that

migrant students worked so hard that they offset their own disadvantages in family background. During the interviews, both teachers and students themselves believed that working hard is the single most important condition for success in school examinations.

I think, for a migrant student, regardless of how poor the family is... even though the student has nothing or the parents are illiterate, s/he can still get good examination results. The main problem I think lies in the students. If s/he wanted to get better examination results, he could always make it, as long as s/he is not too much below average intelligence...The family is just an external condition and I think it is not the most important issue. (Teacher F, Middle School QT)

They [urban students] do not study hard. Maybe that is because their family background is too well-off. I don't know why. It is as if they do not care about their studies. I have several classmates who are like this. They have a very good study environment, but they are very easily distracted by other things or people. (Student AJ)

I think as long as you work hard you can get better examination results, regardless of whether you are a migrant or an urban student. I think the study methods and diligence are more important. (Student AR)

Moreover, it seems that such an “offset” effect can only take place in an exam-oriented education system. As mentioned earlier, one of the features of exam-oriented education is that both study and teaching activities focus on a very narrow domain of knowledge that is expected to appear in entrance examinations. In order to get better results in the examinations, good understanding and accurate memorisation of the knowledge taught in school are crucial. Migrant children may have very few extra-curricular books to read and their parent may not be able to afford the money or the time for the development of extra-curricular knowledge, but they may still get better examination results if they spend more time than urban children in going over what they learn in classes again and again.

The finding that migrant students can outperform urban students should be interpreted with some caution. Such an argument is made on the basis of a small sample. Such an argument cannot be generalised to the entire compulsory education system. The evidence presented above only shows that migrant students can outperform urban

students in the five schools interviewed. Their academic performance vis-à-vis urban children in other schools (especially more prestigious schools) is unknown.

Furthermore, it is also inaccurate to conclude that the academic performance of all migrant children is better than urban students. Some migrant students do struggle in their studies in urban public schools. Even though both teachers and students believe that student diligence is the single most important factor that affects their examination results, the role that the parents play should not be underestimated. In particular, the attitude of parents towards education sometimes may be a very important factor in determining the examination results of their children.

The interviews suggest that not all migrant parents care about their children's education. In some cases, migrant parents are too poor to have any time to think about their children's study (Teacher C, School FO). In other cases, migrant parents do not take education seriously and simply regard schools as being organizations to take care of their children for them.

They [migrant parents] held different attitudes towards education. They thought it would be enough as long as their children could grow up and be healthy in schools. Sometimes the teachers might be a little bit strict on their children's studies. The parents would criticize the schools for providing a poor education service. (Principal D, School TW)

As mentioned in Chapter 2, mutual agreement between the parents and the children is the foundation of the diligent working spirit of migrant children. If the parents do not care about education, the children may not be motivated to work hard. In other words, if the parents are not strict on their children's studies, the children may lose self-discipline. In this case, the children tend to perform badly in class and their examinations. The interviews with both teachers and students support this point:

His father is a construction contractor. ... [This migrant student] eats snacks all the time, even in the class...I talked to him: "do you have anything else to do other than eating?" He replied: "attending the classes". I asked him whether his parents had any requirements of him. "Behaving well in the classes", he told me. I said: "what about the examination results?" He told me: "never mind, we will pay the

money”... His study is not good. I guess families like these are more interested in earning money, but pay little attention to their children’s studies. (Teacher A, Middle School TS)

The parents of that [migrant] student do not discipline him well. His parents do everything they can to make more money. He is overlooked by his parents...His parents bought a computer for him. He does not do his homework after school anymore and plays on the computer until very late every day. (Student BD)

For those students without strict parental monitoring, their academic performance will be further compromised by a disadvantaged family background. Therefore, the academic performance of migrant children tends to be polarised in urban public schools. Either they are among the best or among the worst in class. The interview with Students AI confirmed this point: “good students are migrant students and bad students are migrant students as well”.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the implementation of equal opportunity policy. It answered the second group of sub-questions of the thesis. Compulsory education in China is exam-oriented. Such a system can have an impact on almost every education policy formulated by the central government. The education policy related to migrant children is no exception. Under the exam-oriented education system, all activities in the school revolve around examinations, and local schools compete fiercely with each other to get better results. The pressure to compete comes from both the governments above and the parents below. The schools with good examination results will be rewarded by local education bureaus and enjoy a more favourable reputation among the parents.

Under the exam-oriented education system, the attention of parents focuses on the examination results as well. Compared with their urban counterparts, migrant parents tend to be less well-educated and do not have well-paid and stable jobs. This is in line with the findings in the existing literature. Migrant parents cannot provide as much support to their children as urban parents do. They are either too poor or too busy to provide extra-curricular knowledge to their children. Besides, migrant parents frequently do not know how to help their children with reading and doing the

homework. But this does not mean that migrant parents do not care about the education of their children. In fact, some migrant parents believe that education is very important and hope that their children can receive a good education in urban schools. In practice, some migrant parents are very strict on their children and press their children very hard to get good examination results. These migrant parents arrange their children's work schedules and require them to put study above everything else. Entertainment activities and the development of hobbies must not have any adverse impact on examination results, otherwise these activities will be cancelled. Some migrant parents do not communicate with their children effectively. They simply reprimand or beat their children if they do poorly in their examinations.

The exam-oriented behaviour of urban public schools and parents constitutes a self-reinforced system. The parents compete to send their children to the school with good examination results and the schools compete to be recognized as reputational or prestigious schools. Due to the competition, school stratification emerges and becomes stable in the long run which further strengthens the importance of examination scores. The result is that both parents and local schools get stuck in a system where their only choice is to be exam-oriented.

The exam-oriented system provides a strong incentive to parents and local schools. Any policy which requires parents or local schools not to be exam-oriented will not be implemented, while any policy which is exam-oriented will be effectively implemented. The central government policy requires local schools to apply equal school admission procedure. Because such a policy goes against the exam-oriented education system and harms the interest of local schools, it is poorly implemented. The schools are interested in "cream-skimming" and select those migrant students with strong academic abilities. If migrant children cannot demonstrate these academic abilities, they will have to pay school selection fees or leave their fate to a computer lottery.

The central government policy forbids local schools to put migrant children in separate classes. No school interviewed reported this regulation being violated. But this policy goal is achieved not because local schools intentionally mix migrant and urban

children in the same classes as required by the policy, but rather is the by-product of student allocation on the basis of rankings by examination scores.

The central government policy asked local schools to help out those migrant children who have difficulties in their studies. This policy is well-implemented because it is in agreement with the exam-oriented system and suits the interests of local schools. The examination results of migrant children are taken as part of schools' performance. Urban public schools are incentivised to help out migrant children, because this will improve their own overall academic performance as well.

Some migrant children did not attend urban schools from the start of their primary education. They studied in village schools for a few years first and then came to the cities when they were older. Due to poorer education standards in village schools, these children lagged behind and were likely to be struggling academically when they first arrived in urban public schools. With the help of local schools, most of these children can catch up with their peers. However, this does not mean that migrant children do not encounter any difficulties in urban schools. On the contrary, they have to deal with huge academic pressure on a daily basis. Within the exam-oriented education system, both the schools and parents press them hard to get better examination results and they also have to compete with peers in the examinations. This means that the role that local schools can play in relieving the difficulties facing migrant students is rather limited. The difficulty related to academic pressure is systematically produced by the exam-oriented education system and urban public schools can do little about this.

Some migrant children work very hard or even harder than urban children. These children understand the expectations of their parents and thus endure academic pressure and their parents' strictness. The result is that many migrant children can get better examination results than urban children in the same classes. The central government policy only requires local schools to help migrant children catch up with urban children, but does not expect migrant children to be as good as urban children in terms of their examination results. Existing literature on academic performance of students in the UK and the US suggests that on average the children from lower

socioeconomic family backgrounds tend to do less well in the examinations. The findings in this chapter do not seem to support this point. Migrant children are from lower socioeconomic family background, but many migrant children outperform urban children in the classes.

It should be noted, however, that migrant children are found to outperform urban children in the same classes only. The relative academic strength between the two groups of children within the entire education system is unknown. Furthermore, there are some migrant students struggling academically in urban public schools. These children tend not to have strict parents and may not be as diligent as other migrant children. They are often among the worst in their classes. This means that the academic performance of migrant children tends to be polarised.

## **Chapter 8 School Support, Social Integration, Policy and Implementation**

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the implementation of school support and social integration policy (Chapter 1). Central government policy requires that urban schools should provide support for migrant children so that these children can adjust to their new study environment (Chapter 5). This policy consists of two issues: school support and social integration.

Urban schools are supposed to support migrant children. The objective of school support is that migrant children are able to integrate themselves into the new study environment. According to the policy, school support includes keeping frequent contact with migrant families, getting to know their family conditions and helping out those children with psychological difficulties (SC, 2003b, Article 4).

However, the policy goal relating to social integration is less clear. First, the central government fails to provide a clear definition of “study environment”. It does not state clearly whether it refers to the environment in urban schools or the environment in cities more broadly (Chapter 5). Within the constraints of this thesis, I take the former interpretation as a working definition, equating the study environment with the environment provided by the urban public schools. Therefore, the policy goal of adjusting to the new study environment in this chapter means that migrant children should be able to integrate themselves into school life. The broader issue of adjusting to urban life will not be examined in the chapter.

Second, the central government does not define the meaning of social integration clearly. It is difficult to assess whether the policy is implemented, because there is no definition of social integration in the policy (Chapter 5). This chapter will interpret this concept on the basis of the discussion in Chapter 3. It will examine the concept from four dimensions: language learning, friendship, adjustment to the new rules and absence of discrimination.

This chapter aims to address the third group of sub-questions of the thesis which can be stated as follows:

- Q3.1 What support is provided by urban schools to help migrant children adjust to new study environment?
- Q3.2 Is the policy goal of social integration successfully achieved?
- Q3.3 What are the factors affecting the achievement of policy goals relating to the social integration of migrant children?

The chapter consists of three sections. The first section discusses the intergroup relations between migrant and urban families. It aims to outline the context of the implementation of social integration policy at the local level. The second section answers the first sub-question. It examines the support provided by urban public schools, which aims to help migrant children adjust to school life. The last section answers the second and third sub-questions. First, it examines whether migrant children can integrate themselves into their new lives in urban public schools. Second, it is suggested in Chapter 3 that intergroup relations are a very important factor affecting the implementation of social integration policy. On the basis of this theory, this section tests whether the intergroup relations between migrant and urban children have a significant impact on the social integration of migrant children, and examines the role of school support in fostering intergroup relations and facilitating social integration.

The analysis in this chapter is based on the qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews (five migrant parents, five principals, six teachers, 36 migrant children and six urban children). Again, it must be stressed that the findings reported in this chapter are based on a small sample of five schools. Some of the findings may not be generalised to other schools.

### **8.1 Intergroup Relations between Migrant and Urban Families**

This section discusses intergroup relations between migrant and urban families, which serve as the context of the implementation of social integration policy at the local

level. The discussion in Chapter 3 suggested that the concept of intergroup relations had two dimensions, namely intergroup contact and hierarchy. Regarding intergroup contact, migrant and urban families are alienated from one another. This is first of all reflected in the fact that the two groups of people tend to live in different areas of the city. In particular, migrant families are often clustered in terms of residence. Most of them are concentrated in the fringe areas of the city (Chapter 6). The alienation between migrant and urban families is also reflected in their occupations. Most migrants engage in unstable and poorly-paid jobs (Chapter 7). Moreover, the interviews suggest that migrants are also concentrated in specific factories and companies. For example, in the food company in city H where Migrant Parent C works, at least 95% workers in the workshops are rural-urban migrants.

The third dimension of intergroup alienation is reflected in the fact that the two groups of people seldom interact with each other. In particular, if migrant families need help, they always turn to fellow migrants or fellow villagers (*laoxiang*) for help. None of the migrant parents reported that they would ask urban families for help in the interviews. The following replies are very common among migrant parents:

I never asked urban residents for help. If my child suddenly got ill and I had no money, I definitely would ask fellow villagers here for help. They [urban residents] would not believe you and thus would not lend you money. I definitely would trust my relatives here. (Migrant Parent B)

I have few friends who are urban residents. How can I expect them to help me? We do not have too much contact with them [urban residents]. We and urban residents have different circles of friends. Occasionally I might bump into one or two urban residents. We just have a little chat, but have no intention of deepening our friendship. (Migrant Parent E)

The second characteristic of intergroup relations between migrant and urban families is intergroup hierarchy. The two groups of people do not have the same status in cities. Migrant families are in the lower status group, because they do not have the urban *hukou* (Chapter 2) and their income is lower than that of urban families (Chapter 7). Furthermore, the interviews suggest that urban families think that the “quality” (*suzhi*) of migrant families is generally low. According to Murphy (2004), the term “quality” in post-reform China refers to “the innate and nurtured physical, intellectual and

ideological characteristics of a person” (p.2).

The “quality” of the population was frequently mentioned when principals and teachers talked about their impressions of migrant families. Table 8.1 shows how many times “quality” was mentioned in the interviews with principals and teachers. It should be noted that during the interviews, the interviewers never initiated discussion on issues of population quality; the interviewees touched upon this issue unprompted.

High quality is desired and respected by society, while low quality is undesirable and calls for improvement. As pointed out by Murphy (2004), “...although concerns about *suzhi* pertain to the entire population, groups in lower valued situations are seen to need special remedial attention” (p.3). Most principals and teachers pointed out that the “quality” of migrant families is not as good as they expected, or that it needs improvement. The common lines in the interviews were as follows. “The quality of migrants needs improvement”; “I have noticed a steady improvement of the quality of migrant parents in recent years”; “By communicating with migrant parents, we think we can also help them improve their quality”.

Table 8.1 Counts of Mentioning “Quality” in Conversation

| School Teachers | Mentioning <i>suzhi</i> | Principals | Mentioning <i>suzhi</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| B               | 1                       | A          | 3                       |
| C               | 9                       | B          | 5                       |
| D               | 5                       | C          | 2                       |
| E               | 8                       | D          | 7                       |
| F               | 3                       | E          | 3                       |

Source: Fieldwork Interviews

The interviews show that the “quality” of the population has two meanings. First, it refers to the level of education. This means that urban residents think migrant families are not well-educated. “Most migrants only received secondary education...Their quality level is relatively low”. (Principals E, School QT) Second, it also refers to daily habits and courtesy, namely the behavioural side of social life. The life habits of families in rural areas are different from those of urban families. When rural residents migrate to cities, they continue to follow their rural behaviours. Such behaviours are regarded by urban residents as backward and the representation of “low quality”. For

example, Teacher C in Primary School FO complained that some migrant parents wore slippers or dusty clothes when they went to school. She thought such behaviours showed a lack of courtesy and showed no respect to school staff, representing low quality.

Migrant and urban families do not get along well with each other. Because migrant families are in a lower status group in terms of income, *hukou* status and population quality, they are looked down upon by urban families. It appears that migrant families do not like urban families either. They think urban residents are rude to them. Every migrant parent in the interviews reported that they experienced discrimination in cities.

Discrimination against migrants is very common. Not only in city H. It is very common everywhere... There was a customer who came to my shop to buy some stuff. He said he had no money and would pay me back later on. He just harassed me deliberately. (Migrant Parent A)

They [urban residents] looked down upon migrants. They thought migrants were at the bottom of the city... Once there was a cleaner sweeping the floor. A local resident passed by... He said: "why are you so dirty?" His tone was very rude. Then the cleaner's tone also became very rude. So they started to quarrel (Migrant Parent B).

When you start to speak, urban residents will immediately judge you by your accent. They will say this person is not local. Then they would call you differently and their behaviours will also be different (Migrant Parent F).

The quotations above are only one side of the story. Whether an unhappy encounter is really discrimination is worth further scrutiny. It should be noted that migrant parents reported discrimination based on their interpretation of rude behaviour from urban residents. In other words, they "thought" or "believed" that urban residents discriminated against them. The important question is whether these interpretations reflected true intentions of urban residents. In other words, are those unhappy experiences truly discrimination? The following quotation from Principal C suggests that sometimes they are not.

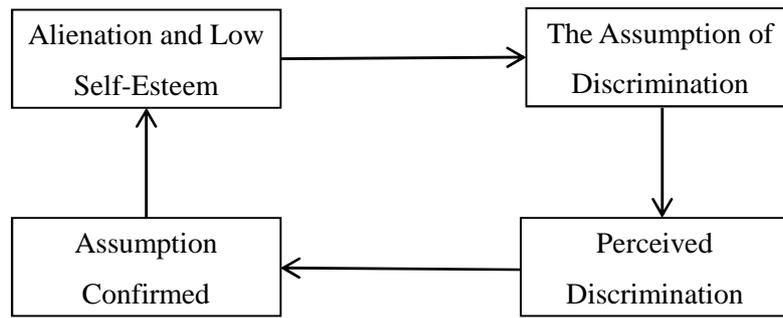
Sometimes, migrant parents had the feeling of low self-esteem (*zibei*).

They sometimes jumped to conclusions too fast. For example, once we distributed textbooks to the students. It happened that some of the textbooks were not delivered to us on time and one migrant student did not get his copy. The parents of this student soon got worried. They suspected that the school had discriminated against their child and did not distribute the textbook to their child. In fact, this was just a misunderstanding. (Principal C, School FO)

The quotation above has a very important implication. It confirms the existing theories that discrimination can be self-fulfilling. As discussed in Chapter 3, the people in lower status groups may have feelings of low self-esteem, which is defined as “the general sense of low self-worth” on the basis of social comparison (Myers, 2007, p.51). There has been evidence that the people with low self-esteem may worry about or expect discrimination (Steele and Aronson, 1995; Steele et al., 2002; Wright and Taylor, 2003). This can result in people in lower status groups attributing certain behaviours to discrimination. For example, a person in a lower status group may attribute the rude behaviour of another person in a higher status group to discrimination. But in effect, the rude behaviour is simply due to that person’s bad mood or bad temper. The implication of this is that discrimination can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and these biased attributions can further alienate one group from another (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Goff et al., 2008).

As pointed out by Principal C in the above quotation, some migrant parents had feelings of low self-esteem and worried about being discriminated against by schools. Therefore, when they found that their children did not receive textbooks, they attributed this to discrimination. Based on the theories discussed above, it can be argued that the feeling of being discriminated against by urban families is sometimes self-fulfilling, and that the intergroup relations between migrant and urban families can be further damaged by biased attributions. In this case, the alienation between migrant and urban families may be systematically produced and remain stable overtime (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Self-Fulfillment and Reproduction of Discrimination



It is important to discuss the stability of intergroup alienation between migrant and urban families at the beginning of this chapter. Such intergroup relations are systematically produced. This implies that it may be very difficult for the two groups of people to develop good intergroup relations if there is no intervention from a third party (e.g. the local governments). Bearing this point in mind, I will discuss intergroup relations between migrant and urban children in the next section. I will also compare intergroup relations between migrant and urban families in urban public schools and in society more broadly. Such a comparison will further highlight the important role of school support (which is considered as a type of third party intervention) in fostering intergroup relations and facilitating social integration.

## **8.2 School Support for Social Integration: School Policy and Study Environment**

This section discusses the support available to migrant children at the school level to help them with social integration. Five types of school measures and policies will be discussed. They are engagement with parents, psychological counselling, improving confidence, equal treatment and poverty relief. Apart from identifying the measures and policies carried out by urban schools, the analysis in this section also looks at the difficulties facing urban schools when they provide support for migrant children.

### **8.2.1 Engagement with Parents**

The central government policy requires that local schools should actively engage with migrant parents and identify the non-academic difficulties facing migrant children. Non-academic difficulties are different from academic difficulties (Chapter 5). It is easier for teachers to identify the students struggling in their studies because the

teachers can interact with the students in the class (e.g. asking the students questions) and use examination results as an indicator. In comparison, it is more difficult to identify non-academic difficulties because the teachers cannot possibly know everything happening after class or at home. Therefore, it seems imperative for the schools to co-operate with parents if they want to provide support for those migrant children encountering difficulties in life and help these children with social integration.

The interviews with teachers and students suggest that all schools make regular contact with migrant parents. Commonly, there are two ways through which school teachers meet up with migrant parents, namely in parent meetings (*jiazhanghui*) and individual meetings. Parents meetings are held immediately after the in-term exams. Therefore, the frequency of parent meetings is determined by how many in-term exams there are in the school each year (Student AO; Teacher C, Primary School FO; Teacher F, Middle School QT). The schools require that every family should send one parent to attend the parent meeting. During the meeting, the teachers stand in front of the class and give speeches to all the parents, summarising the progress and problems of the children at school. “Usually my mum attends the parents meeting...After the meeting she will talk to me about my study and my shortcomings. The teachers told her this stuff...It is something like I did not listen to the teachers attentively...” (Student AQ) “After the exams, the teachers hold the parent meeting. The teachers will report to the parents what is going on at school. They need to communicate with the parents.” (Student AT)

Parent meetings are focused on the academic performance of students. To deal with more specific and non-academic issues, the teachers meet up with parents individually. The teachers either pay home visits to migrant families or make appointments with the parents to meet them at school. The interviews with teachers suggest that migrant parents vary in terms of their contact with teachers. School YC and TW are located near the city centre. Migrant parents in these schools are reported to be more active in contacting teachers. Some migrant parents in these schools do an even better job than urban parents in communicating with local schools. As Teacher B in School TW described:

They all come from rural areas and respect the teachers very much. They are willing to talk about anything happening at home...They often come to school and ask the teachers for help. They are more willing to open their hearts than urban parents...They are more honest and candid. They talk about the trivial issues and how their children behave at home.

In comparison, it is more difficult for the teachers in suburban schools (e.g. Primary School FO and Middle School QT) to engage with migrant parents. The teachers complained in the interviews that these parents do not know how to co-operate with the schools to educate their children. They are less active in terms of engaging with schools teachers. The teachers are concerned about this issue because migrant parents are not doing a good job in providing effective support to their children at home (Chapter 7) and thus need more help from the school than do urban children. If the parents do not contact the school, it is more difficult for the school to find out whether the children have any difficulties in life. This makes it more difficult for the school to help those children who are not well-adjusted to their new study environment. Therefore, both teachers and principals in the interviews pointed out that migrant parents should contact the school more.

Some parents just called me up and asked me whether their children were doing all right at school. Seldom did they come to school and discuss how to educate their children. They send their children to this school to enjoy a high-quality education service. They do not appreciate the importance of their co-operation with schools and teachers. (Teacher C, School FO)

The school and parents should work together [to educate the children]. Migrant parents are not aware of this. Some parents even told us: “we are very busy and have no time to take care of our children. It is your job to educate them.” (Principal E, School QT)

There are more migrant children in suburban schools (Chapter 5). Because the parents of these children do not contact the schools very often, the schools have to make more effort to engage with migrant parents. The principals and teachers have to actively reach out and initiate communication with the parents. School FO addresses this issue in parent meetings. “We educate our parents in parent meetings. We talk about how to educate the children at home and how they should co-operate with the teachers.” (Teacher C, School FO) School QT holds separate seminars to address this issue. “We

hold separate seminars every year and provide the parents with an opportunity to learn how to educate their children at home. We let them know what they can do to cooperate with the school.” (Principal E, School QT)

Apart from keeping in touch with the parents, suburban schools also devise innovative measures to engage with migrant parents. For example, School QT established the Mutual Help Centre which according to Principal E is the only one of its kind in city H. Each year it enrolls the urban parents who are able and willing to provide help for migrant families. These parents then help the school identify or directly help out those migrant families facing difficulties in life.

We hope the parents could help out parents. To be honest, what the school can do is limited. Our funding is limited...We have a [urban] parent in his 50s. It is impossible for him to provide financial help to other parents. So he helps with home visits. He walks into the houses of migrant families with the teachers. (Principal E, School QT)

### **8.2.2 Use of Psychological Consultation Services**

The central government requires local schools to help migrant children overcome psychological difficulties. This is an important part of the social integration policy (Chapter 5). It has been found in media reports and academic research that migrant children may suffer from psychological problems after they migrate to cities. They may become overanxious, get worried easily or have difficulties in making friends at school (Chapter 2).

Local schools can provide help at both the school and the individual level. The help at the school level refers to the formal organizations within schools which provide psychological consultation services. In all five schools studied, there are psychological well-being offices which provide such a service. The interviews with the students confirm this. 12 students in five schools reported that they knew there were psychological well-being offices in the school. This means that the students know where they can get help if they encounter psychological problems. “There is a psychological consultation office in the school; it is in Building Four.” (Student AL)

One major problem with the psychological well-being office is that it is passive in its

functioning. The psychological advisors usually sit in the offices and wait for the children to visit them and ask for help. If the students are not willing to use the service, the staff in the psychological well-being offices can realistically do little to help. It seems that the consultation services are under-used in all five schools. None of the students interviewed had ever used the consultation services. Moreover, some students reported that the psychological well-being offices in middle schools are even more under-used than those in primary schools.

We now rarely use [the consultation services]. Some primary school students use it. There is a psychological well-being office in Primary School TL. I know that a few primary school students went there. We use it less in middle school. (Student AN)

Apart from help at the school level, class teachers can also provide help to the students. The teachers reported that they are willing to help out those students with psychological problems. However, two principals and five teachers pointed out that what school teachers can do is rather limited. The main reason is that, in practice, it is very difficult to identify psychologically struggling students.

The students do not ask me for help very often...For example, some children are not willing to communicate with their parents. They need help but normally do not ask you for help. Then you need to find it out by yourself and provide guidance [for them]. (Teacher D, School YC)

Our teachers can help with psychological consultations. But there are too many students and too many problems out there. Some psychological problems are shown on the surface, but some others are hidden. This requires us to communicate effectively with the parents first. (Principal D, School QT)

This means that even though local schools are willing to help and there are resources and facilities available at the school level, the students are not willing to seek help from schools and teachers. This constitutes a major difficulty to local schools when they implement the policy formulated by central government. But this does not mean that those struggling students are left without help. Instead of making use of school resources and facilities, the students are more willing to seek help from friends and classmates. Among 12 migrant students who talked about the issue of psychological

difficulties in the interviews, only Student BJ said she would ask teachers for help and only Student AY said she would ask her parents for help. All the other students said that they would seek help from their fellow students.

The students pointed out that it is easier to talk about their psychological issues with their friends. They can communicate with their friends well and their friends are more trustworthy. “If I have psychological difficulties, I will seek help from my friends and classmates. I tell them everything.” (Student AX) “If I encounter difficulties, I think my friends can help me more.” (Student AY) “You can talk to your friends and classmates. You can tell them your worries and doubts. Then they can comfort and help you.” (Student BC)

One of the main reasons for some migrant students not discussing their psychological difficulties with their teachers is that they are too shy. “I just feel awkward and do not want to talk to my teachers about this. My teachers are already very busy and tired. If they deal with these [psychological] issues, they will be more tired.” (Student AQ) “If the teachers ask me to go to their offices, I will go and chat with them. Otherwise, I do not talk to them about these issues first.” (Student BK)

### **8.2.3 Improving Confidence**

As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the central government policy does not define clearly the meaning of social integration. The interviews with the principals and teachers suggest that urban public schools have their own understanding of the definition of social integration. The principals and teachers also have their own methods to test whether migrant children are integrated into the new study environment. In particular, three principals and four teachers equated social integration with the confidence that migrant students demonstrate in their social interactions. If they find that a migrant student is lacking in confidence when the student talks to them, they think this student has not yet been able to fully adjust to the new study environment.

According to these principals and teachers, they are able to assess the confidence that a migrant student demonstrates in social interaction by examining how he or she

behaves when talking. Those children who lack in confidence often look uneasy and nervous. They do not speak loudly in front of teachers.

The student was lacking in confidence when he spoke. His voice was very low and he did not look straight into your eyes. (School Teacher A, School TS)

They did not dare to speak loudly. When we asked them questions, they did not dare to answer (these questions). (Principal D, School TW)

There is a student in our class. I think he is very good. He gets good exam results and is well-behaved. We sometimes would let him stand in front of the class and speak. But his voice is extremely low. (School Teacher B, School TW)

The interviews suggest that two factors may contribute to the lack of confidence of migrant children. First, the lack of confidence may be the exterior representation of their low self-esteem. “These children normally have low self-esteem and they are not confident enough”. (Principal E, School QT) Migrant families are often looked down upon by urban families and migrant children may have low self-esteem due to their family backgrounds (Section 8.1). Therefore, they do not have the confidence to talk with teachers. As the teachers described:

When these children are out of schools, they are in a different kind of environment. This may have an impact on them...They may be sensitive to other people’s attitudes towards them. Or maybe it is because their parents’ jobs are a little bit different. I think all these factors may affect their confidence. (School Teacher A, School TW)

I have a student. His family background is not good...He works very hard and he respects teachers very much. This child has only one problem though. He has low self-esteem... This is just caused by his family background (School Teacher B, School TS)

Second, the lack of confidence can also be caused by unfamiliarity with the new study environment. Migrant children become very uncertain of how to speak and behave in this new environment. They are hesitant and uneasy when talking with people. This leads the principals and teachers to think that they are not confident.

When the students first came in, they were not familiar with the

environment. They knew little about city C. They gave me the feeling that that they were uneasy and nervous... Usually they watched how other students talked. Then they would know how they should talk. (Principal C, School TS)

When migrant children first came to city H, they were lacking in confidence or even had low self-esteem. (Principal D, School YC)

To help migrant children with social integration, special measures at the school level are devised to increase their confidence. For those migrant students who were lacking in confidence due to a lack of familiarity with the new study environment, the urban public school did not think there was too much to be done to help these children build up their confidence. Both teachers and principals in the interviews pointed out that, after a while, these migrant children become accustomed to the new environment. The following quotes are typical among the principals and teachers during the interviews. “Children are not like adults. They get familiar with the environment very quickly.” (Principal C, School TS) “Maybe in the first year, these [migrant] children are scared. Maybe it is because they have just migrated to the city. It is not a problem after a while.” (Principal D, School TW) “Maybe they [migrant children] are unfamiliar with the environment for the first few weeks or months, but gradually they will feel better.” (Teacher B, School TW)

In comparison, the schools interviewed are more concerned with those migrant students with low self-esteem. In practice, school support is available to tackle this specific issue. It is found that every school in the study has taken measures to help these children overcome low self-esteem. A common practice among the schools is to hold events where migrant children can demonstrate to others what they are good at. For example, the principals and teachers found that migrant children are generally better than urban children in sports. Therefore, the schools encourage migrant children to participate in sports events. This is to make migrant children aware that they have some advantages and can be as successful as urban children.

[Migrant] children’s confidence is fostered in the process of taking part in various activities... We held sport events called “Sunny Sports” (*yangguang tiyu*) every year. We let them experience championships. (Principal D, School YC)

They [migrant children] had better physical conditions (*tizhi*). A lot of them could get good results in sports events. The students in the same classes would applaud them...We hoped they could reach the stage where they could present themselves. (Teacher A, School TS)

#### **8.2.4 Equal Treatment in the School**

The school support discussed in the last three subsections is in agreement with what is stipulated by the central government in its social integration policy. Apart from this, there are other types of support which are regarded by principals and teachers themselves as vitally important in helping migrant children adjust to the new study environment.

This subsection will focus on equal treatment in schools and the next subsection will focus on poverty relief measures. The central government requires local schools to treat migrant children equally. Equal treatment here mainly refers to two issues. First, migrant children should participate in the same school events and have equal access to school resources as do urban children. Second, school staff should treat migrant and urban children equally in their social interactions. Different treatment is not allowed in schools (Chapter 5).

From the perspective of urban public schools, equal treatment is imperative to social integration. All six teachers expressed this view during the interviews. In fact, when the teachers were asked how the school helped migrant children with social integration, equal treatment was quite often their first answer.

I only know equal treatment [is helpful]. Everyone is the same. When there is any event, everybody competes equally. Anyone can be elected as the student representative as long as you have the ability. (Teacher A, School TS)

The most important thing is to make sure they are treated equally. Regardless of whether you have been here for a long time or you just come...you will not feel you are treated differently because you are the children of migrants. (School B, Teacher TW)

We do not assign labels to the children. We do not discriminate. We treat migrant and urban children equally. We will not let them lose at the starting point. (Teacher F, School QT)

At the school level, equal treatment is institutionalised. In every school interviewed, equal treatment is an integral part of the codes of conduct of the school. For example, school QT has revised its codes of conduct for teachers as more and more migrant children studied in the school. The revised version of the codes of conduct sets out a series of new requirements as to how school teachers are supposed to treat migrant children. Above everything else, the teachers must treat migrant and urban children equally.

Nine Migrant children touched upon the issue of equal treatment during the interviews. They all reported that they are satisfied with how they are treated by the teachers. In particular, they all said that the teachers do not discriminate. The following quotations were typical during the interviews. “I think the school is doing a good job in this aspect [of equal treatment]. Everyone is equal in our class...We move forward together.” (Student AR) “The teachers treat everyone of us well. They care about us all.” (Student AX)

These migrant children are satisfied with the teachers in urban schools, because they find that the teachers are nice and patient with every student. They pointed out during the interviews that urban teachers are much better than rural teachers who are rude and often beat students.

The teachers here make me feel relaxed. I am scared of the teachers in my village school. They are very strict on you. If you make a little mistake, the teachers will ask you stand there and face the wall for a whole day. (Student AB)

The quality of the teachers here is higher. In my hometown school, it was very common to see teachers beating students. Once I was beaten by my teacher. But it was not my fault. The teachers are not allowed to beat students in urban schools. (Student AN)

The teachers here are very good. They take care of us. They are very considerate...The teachers in my hometown were quite ferocious.

(Student BE)

The interviews suggest that school facilities are open to all students. None of the teachers or students reported that the facilities such as computers, the library or labs are only open to a certain group of children. In the interviews, some migrant students reported that they are satisfied with the facilities they can use in schools. They think they are much better off in urban public schools, because village schools are short of computers and photographic projectors. Furthermore, the facilities in rural schools are open to only certain groups of students.

We only had one computer in my village school. Only the students in Grade Six can use this computer...I wanted to learn how to use computer very much back then. But I had to wait until Grade Six to use a computer.  
(Student BA)

The equal treatment policy is not only about how urban public schools treat migrant children. By implementing an equal treatment policy, urban public schools create an environment where migrant and urban children can interact with each other frequently and equally. When the teachers treat migrant and urban children equally, this demonstrates to the students that everyone in the class is equal. The intergroup relations between the two groups of children in urban public schools thus sit in stark contrast to those between migrant and urban families in society more broadly. There is neither intergroup alienation nor intergroup hierarchy between the two groups of children in urban public schools.

First, migrant and urban children can frequently interact with each other on a daily basis. Migrant and urban children are not segregated in schools (Chapter 7). They participate in the same events and use the same school facilities. The children in both groups spend most of their time with their classmates. All these factors suggest that the two groups of children are not alienated from one another.

Second, there is no intergroup hierarchy between urban and migrant children. In the interviews, both migrant and urban children reported there are no differences between the two groups. The following lines are very common among migrant children. “I think I am no different from any other students.” (Student AS) “We do not have the

concept of local children and foreign children.” (Student AX) The urban children made similar points during the interviews. “The children usually do not think about these [issues]. There are no differences [between migrant and urban children].” (Student AW)

The theories of intergroup relations suggest that intergroup hierarchy is the result of social comparison (Chapter 3). Within an exam-oriented education system, social comparison focuses on exam results. Many migrant children are either as good as, or even better than, urban children in their examination results (Chapter 7). This means that migrant children should not have the feeling that they are in the lower status group. Indeed, good exam results can give them some kind of psychological advantage in urban schools. This is very different from how their parents feel (Section 8.1).

### **8.2.5 Poverty Relief**

Central government policy requires local schools to help out those migrant families which find themselves in financial difficulty. This policy is further enhanced by local government policies. For example, it is recommended in both cities C and H that scholarships or free textbooks be provided to poor migrant children (Municipal Government of City C, 2004, Article 2.6; Municipal Government of City H, 2004, Article 9).

Both principals and teachers indicated that poverty relief could be very helpful in aiding social integration. The reasons are twofold. First, Teacher A in School TS reported that migrant children in receipt of financial support do not need to worry about those issues unrelated to their studies. As shown in Chapter 7, some migrant parents without stable or well-paid jobs have to take on several different jobs at the same time to make ends meet. They ask their children to do the housework for them (because they are too busy to do it), or to earn more money for them. Such activities could be very distracting to their education. The children would not be able to focus on study or participate in school events if they spend too much time on housework or earning extra money. This could affect their studies and social interactions with peers.

Second, four principals and two teachers reported that migrant children in receipt of

financial support would know that the schools cared about them. They would feel that they lived in a big “family” where people were willing to support each other. Such a feeling of belonging to a bigger family could help the children adjust to the new environment. “We just want our students to feel the warmth of the ‘family’. We want to make sure no one drops out of school due to financial difficulties.” (Principal D, School TW)

Even though the poverty relief policy is welcomed by urban public schools, it is implemented in an erratic and informal way. Like other policies relating to education for migrant children, poverty relief policy is soft and ambiguous (Chapter 5). The central government policy mentions this issue very briefly without further elaboration on how to specifically help migrant children. Local policy makes recommendations on what to do, but it is up to local schools to decide whether they will follow the recommendations or not. Furthermore, the meaning of “poor students” is ambiguous and there is not a clear definition of poverty in the policy. All of these grant urban public schools plenty of room for discretion. The urban public schools determine which students qualify for financial support, and every school develops its own poverty relief measures.

Table 8.2 provides a list of poverty relief measures used in the urban public schools in the present study. It can be noted that poverty relief measures vary from one school to another. For example, Schools QT and YC provide free school lunches to students in financial difficulties. Schools TS and FO grant poverty relief funds. Schools TW and FO distribute free textbooks to the students in need of financial support. There are even differences within the same type of poverty relief measure. The students in School QT can enjoy totally free lunches if they qualify for the poverty definition of the school. In the case of School YC, some children can have totally free lunches, while others have to contribute some of the lunch fee by themselves, depending on the children’s family income

Local schools are sympathetic to students with financial difficulties, and are willing to help them out as much as they can. “We understand our students and know their situation [of financial difficulty]... So we try our best to help them out. I believe this is

the value of education.” (Principals A, School YC) However, the principals also pointed out in the interviews that it is impossible for the schools alone to solve the entire problem of poverty. In some cases, migrant families are simply too poor. Local schools believed it should be the task of the government and society to help them.

There were some special cases where we wanted to help but were simply unable to do it...There are some extremely poor families. Should something [bad] happen to them, they would not be able to move on in life. This is not something we can solve in the short term. Nor is it a matter of money... In the face of such families, there is nothing we can do actually. (Principal E, School QT)

Table 8.2 Poverty Relief Measures of Urban Schools

| School    | Poverty Relief Measures            | Support to Students in Financial Difficulties   |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|
| School QT | Lunch                              | School lunch is free.   |
| School YC | Lunch                              | School lunch is totally or partially free   |
| School TS | Poverty relief funds               | 5% of migrant students receive financial aids in the school each year.                        |
| School TW | Textbooks                          | Textbooks are free.   |
| School FO | Poverty relief funds and Textbooks | Textbooks are free and 2% of migrant students receive financial aids in the school each year. |

Source: In-depth interviews with the principals

### 8.3 Social Integration of Migrant Children

This section discusses the social integration of migrant children in urban public schools. As discussed in Chapter 3, social integration can be measured using four dimensions: language, friendship, adjustment to norms and rules of mainstream society, and discrimination. Following this conceptual framework, this section examines social integration of migrant children from four dimensions as well: learning Mandarin, friendship with urban children in the same school, adjustment to the rules of urban schools and discrimination against migrant children.

#### 8.3.1 Language Learning

One important aspect of social integration involves communicating effectively with other people (Chapter 3). The basic issue in effective communication is language. An individual has to be able to understand what other people are talking about and make him or herself understood. When rural children migrate to the cities, the first step

towards social integration is to learn the language used in urban public schools, namely Mandarin Chinese (*putonghua*). This can be a challenge for migrant children. When migrant children live in rural areas, they normally speak the local dialect, which can be very different from Mandarin. The teachers in village schools speak Mandarin in class, but they usually have strong local accents. Therefore, many migrant children in urban public schools experience some difficulties in communication at first. Some of them cannot speak Mandarin well, and it is difficult for other children and school teachers to understand them. The following was typically reported by migrant children in the interviews. “At first, I always spoke in dialect. My classmates could not understand me.” (Student AD) “I did not speak Mandarin very well when I first came here...it did affect me a little bit.” (Student BJ)

The principals and teachers confirmed this point when interviewed. “Some migrant children spoke in dialect when they first came here. They did not understand Mandarin and thus could not communicate.” (Principal C, School TS) “The first barrier they need to overcome is the language...We all speak Mandarin in and after class. If other students cannot understand him/her, social integration would be difficult.” (Teacher A, School TS) In addition, some teachers reported that migrant students vary in terms of the effort needed to overcome their language barriers. One teacher reported that it is more difficult for children who come to urban public schools after grade five or six to learn Mandarin.

It can be difficult to learn Mandarin. It is especially difficult for those older children... Migrant children keep coming to my class every year. Only a few of them can speak standard Mandarin. If the students come to our school when they are in grade three or four, it will be fine. But if they come later, it is definitely quite difficult for them to change [their accent]. (Teacher C, School FO)

Even though some migrant children experience difficulties in communication when they first study in urban schools, these children reported that they could learn and speak Mandarin well after staying in urban schools for a period of time. The interviewers asked all migrant children whether they could communicate effectively with other people (Chapter 4). None of them reported that they had difficulties in understanding and speaking Mandarin. The improvement in Mandarin skills is

possibly due to two things. First, school teachers provide help to those migrant children who do not speak Mandarin well. For example, Student AD reported that her teachers often corrected her when she spoke her home dialect at first. In another case, Teacher A in School TW reported that she asked her students to practice Mandarin, because she knew this was very important for social integration. Second, migrant children are in an environment where everyone around them speaks Mandarin. Because migrant children can talk with their classmates in Mandarin every day, they actually have many good opportunities to practice the language. “I can understand [Mandarin] now. There is no problem with communication. Everyone speaks Mandarin at school.” (Student AV) “There are no [language] barriers now. I can understand Mandarin. We all speak Mandarin.” (Student BC)

### **8.3.2 Friendship**

Intergroup relations among the children in school are in stark contrast to the relations between the parents in wider society (see Section 8.2). With the help and support of schools, migrant children can interact with urban children on a daily basis. There is no institutional separation at the school level. Nor is there separation among the children based on their *hukou* status. Within such a school environment, it is easy for friendships between migrant and urban children to develop.

In the interviews, principals, teachers and children all reported that urban and migrant children get along very well in school. The children can make friends with anyone they want to. The friendship among the children is irrelevant to *hukou* status. As Teacher A in School TS described: “it is unlikely that no one plays with a student just because s/he is a migrant child... I know a lot of urban children who like migrant children (Teacher B, School TW)”. Some children believe that making friends with everyone at school is the right thing to do. “Be it migrant or urban children, we should all get along well... (Student AA, Migrant Child)”.

To further confirm the irrelevance of *hukou* status to friendship, the interviewers also asked how migrant and urban children choose their friends at school. The interviewees give different answers including hobbies, gender and study, but no one chooses their friends on the basis of the *hukou* status. First, children with shared hobbies or interests

can become friends. “[I usually play with] those whom I get on with... [I mean] we had a lot in common” (Student AH). “I have three close friends. One of them is local... We just get on well. We knew each other before the term started and got along pretty well afterwards”. (Student BM) Teacher A from School TW confirmed this point during the interview:

Probably personality and hobbies [make students become good friends]. For example, those girls who have similar personalities and styles of talking, they walk together, have lunch together and go home together. Different students have different groups of friends.

Second, mutual help in study is another factor through which the children were reported to become good friends. Some children reported that they make friends with those who can help them with study in the same class. It seems that mutual help provides a good opportunity for the children to get to know each other, and friendships develop at the same time. Furthermore, some children also reported that they are more likely to seek help from those who live close to their homes, because it is more convenient for those children to meet and discuss their homework. “[I usually play with] those who live near my home. We could help each other in study... We go to and leave school together” (Student AN). “I usually play with those in my class or near my home... We also do homework together sometimes” (Student AG).

Mutual help in study fosters friendship. This finding has an important implication. The children with better examination results can easily make friends with others because their help is needed more by their peers, while the children with poor examination results may find it more difficult to make friends. This point is confirmed by Student AK. As he reflected, “[The children I play with] they are good or just so-so in study. I do not have friends who are bad performers in study... They [bad performers] do not like reading, and they like teasing you”.

Finally, there was only one child (a boy) in the sample who claimed to get along well with boys only. “I do not know where my friends come from, because I have never asked them before... I normally get along pretty well with every boy in my class. I do not have too much contact with the girls though” (Student AK).

This thesis is also concerned with how close friendships between the two groups of children can be. One way to examine the closeness of friendship is to look at whether there are home visits between the two groups of people (Dalgard and Thapa, 2007). The interviewers asked if the children in one group had ever paid a home visit to the children in the other. The majority of migrant children interviewed said they had been to the homes of urban children, which indicates that the two groups of children can form close friendships. “I do not go to my friends’ home very often. They come to my home more...There are both urban children and migrant children who come to my home (Student BP)”. “I have several close friends. Two come from city H and others come from Province A. Six came to visit my home when I was in primary school and four came to my home when I was in junior secondary school (Student AK)”. The interview with an urban child also confirmed this point.

We get along quite well...I get along well with everyone in my class. My best friend ZSC is a migrant student. We are in the same class... I know his father is a taxi driver...I have been to his home.

Apart from home visits, the closeness of friendships between the two groups of children is also demonstrated in the fact that they spent time together and “shared” their pocket money with each other. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that during fieldwork there was a migrant student and urban student being interviewed together. The following quotation comes from the group interview of these two students.

Interviewer: Do your parents take you to the parks nearby?

Student AZ (Urban Student): They give me the money and I go there by myself.

Student BA (Migrant Student): My mother never gives me money. I haven’t had Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC).

Student AZ (Urban Student): You haven’t had KFC?

Student BA (Migrant Student): Yes, I remember. You treated me once. But my mother never gives me money to have KFC.

However, the analysis above merely indicates that the majority of migrant children in urban public schools can form good relations with urban children. It does not mean that all migrant children can do so. None of the students interviewed reported having

difficulties in making friends at school. But two students did report that they know some migrant children struggling to make friends at school and who are excluded from daily social interactions. According to the interviews with these two students, there are a small number of students in difficulties, but the problem seems to be serious, because these students are often beyond the school's ability to help, which can result in them dropping out of school. As Student AL described:

...One difficulty is in social communication, and the other is in study. I guess these two are interrelated. Those who dropped out of school were mostly unsociable. They did not talk too much. They were prone to cause trouble. No one liked them. They always did their assignments on their own. They did not dare to ask teachers for help. If they had any difficulties in their studies, they just left them there. Then their studies got worse and worse.

Teacher C in School FO reported a similar case of a migrant child with difficulties in social integration:

Some students did struggle in social integration. They definitely suffered from low self-esteem. This became a vicious circle. They had a poor foundation in their studies and could not catch up in school. Gradually they got worse and worse in their studies and lagged behind.

The interviews here suggest that some migrant children have difficulties in making friends in urban public schools because of their personality rather than their *hukou* status. Unsuccessful social integration is mainly attributable to individual rather than collective reasons. Moreover, it is also suggested here that academic achievement is a very important factor in social interaction. Some migrant children, especially those who did not attend urban public schools from the beginning, are disadvantaged in academic ability and performance (Chapter 7). Being too shy to ask fellow students or teachers for help, they may lag behind further in their studies. Because the students compete and compare with each other in examination results (Chapter 7), these children may suffer from low self-esteem and be socially isolated. As a consequence, they find it difficult to adjust to their new school life.

### 8.3.3 Adjustment to New Rules in Urban Schools

Adjustment to the rules is a very important dimension of social integration (Chapter 3). Social rules govern individual's behaviours. By adopting the rules of a certain social group, people are adopting the behavioural habits of that group. In other words, they will behave like the other members of that group.

When talking about social integration in the interviews, migrant children recalled that they had to get used to the rules in urban public schools. The rules here mainly refer to the codes of conduct for the students in urban public schools. These codes of conduct for the students set out what students should or should not do while in school. The codes of conduct in urban schools are very different from those in rural schools, because urban and rural schools face different problems and have different considerations.

First, some school rules are developed out of consideration for student safety. For example, urban schools are crowded (Chapter 6) and the corridors in the school buildings are quite narrow. It is very dangerous if students keep running around in the corridors. The teachers and the principals worry that this may hurt migrant children themselves and other children as well (Principal F, School QT). So the students are not allowed to run around in urban schools:

The children are energetic. Especially migrant children, they had been used to running around in very spacious places in rural schools. But we ask them to behave themselves as proper students here. If you run around, you will bump into others. Meanwhile, you will make a lot of noise in the corridor. This is not good. (Teacher C, School FO)

The interviews with the students suggest that the incidents do happen when migrant children do not follow the rules of urban schools.

When I was in the rural school in my hometown, I could do anything in the school after class. When I am in this school, I feel I am a little bit constrained. I cannot run around anymore...I have already bumped into someone. His eye was swollen afterwards.

Second, some rules are related to the patterns of behaviour. Urban schools set up the

rules in the codes of conduct with the aim of helping students form good habits. The habits which were mentioned frequently in the interviews with principals and teachers are those related to personal hygiene and courteous behaviour. For example, Middle School QT requires students “to be clean and tidy, not to spit on the ground, not to drop litter around” when they are at school. The codes of conduct in School QT also require students “not to fight back if they are beaten by other students, but to report it to the teachers”.

Principals and teachers reported that migrant children are often lacking in basic knowledge of courteous behaviours and personal hygiene. They thought village schools were to blame for this.

They [migrant children] were not taught how to be courteous in rural schools...The education system in rural areas are not well-rounded...Education relating to courteous behaviours is not very strict in village schools...The environment in rural areas shaped their behavioural habits. (Principal A, School YC)

There are a lot of migrant children who have not been taught how to be courteous in rural areas. There are considerable differences between urban and migrant children in terms of their daily habits. This has posed quite a problem to our work. (Principal E, School QT)

I have a student. When he was studying in the village school, the teachers led the students like a shepherd led the sheep. So when he came to my class, I could not find him. It turned out that he was crawling on the ground. I met up with his parents to talk about this issue. His parents said it was not their child's fault. He was like this when he was in the rural school. (Teach C, School FO)

Even though the rules are very different between urban and rural schools and migrant children have to get used to those new rules, the interviews suggest that most of them can quickly adapt to the new rules. None of the children reported he or she had difficulties in getting used to the new rules. Those migrant children who studied in urban schools at the very beginning were able to get used to the new rules alongside urban children, because the urban children were not familiar with the rules either when they first came to urban public schools. “We actually are not that different. Regardless of local or outside children, we were all unfamiliar [with school rules] at first. But it

got better and better thereafter.” (Student BO) Those children who came to urban schools later had to start from scratch and had to catch up with other students in terms of learning the rules. However, with the help of teachers and students, they were able to learn these rules.

My classmates were very nice to me [when I first came here]. They were very friendly... For example, if you have questions in the class, you should raise your hand. I did not know this at first. My classmates told me everything I should know and pay attention to... [They told me] when you saw the teachers, you should greet them. (Student BB)

When I first came here I was very nervous... [But] since the first day, my classmates and teachers have been very nice to me. They told me everything I did not know...Some of my classmates even taught me how to play, because I had never played [these games] in my hometown. (Student BC)

#### **8.3.4 Discrimination against Migrant children: The Role of Urban Parents**

Discrimination is an important dimension of social integration. If one group is discriminated against in society, it can hardly be said that the group is well-integrated into society (Chapter 3). The discussion in the previous sections found no evidence that either urban schools or urban children discriminate against migrant children in the schools. However, this does not mean that migrant children are in an environment free from discrimination. As discussed in Section 8.1, some urban families look down upon migrant families. The interviews with principals, teachers and urban students suggest that some urban parents hold negative attitudes towards migrant children. These urban parents ask schools to discriminate against migrant children, move their children to other schools or give urban children suggestions on making friends at school.

First, some urban parents ask schools to discriminate against migrant children. These parents feel threatened by migrant children. They think only their own children are entitled to an urban public education. If their children must share educational resources with migrant children, as required by the central government policy, they think their children must claim those high quality resources first. They require that school policy should be in favour of their own children. As Principal B reported in the interview:

Urban parents thought that migrant children were competing for educational resources with their own children. They asked us to put their children in the reserved seats or in the front row in the classroom (Principal B, School FO)

Second, some urban parents move their children out of school. They worry that if their children have too many friends who are migrant children, their children may learn some bad habits from migrant students or perform poorly in examinations. Because of this, they pay school selection fees and take their children to those schools where there are fewer migrant children. These urban parents are often rich enough to afford the school selection fees (Chapter 7).

I have a colleague ... He said that the top ten students in his class all left the school. He told me: “my class cadres (*banganbu*) have all left. There might be various reasons for this. But an important reason is migrant children...Their quality is not so good. I definitely know there are urban parents who think of them like this. (Teacher C, School FO)

I think they [urban parents] are not very happy with this. Especially for those parents who care about education...The parents have this prejudice. They think if there are too many migrant students, the general environment of the class will be affected. (Teacher F, School QT)

School selection by urban families can potentially undermine the implementation of social integration policy. This is because school selection further increases the concentration of migrant children in certain schools. As urban children move out of the school, more and more children who remain in that school are migrant students. As shown in Section 8.1, intragroup concentration can result in intergroup alienation and misunderstanding in society.

Finally, there are urban parents who do not discriminate directly against migrant children, but who do give their children advice on making friends at school. Among six urban children interviewed, two children talked about this issue. Both of them reported that their parents told them to make friends with particular students. “[My parents] told me to make more friends with those who can be beneficial to me. By this they mean those friends whom I can be very close to. We can open our hearts to each other.” (Student AR) “They let me play with those who are good in study, but do not

allow me to play with those sloppy, lazy and badly-performing children.” (Student BO)

The discrimination against migrant children is not welcomed by urban schools. In the interviews, two principals indicated that some urban parents have feelings of superiority over migrant families. “Some parents simply have the feeling of superiority.” (Principals B, School FO) “They [urban parents] have the feeling of superiority. Are they really superior? They are not. It is just a notion.” (Principal D, School TW) This suggests that these two principals do not share the same feeling of superiority as urban parents. Furthermore, none of the principals and teachers interviewed reported that they accepted the requests of urban parents to discriminate against migrant children.

Contrary to the belief held by urban parents that migrant children will have a negative effect on their children, almost every principal and teacher reported that migrant children have good virtues such as obedience, honesty and diligence. They all believe that urban and migrant children can learn from each other by staying in the same classes and schools.

They are very thrifty. What they eat and wear is very simple. In addition, they do a good job in volunteer work. They are very diligent. (Principal C, School TS)

[Migrants children] are diligent. They are seldom late for school. Urban children often oversleep and are often late for school...Migrant children are honest. Some urban children, especially boys, are naughty and lie a little bit...Migrant children...they are honest...They are not good at expressing themselves, but at least what they say is true. I think this is truly valuable. (Teacher A, School TS)

Most migrant children listen to the words of teachers. They are quite united. There are some children who have their own ideas and thoughts...Relatively speaking, they are more obedient. (Teacher E, School YC)

Urban children held similar views to school staff. None of urban children interviewed had the feeling that they were superior to migrant children. They concurred with the teachers that migrant children were honest and the two groups of children could learn

from each other. “They are honest and they do not swear.” (Student BE) “I think outside and local children are the same. We all have disadvantages and advantages. Everyone has disadvantages and advantages.” (Student AR) Furthermore, one urban child reported that he did not agree with his parents’ suggestions on making friends at school.

The notions of many parents are not right...They think if you play with good performers you will turn good and if you play with bad guys you will turn bad...I do not think so. If he or she has self-discipline, he or she will not be like that. (Student BO)

All in all, urban parents seem to be the only group of people who discriminate against migrant children. This can be problematic to the implementation of the social integration policy, because urban parents do not support such a policy and try to undermine the achievement of the policy goals. However, such a threat to effective implementation has not materialised. The interviews quoted above suggest that migrant children do not experience discrimination despite the negative attitudes of urban parents. The reason is that urban parents do not have a direct impact on the policy goal of non-discrimination. Put differently, they do not have direct contact or any social interactions with migrant children. Therefore, urban parents can only affect policy outcomes by influencing the behaviours of urban schools and urban children. Furthermore, it can be noted that neither urban schools nor urban children agree with the urban parents, so the requests for discrimination by urban parents are not accepted. The only potentially problematic issue is that some parents may remove their children from schools. This will lead to further concentration of migrant children in particular schools.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the implementation of social integration policy. The analysis focused on school support made available to migrant children and the achievement of the policy goal of social integration. In general, social integration policy is well-implemented. School support is carried out as required by the central government, and most children in urban schools can adjust to their new study environment.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that urban schools are generally supportive in helping migrant children adjust to new school life. The schools actively engage with migrant parents and try to identify those students who may need help in life. Psychological consultancy services are available at both the school and the individual level, although such services are under-used. Psychological well-being offices and school teachers can help migrant children who have psychological difficulties. Events are held in the schools to let migrant children demonstrate their talents and build up their confidence. Migrant and urban children are treated equally in schools. This creates a friendly environment where the two groups of children can interact with each other frequently and equally. Free textbooks and financial aids are provided to migrant children. In some schools, migrant children with financial difficulties can enjoy free lunches.

School support is not carried out without difficulty. The major issue is that the role that urban schools can play is limited if there is no assistance from other groups of people, such as migrant children, migrant parents and the governments. In some cases, urban schools are simply daunted by the huge task facing them. Urban schools are supposed to keep in contact with migrant families and identify those who are in difficulties. However, some migrant parents are too busy to make contact with urban schools or are not keen to do so. In this case, it is quite difficult for urban public schools to effectively engage with migrant parents. Likewise, migrant children may not be willing to confess their non-academic difficulties to their teachers, and it is difficult for the schools to figure out these issues by themselves. Urban public schools are willing to help out children with financial difficulties, but some families are too poor to be “rescued” by schools alone.

Migrant children do experience various kinds of difficulties in adjusting to their new study environment when they first arrive in urban public schools. They have to learn to speak standard Mandarin, and get used to the codes of conduct in the schools. But this does not mean that migrant children cannot be well-integrated into urban life. On the contrary, the interviews with migrant children suggest that most of them can get used to the new life in urban schools after a period of time. Meanwhile, migrant and urban children can form very close friendships in the course of daily interactions. In this

sense, it can be concluded that difficulties in relation to social integration are likely to be a short-term issue and the policy goal of social integration can be successfully achieved in the long run.

Two factors contribute directly to the achievement of the social integration policy goal. The first is school support. With the help of teachers, migrant children gradually learn to speak Mandarin well and become familiar with school rules. The second factor is the help of classmates. In the course of daily interaction with urban children, migrant children have the opportunities to practice their Mandarin. Meanwhile, the children reported being friendly to each other in the schools and urban children are willing to provide guidance to those migrant children who are not familiar with school rules.

Apart from the help from teachers and class mates, the environment that urban public schools create is another factor likely to account for successful social integration. While none of migrant children mentioned this point specifically in the interviews, this does not mean that it is not important. Migrant families have difficulties in getting on well with urban families. There are no third-party interventions for improving intergroup relations between migrant and urban families. It is argued that such intergroup relations are persistent and difficult to change in the long-term. In comparison, urban schools create a friendly environment for migrant and urban children to interact with each other freely, frequently and equally. The two groups of children are found to maintain a good relationship. Such a comparison suggests that third-party interventions can play a very important role in shaping intergroup relations and social integration. This point was not reported by migrant children, because equal treatment measures take effect indirectly and perhaps can easily be taken for granted by the recipients. Migrant children report that their classmates are supportive and helpful while they are studying in urban schools. But it should also be remembered that this takes place because there is an equal environment in urban schools in the first place. In other words, equal treatment policies in urban schools indirectly contribute to the achievement of the policy goals relating to social integration.

Not every migrant student can adjust to the new study environment. Some migrant children who came to urban schools when they were in grade five or above might find

it more difficult than those arriving earlier to change their accent or correct their dialect. Those migrant children who are too shy to ask for help from teachers and classmates often struggle in making friends and may finally drop out of school. There is no evidence indicating that social integration of migrant children is adversely affected by the *hukou* status. That some migrant children cannot adjust to their new study environment appears to be mainly due to individual reasons.

Urban parents pose as a potential threat to the effective implementation of social integration policy. Because urban parents look down upon migrant families, they ask urban schools to discriminate against migrant children or move their children to other schools where there are fewer migrant children. The negative attitudes of urban parents are not found to directly affect the social integration of migrant children. This is because migrant children spend most of their time with school teachers and classmates and neither group welcomes the negative attitudes of urban parents towards migrant children.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

### Introduction

This thesis examined the implementation of education policy for migrant children in China. The main research question of the thesis is: to what extent is the education policy for migrant children implemented and why? The thesis aims to find out whether relevant policies have been effectively implemented and the reasons for effective implementation or non-implementation of these policies. Policy implementation is defined in the thesis as the efforts by various policy actors to achieve the predesigned goals of public policy. If the policy goals are achieved, it means that the policy is effectively implemented. Otherwise, the policy is not implemented.

The education policy for migrant children contains three elements: sufficient funding and school access policy, equal opportunity policy, and school support and social integration policy. The main research question is broken down into three groups of sub-questions. Each group of sub-questions examines a specific part of migrant children's education policy.

The first group of sub-questions aims to examine whether the sufficient funding and school access policy is effectively implemented and why:

- Q1.1 Is there sufficient funding to provide education for migrant children in urban public schools?
- Q1.2 Who is responsible for allocating the funding of education for migrant children at the local level?
- Q1.3 What are the factors affecting the decisions of funding allocation?
- Q1.4 What is the impact of funding allocation on access to urban public schools?
- Q1.5 Do migrant children have access to urban public schools?

The second group of sub-questions examines whether or not equal opportunity policy is effectively implemented and why:

- Q2.1 What are the factors that affect the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.2 What is the impact of these factors on the implementation of equal opportunity policy?
- Q2.3 To what extent is equal opportunity policy effectively implemented? That is, do urban schools apply equal admission criteria, follow the principle of non-segregation and help out migrant children in their studies as required by the central government in practice?

The third group of sub-questions examines whether school support and social integration policy is effectively implemented and why:

- Q3.1 What support is provided by urban schools to help migrant children adjust to their new study environment?
- Q3.2 Is the policy goal of social integration successfully achieved?
- Q3.3 What are the factors affecting the achievement or non-achievement of the policy goal of social integration?

The previous three empirical chapters answered the three groups of sub-questions above. This chapter brings the findings in those chapters together and positions them in the wider theoretical and policy debate. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section summarises the findings on the implementation of education policy for migrant children. The following two sections go back to the literature reviewed in chapters 1 to 3 of the thesis and discuss the theoretical and policy implications of these findings. This chapter ends by discussing the directions for further research.

## **9.1 Summarising Research Findings**

This section summarises the findings and answers the research questions of the thesis. It first assesses whether the policies goals relating to education for migrant children have been achieved, and then explain why only some of these policies are being implemented.

### **9.1.1 Assessing Policy Implementation**

Migrant children's education policy is being selectively or partially implemented. The term "selective implementation" or "partial implementation" has two dimensions. It means that some policies are being effectively implemented, while others are being poorly implemented or not implemented. Or put differently, some policy goals are achieved, while others are not.

Selective implementation can also mean that not all migrant children face the same barriers and difficulties in accessing or using the urban education system. There are considerable variations between migrant children as a group. They differ in terms of family background, parenting style, places of residence, the length of time in cities and individual personality. Some migrant children may face fewer difficulties in finding study places, catching up with urban students and getting used to the new school environment, while others may be more disadvantaged.

#### Q1.1 Is there sufficient funding to provide education for migrant children in urban public schools?

Sufficient funding policy is not being effectively implemented. There is not sufficient funding in local education bureaus and urban public schools to provide education for migrant children. The officials in local education bureaus complain that there is not enough funding for them to implement the policy. The numbers of migrant children continue to increase rapidly in cities C and H each year, but the funding for education does not change accordingly. In particular, the last decades witnessed continuous declines in the proportions of funding for education in the government budgets in both cities.

#### Q1.5 Do migrant children have access to urban public schools?

School access policy is not being effectively implemented. Migrant children have limited access to urban public schools, and it is still difficult for these children to find study places in these schools. Migrant parents need to present a series of certificates to show that they have stable jobs and accommodation in cities. For those parents who cannot present these certificates, their children have little chance to study in urban public schools. Instead, these children have to pay school selection fees, study in

migrant schools or return to their hometown schools. These certificate requirements mean that, compared with urban children, migrant children are put in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to urban public schools.

Furthermore, some migrant children are even more disadvantaged than other migrant children in terms of school access. First, migrant children living in the suburban or fringe areas of the cities are more disadvantaged in getting access to schools. Migrant families are concentrated in these areas, so the numbers of study places available in nearby schools are far exceeded by demand. It is more difficult for migrant children in suburban areas than those near the centres of cities to find study places in urban public schools.

Second, migrant children who come to the cities when they are older are more disadvantaged. Local schools quickly fill up to their capacities in the first year and there are far fewer places left for later years. Therefore, these older migrant children face more competition and have more limited access to urban public schools than younger migrant children.

### Q2.3 To what extent is equal opportunity policy effectively implemented?

Equal opportunity policy has three goals: equal school admissions criteria, non-segregation and equalisation of academic performance. The first policy goal is not being achieved, while the latter two are being achieved. First, equal school admissions criteria policy is not being effectively implemented. Urban schools use examinations to select migrant students with high academic abilities and charge school selection fees to migrant students who cannot find study places. This is a breach of the laws which prohibit urban public schools from holding examinations or charging fees to select migrant children.

Second, non-segregation policy is being effectively implemented. None of the schools interviewed put migrant children into separate classes. The policy relating to academic support is also being effectively implemented. Urban schools put in a lot of effort to help those migrant children who lag behind in their studies.

Finally, the equalisation of academic performance policy is being effectively implemented. Migrant children not only catch up with urban children in urban public schools, but many of them overtake their urban counterparts in examination results. However, even though most migrant children do not have difficulties in catching up with urban children, they do have to deal with huge academic pressures on a daily basis.

Some migrant children do perform poorly in examinations. When migrant parents are not strict with their children regarding their studies, the children themselves may lose self-motivation and inspiration to work hard. These children with less strict parents may perform badly in the examinations and may even be among the worst in the class.

Q3.1 What support is provided by urban schools to help migrant children adjust to their new study environment?

School support policy is being effectively implemented. Various types of support are available to help migrant children adjust to the new environment in urban public schools. School support includes engagement with urban parents, psychological services, confidence improvement, equal treatment and poverty relief. The former two types of support are in compliance with the central government policy, whereas the latter three are mainly based on urban schools' interpretation and understanding of the issue of social integration.

When providing support for migrant children, urban public schools do encounter some difficulties. Some migrant parents do not actively get in contact with schools. This makes it difficult for schools to engage with parents and find out about migrant students' difficulties in life. Psychological counselling services at schools are under-used. Migrant children are not willing to ask for help from teachers when they have psychological difficulties. Because of this, it is difficult for schools to identify those students who are suffering from psychological difficulties. Urban public schools are sympathetic to migrant families who are in financial difficulties. But they think their role in poverty relief is limited. In particular, they believe that it is impossible for schools alone to help out these families, because this should be the task of governments and wider society.

### Q3.2 Is the policy goal of social integration successfully achieved?

Social integration policy is being effectively implemented. Most migrant children have no difficulties in social integration. They may find it difficult to speak good Mandarin or get used to school rules at first, but most of them can overcome these difficulties after a period of time in an urban public school. Meanwhile, migrant children form very close friendships with urban children. The two groups of children help each other with their studies and get used to the school rules together. Migrant children face the potential threat of discrimination from urban parents, but because migrant children do not have direct contact with urban parents, these children do not have the experience of being discriminated against.

However, migrant children do vary in terms of social integration in urban public schools. First, those migrant children coming to cities later may face more difficulties than other migrant children in social integration. Some of them have more difficulties in changing their accent or correcting their dialect. Because students and teachers are supposed to speak Mandarin at school, this has become an obstacle to their effective communication with teachers and peers,

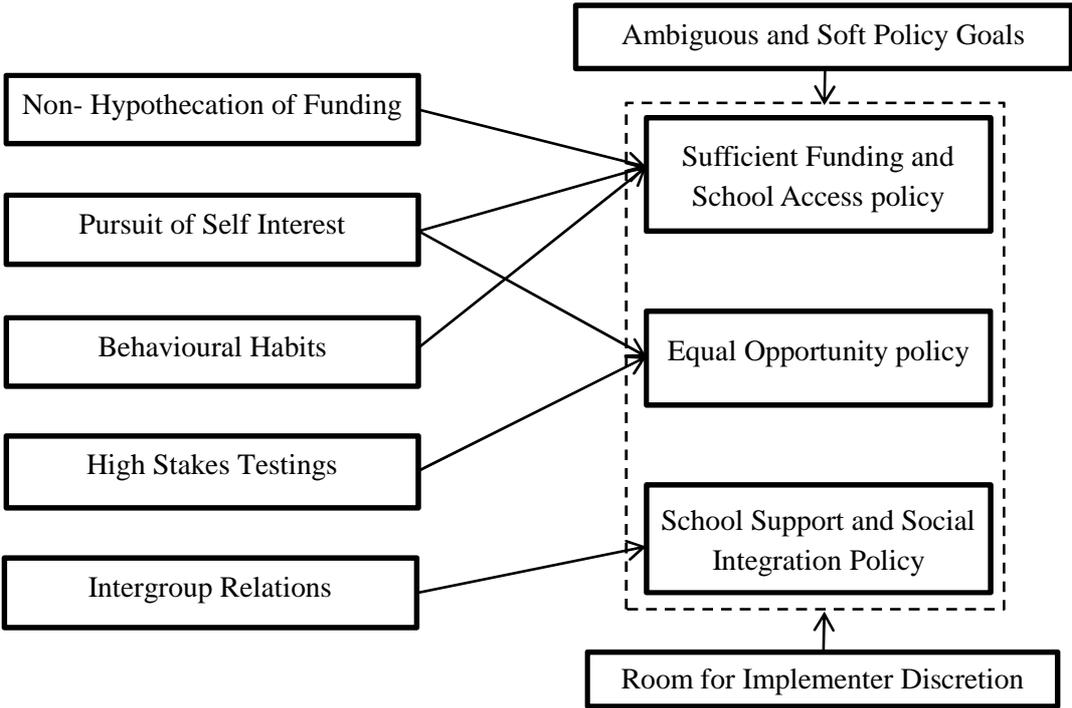
Second, migrant children who, personality-wise, are less sociable may not adjust to the environment in urban public schools well. These children are less able to make friends and seek help from teachers at school. When they run into difficulties, there is no one to help them. The difficulties are left unsolved, and these children further lag behind in their studies and social interactions.

#### **9.1.2 Explaining the Results of Policy Implementation**

This thesis seeks to explain why some policies relating to education for migrant children are being effectively implemented, while others are not. Chapter 3 reviewed the literature on policy implementation and identified the factors that may potentially affect the implementation of migrant children's education policy. These factors are grouped into two categories. The first category is generic factors which can affect different types of policies. Generic factors include the characteristics of policy goals, room for implementer discretion, pursuit of self-interest and habitual behaviours. The

second category is policy-specific factors which only affect a specific type of policy. Existing literature suggests that hypothecation of funding affects the implementation of funding policy, high stakes testing affects the implementation of equal opportunity policy and intergroup relations affect the implementation of social integration policy. The analyses in the previous four chapters show that all these factors have significant impacts on the implementation of migrant children’s education policy (Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 The Factors Affecting the Implementation of Migrant Children’s Education Policy



The implementation of migrant children’s education policy is affected by two preconditional factors: discretionary power of policy implementers and the characteristics of policy goals. The intergovernmental relationships in China grant policy implementers plenty of space to exercise discretionary power. First, the laws and regulations formulated by the central government are low in specificity. This gives policy implementers the opportunity to reinterpret the policies at their discretion. Second, the financial system in China is characterised by fiscal federalism. Policy implementers can decide on the allocation of government revenue between different policy areas. Finally, government officials in China are appointed, promoted and monitored by the high level governments rather than by the public. Due to the existence of monitoring costs, policy implementation at the local level is not well-

monitored, and policy implementers have the opportunity not to implement the policies if the superior governments are unaware of the situation.

Education policy for migrant children is not well-designed. The policy goals are ambiguous, infeasible and lacking in strong incentives. The policy goals relating to school access and social integration are not formulated clearly. Local government and urban public schools can interpret or modify these goals to suit their own interests. The post-2001 policies represented a U-turn from the pre-2001 policies. Such a significant change in policy goals may result in local governments and urban public schools not reaching a consensus for policy implementation. No rewards or sanctions are attached to the policy. The central government does not specify the consequences of implementation or non-implementation. In this case, the implementation of migrant children's education policy may not be taken seriously by local governments nor by urban public schools.

The discretionary power of implementers and the characteristics of policy goals are the preconditions of policy implementation. They imply a series of possible results in policy implementation and leave the possibility of non-implementation wide open. The actual results are then determined by how implementers make decisions and take actions when implementing the policy on the basis of these preconditions.

Q1.2 Who is responsible for allocating the funding of education for migrant children at the local level?

The central government does not provide financial support for the implementation of migrant children's education policy. According to the central government policy, local governments should assume the financial responsibilities. At the local level, local core governments can decide how much funding is to be provided for migrant children's education. Local education bureaus collect information on the numbers of students in urban public schools and request funding from local core governments. This means that funding for migrant children's education is not hypothecated. The results of policy implementation, in this case, will be determined by the decisions of local core governments.

Q1.3 What are the factors affecting the decisions of funding allocation?

Local governments' decisions on funding allocation are affected by two factors: pursuit of self-interests and habitual behaviour. First, local governments distribute the funding among different policy areas in a way that serves their own interests. The incentive of implementing migrant children's education policy is not strong, so providing funding to this policy is not a priority for local core governments. Local core governments spend more money on promoting local economies, because this serves their interests better. The result is that migrant children's education is underfunded.

Second, local governments distribute the funding among different policy areas based on past experiences. Education for migrant children is a new policy issue. Local governments are uncertain about the consequences of suddenly increasing the funding for education. Faced with uncertainties, local governments choose to follow their habits. They only allow the funding to be increased incrementally and refuse to spend large sums of money in building new schools. This also leaves the education of migrant children underfunded.

Q1.4 What is the impact of funding allocation on access to urban public schools?

Insufficient funding imposes huge pressure on the urban public education system. First, to relieve financial pressure, local governments have to set out a series of certificate requirements to exclude some migrant children from the urban public education system. Second, because local governments are not willing to build new schools, it is the task of existing urban public schools to provide study places for migrant children. Since the study places available cannot meet demand, some urban public schools are overcrowded and have to decline many migrant children who want to study in these schools.

Q2.1 What are the factors that affect the implementation of equal opportunity policy?

The implementation of equal opportunity policy is affected by two factors: pursuit of self-interest and the exam-oriented education system. The exam-oriented education system is an institution with strong incentives. School principals are promoted or rewarded if their schools can get good examination results, and are demoted or sanctioned if their schools perform badly in examinations. Equally, school teachers are

rewarded if their classes can get good examination results, and are sanctioned if their classes perform badly in examinations. To pursue their own interests, schools compete with each other to get better examination results. Almost all school activities revolve around examination scores.

Examination scores also provide strong incentives for migrant parents and students. These scores determine whether the students can graduate from the schools or progress to the next level of education. Even though migrant parents do not have the time and money to support their children in education, many of them care about their children's education. These migrant parents hope their children can receive a good education, so they are very strict regarding their children's studies. Their strictness is reflected in the fact that these parents ask their children to put studies above everything else and strongly encourage their children to get good examination results.

Exam-oriented school activities and exam-oriented parents constitute a stable institution where the only choice for schools and parents is to pursue good examination results. As a result, the policies in agreement with the exam-oriented education system are effectively implemented, while the policies that go against the exam-oriented education system are not implemented.

### Q2.2 What is the impact of these factors on the implementation of equal opportunity policy?

Within an exam-oriented education system, urban public schools have to make sure that the implementation of migrant children's education policy will not harm their academic performance. Some migrant children do not have strong foundations in their studies. Urban public schools fear that accepting these children into schools may lower their standards, so they use entrance examinations to select migrant children with high academic abilities.

Within an exam-oriented education system, urban public schools allocate students to different classes on the basis of students' score rankings. As it happens, such a student allocation method does not lead to a segregation of students by *hukou* status. This means that effective implementation of non-segregation policy is attributable to

schools' focus on examination results, rather than their intention to implement this policy.

Within an exam-oriented education system, urban public schools provide academic support for migrant children in order to raise their overall performance in examinations. Meanwhile, because almost all school activities revolve around examination results, migrant children feel huge pressure in their studies. Many migrant parents are very strict with their children regarding their studies. This imposes even more pressure on migrant children. Most migrant children understand their parents' expectations, so they work very hard at school. Such a hard-working spirit explains why some migrant children catch up with peers quickly or get better examination results than their urban peers in urban public schools.

### Q3.3 What are the factors affecting the achievement or non-achievement of the policy goal of social integration?

The implementation of social integration policy is affected by the intergroup relations between migrant and urban children and the support provided by schools. Migrant and urban children form good relations in urban public schools. There is neither intergroup alienation nor intergroup hierarchy between the two groups of children. Those migrant children facing difficulties in speaking Mandarin or who are unfamiliar with school rules can receive help from their peers. Such help is crucial to the social integration of migrant children in urban public schools.

Schools provide both direct and indirect support for migrant children in the aspect of social integration. First, teachers provide direct support for migrant children in speaking Mandarin and in acclimatising to school rules. They correct migrant children's local accents and ask migrant children to follow the codes of conduct in urban public schools. This is found to be helpful for the social integration of migrant children. Second, urban public schools treat migrant and urban children equally in class, school events and using school facilities. This creates a friendly environment within which migrant and urban children can interact with each other and form good intergroup relations. In this case, school support indirectly helps migrant children adjust to their new environment.

## **9.2 Discussing Research Findings: Theoretical Implications**

This section goes back to the literature reviewed in chapters 1 to 3 in the thesis and discusses the implications of the findings in this thesis for existing theories. The section starts by discussing the theoretical implications for the implementation of migrant children's education policy. This is followed by a discussion of the equal treatment and psychological problems of migrant children. The third subsection discusses the implications of the institutional perspective for policy studies and implementation theories. The fourth subsection focuses on the relationships between socioeconomic status and students' academic performance within an exam-oriented education system. The last subsection discusses social integration theories in the Chinese context.

### **9.2.1 Implementation of Migrant Children's Education Policy**

Chapter 1 presented a review of the literature on the implementation of migrant children's education policy. So far, there has been a limited amount of research on this topic and all existing research focuses on sufficient funding and school access policies. The findings in this thesis can contribute to existing theories in two aspects.

First, some researchers (Zhou, 2006, 2007; Li 2009) pointed out that funding policy was not implemented, because the central government did not provide funding for the policy and local governments were not willing to spend money to support this policy. This thesis confirms this point and also finds that local governments are not willing to provide funding for migrant children's education. Beyond this point, this thesis further argues that the unwillingness of local governments to implement funding policy is due to their pursuit of self-interest and their habitual behaviours. As summarised in the previous section, local governments spend more money in promoting local economies and only increase the funding for education incrementally. This leaves migrant children's education underfunded.

Qian and Geng (2007) argued that the *hukou* system is a main factor accounting for non-implementation of school access policy. They pointed out that "the *hukou* system is one of the sources of many social problems...Migrant children do not have access to

urban public schools, because they do not have urban *hukou*” (p.92). They further suggested that central government should reform the *hukou* system to solve this problem (p.93). This thesis does not find evidence to support this argument. In cities C and H, migrant children with rural *hukou* can still study in urban public schools, as long as their parents can present the certificates required by local governments. This thesis does find that migrant children are in a disadvantaged position in terms of school access. Such disadvantages result from insufficient funding rather than the *hukou* system. Local governments are not incentivised to provide funding for migrant children’s education, so they use certificate requirements to exclude some migrant children from urban public education. This is to relieve themselves of financial burdens in educating migrant children. In this sense, *hukou* status seems irrelevant to the implementation of migrant children’s education policy, and thus reforming the *hukou* system may not be an effective solution to non-implementation of school access policy, because local governments may devise other measures to exclude migrant children and reduce their own financial responsibilities if they cannot use the *hukou* status to do so.

### **9.2.2 Equal Treatment and Psychological Problems of Migrant Children**

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on education for migrant children. Existing research suggests that migrant children in urban public schools were not treated equally by teachers (Yang et al., 2003; Feng 2007; Feng and Guo, 2008). For example, Feng (2007) found that “migrant children...were often ignored in classes...and teachers did not care about migrants children as they cared about urban children” (p.100). This thesis does not find evidence to support this point. All five schools interviewed reported treating migrant and urban children equally. As summarised in the last section, the two groups of children study in the same classes, participate in the same events and use the same facilities.

Existing research also suggests that migrant children may have low self-esteem in urban public schools (Zhou, 2006; Liu et al., 2007; Hu and Guo, 2007). The evidence in this thesis only partially supports this point. It is found that some migrant children did have low self-esteem or were lacking in confidence when they first came to urban public schools. However, in many cases, these psychological problems tended to

disappear after migrant children stayed in schools for a period of time, with the help of teachers and peers. This seems to suggest that, for many migrant children, low self-esteem is merely a short-term issue and can be resolved in the long run.

### **9.2.3 Institutional Perspective, Policy Decision-Making and Causality of Policy Implementation**

Based on the institutional theories, the policy in this thesis is conceptualised as a set of rules of the game, and policy implementation is defined as the enforcement of a set of new rules in replacement of old ones (Chapter 3). Such an institutional perspective stresses the important role of self-interest and habits in policy implementation. This thesis uses the institutional perspective to examine the process of policy implementation. The findings have important theoretical implications to policy decision-making and the causality of policy implementation.

Policy decision-making is a contested topic in policy studies. There have been heated debates between rationalism and incrementalism in describing and explaining the decisions made by policy makers and implementers (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, pp.166-173). Rationalists argued that the policies were formulated and implemented by individuals who pursued their own interests. Every decision was the result of sophisticated calculations of self-interest (e.g. Elster, 1987; Buchanan et al., 2004). In contrast, incrementalists maintained that policy makers or implementers depended on past experience and behavioural habits when making decisions. Decision makers had to “muddle through” the policy process (Lindblom, 1959, 1979) rather than making “big jumps towards his goals that would require predictions beyond his or anyone else’s knowledge”(Lindblom 1959, p.86).

Institutional theorists (March and Heath, 1994; North, 2005) argued that both self-interests and behavioural habits were important factors affecting the decisions made by policy actors. North (2005) pointed out that cost-benefit analysis dominated the decision making process mostly when individuals were faced with simple and repetitive choices, because in this situation, the cost-benefit structure was clear and it was easy for individuals to work out the best choice (p.23). As the situation became more complicated, individuals were more reliant on habits and past knowledge to

execute calculations or predict the consequences of decisions (pp.26-27). This means that different factors come into play when policy actors face different situations.

The findings in this thesis confirm the arguments based on the institutional perspective. As summarised in the last section, both self-interest and habitual behaviour affect the decisions of local governments in their allocation of funding. Local governments think promoting local economies serves their interests, so they spend more money on the business sector. They are uncertain about the consequences of providing funding for migrant children, so they only make incremental changes to funding allocations and tend to muddle through the implementation process.

The findings relating to the exam-oriented education system also support the institutional perspective. As discussed in the previous section, the exam-oriented education system is an institution with strong incentives. Put differently, it is an institution with a clear cost-benefit structure. Principals, teachers and migrant families know clearly the consequences of getting better examination results. Faced with a clear cost-benefit structure, self-interest is the main factor that affects policy implementation. School activities revolve around examinations, and parents place pressures on their children to get good examination results. In essence, these are all motivated by self-interest.

As discussed in Chapter 3, implementation theories based on an institutional perspective are different from the theories based on a conventional perspective in terms of causalities. An institutional perspective proposes that the policy results are systematically produced by several inter-related factors, while the conventional perspective assumes that the policy results are attributable to separate factors. Therefore, an institutional perspective proposes multiple causalities (i.e. a many-to-one causality), while the conventional perspective assumes a single causality (i.e. a one-to-one causality).

The findings in this thesis suggest that there are both multiple causalities and a single causality when the policies are being implemented. It is found in Chapter 7 that the education system in China systematically produces and reproduces behaviours that are

exam-oriented. Any policies that go against the objective of the exam-oriented education system are not implemented, while any policies that are in line with the objective of the exam-oriented education system are implemented. This is an example of many-to-one causality. It is found in Chapter 8 that school support and good intergroup relations between migrant and urban children help migrant children adjust to their new environment. School support and intergroup relationships take effect separately. This is an example of one-to-one causality. The co-existence of both types of causalities means that the institutional perspective is supplementary rather than alternative to the conventional perspective.

#### **9.2.4 Exam Results and Educational Inequality**

High stakes testing has an important impact on educational equality (Chapter 3). The experiences in the US and the UK suggest that the schools were incentivised to select or retain certain groups of students so that they can achieve better exam results (Smith and Fey, 2000; Fitz and Chris, 2002; Hursh, 2005; West, 2006). The examinations in the Chinese education system are also high stakes in nature. It is found in this thesis that urban public schools use entrance examinations to select migrant students with high academic abilities. However, there is no evidence indicating that urban public schools retain poorly performing migrant students or require these students to attend the graduation examinations later.

Existing literature suggests that children's examination results are closely related to their family background. Students from different family backgrounds receive different levels of support from their parents. The students from higher socioeconomic status (SES) families normally receive more support (Coleman, 1966; Coleman, 1988; Evan, 2004; Sirin, 2005; Lareau, 2011). For example, Lareau (2011) found that working-class parents could provide very little help in their children's studies. Some parents were too busy to help their children, while others did not know how to help due to their own low educational achievements. The findings in this thesis further support these points. Migrant families are generally in the lower SES groups. Compared with urban parents, most migrant parents are not well-educated and engage in unstable and poorly-paid jobs. In order to earn more money, some migrant parents have no time to help their children with their studies. Some migrant parents do not know how to help

their children, even if they may want to do so.

In the UK and the US contexts, parental support has a direct impact on children's examination results. In particular, the children from poorer family backgrounds tended to do less well in examinations (West, 2007). The evidence in this thesis, however, does not support this point. Almost all of the students who spoke about this issue in the interviews reported that migrant children got better examination results than urban children. This was further confirmed by the teachers and principals during the interviews.

That migrant children outperform urban children in the examinations has important implications. It suggests that students' family background sometimes can be irrelevant to their examination results. It is argued in Chapter 7 that migrant children get better results due to two reasons. First, within the exam-oriented education system, the examinations only test students on a narrow band of knowledge and teaching activities focus narrowly on the knowledge to be examined. In this case, students' examination results are reliant on how much effort they spend in going over the knowledge they learn in class. Parental support and extra-curricular knowledge tend to play only a minor role. Second, even though migrant parents provide little help for their children in their studies, they do press their children very hard to get good examination results. Such an exam-oriented parenting style seems to be effective, because migrant students understand their parents and thus work very hard to meet their parents' expectations.

It can be noted that both factors discussed above seem to be in stark contrast to what is being discussed in the western literature. Compared with the examination systems in the US and the UK, the exam-oriented education system in China seems to be an extreme version of high stakes testing. The obedience of Chinese children, the parenting style of Chinese parents and the mutual agreement between the children and parents are very different from those in western countries such as the UK and the US. This means that the disconnection between family backgrounds and examinations results is highly specific to the Chinese context. Therefore, such a finding may not be generalised to other countries. Meanwhile, it seems necessary to stress again that such a finding is based on a small sample of five schools. It may not be generalisable to

other schools.

### **9.2.5 Social Integration Theories**

Existing literature suggests that intergroup relations are one of the most important factors affecting social integration (Chapter 3). The experience of Nordic and North American countries shows that social integration needs policy intervention and government assistance (Brewer, 1997; Velenta and Bunar, 2010). It can be very difficult for different social, ethnic and cultural groups to get along well with each other by themselves. Moreover, the existence of government support alone may not be sufficient for the achievement of the policy goals relating to social integration. In some cases, intergroup hierarchy is so predominant that government intervention can barely achieve its intended effects (Velera and Bunar, 2010).

Likewise, student integration in schools is also reliant on intergroup relations (Chapter 3). Existing research suggests that in those schools where native students and minority students are mixed, the two groups of students can form good friendships due to frequent intergroup contact (Driessen, 2000; Moody, 2001; Goldsmith, 2004; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009). There is also evidence indicating that school support is very important to help children from different ethnic backgrounds form good friendships. In particular, those schools which regularly organize integrated extracurricular activities and let different groups of children work or play in the same team did better than other schools in fostering intergroup friendships (Khmelkov and Tallinan, 1999; Goldsmith, 2004; Van Houtte and Stevens, 2009).

It is found in this thesis that the status of migrant families in cities is very much like that of ethnic minorities or immigrants in western countries (e.g. African American in the US). Migrant families and urban families are alienated from one another in residence, occupation, and in their social interactions. Migrant families are in a lower status group due to their lower socioeconomic status and lower population quality (*suzhi*). Because there are no government interventions on intergroup relations, migrant and urban families do not form good friendships. Most migrant parents interviewed reported being discriminated against by urban residents. Some migrants have low self-esteem and sometimes interpret the behaviours of urban residents as

discrimination.

The findings relating to school integration of migrant children are also in line with the findings relating to school integration of ethnic minority students in western countries. First, frequent intergroup contact is very important to developing intergroup friendships. Because all the five schools mix migrant and urban children in the same classes, the two groups of children in these schools form good friendships, and migrant children receive a lot of help in school integration. Second, school support is very important to social integration. However, it should be noted that school support for migrant children is different from the support provided to ethnic minority students in the existing research. Even though urban public schools also organize extracurricular activities (i.e. sports events), these activities aim to build up migrant children's confidence rather than letting the two groups of children work or play together. Meanwhile, it is also found that equal treatment is a very effective type of school support. School teachers treat migrant and urban children equally, which sets a good example for the children and sends out a message that everyone is equal at school. This, in turn, facilitates contact between the two groups of children.

### **9.3 Discussing Research Findings: Policy Implications**

The findings and conclusions of the thesis have a number of policy implications. First, compared with the existing literature, this thesis executes a more systematic examination of migrant children's education policy. In addition to sufficient funding and school access policies, this thesis also examines equal opportunity, school support and social integration policies. As summarised in Section 9.1, equal admissions criteria policy has not been effectively implemented, but non-segregation, equalization of academic performance, school support and social integration policies have been effectively implemented. This implies that the implementation of migrant children's education policy is not a total disaster. With the efforts of local governments and urban public schools, some policy goals have been successfully achieved.

Second, this thesis suggests that the policy goals formulated by central government should be clearer. The experience from migrant children's education policy in China demonstrates that the policy does not automatically translate into practice. If the

central government wants local governments to implement the policy, it should first of all state more clearly what local governments are supposed to do and what goals are going to be achieved. This will prevent local governments reinterpreting the policy or adding new policies to suit their own interests. Meanwhile, education policies should provide sufficient incentives for implementation. This will make non-implementation more costly to local governments and urban schools. Otherwise, these policies will become empty talk without any substantial effects.

Third, the findings in this thesis suggest that, within a decentralised fiscal system, a policy formulated by the central government will not be implemented if local governments are not interested in providing financial support for this policy. In this case, the central government maybe should consider providing the funding for this policy<sup>40</sup>. Regarding to migrant children's education policy, the Ministry of Education perhaps could co-operate with the Ministry of Finance in policy formulation. If this were possible, then through negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education could formulate policy that fits within the latter's budgetary constraints, potentially making policy implementation a more feasible prospect.

Fourth, migrant children's education policy is being selectively implemented. This perhaps means that the education of migrant children is an on-going issue which will need more government regulations in the years to come. It can be argued that central government in the future should be more focused on those policies which are not being effectively implemented. For example, the central government should be more focused on taking measures to improve the implementation of funding policy and school admissions policy. As for the policies which are effectively implemented, there is no need to repeat them in the future. Of course, any new policy should not be contradictory to existing policies.

Meanwhile, the policy should also be more focused to help out the most disadvantaged children. Not all migrant children have difficulties in finding study places in urban

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<sup>40</sup> However, this does not mean that funding provision is the only instrument that central government can use to solve the problem of non-implementation of policy in China. To improve policy implementation within a decentralized system, the central government could also try to align its own interest with that of local governments in the course of policy formulation.

public schools, in catching up with peers in study or in adjusting to their new environment. The children who live near city centres, started urban education at the very beginning or who were even born in cities have a higher chance of receiving a good education in urban public schools. Once they are accepted into schools, most of them actually are no different from urban children in terms of educational outcomes and social interactions with peers. There is little point to make further regulations targeting these children, because they can do pretty well by themselves under the current system. Instead, more government efforts should be directed at the more disadvantaged children. For example, it might be helpful if the central government could provide hypothecated funding to build more schools in the suburbs. This should be able to help suburban schools relieve some financial pressure. It might also be helpful if the policy in the future could recommend or require local schools to provide extra care to migrant children who migrate to the cities when they are older, because they are the children who need the most help in urban public schools.

Finally, some of the policy results are systematically produced. Within a stable system, the choices and actions of policy actors are fixed. In this case, it could be very difficult to alter their choices and actions with new policy. The implication of this is that in order to make new policy implementable, the central government needs to break down the old system first. Then those systematically produced behaviours will also disappear. In the case of migrant children's education policy, the central government should make more effort to weaken the exam-oriented direction of the compulsory education system. Such efforts can make local schools less "obsessed" with cream-skimming. The existing system of rewards and promotions in the education sector is mainly based on the exam results of local schools. Perhaps the recruitment of migrant children can be added to the promotion system for school principals. For example, it can be regulated that if an urban public school declines a certain proportion of migrant applicants (e.g. 30%), education bureaus will reduce some scores in that school's assessment and the career prospects of school principals will be negatively affected. Perhaps such an evaluation system could improve the implementation of migrant children's education policy.

Of course, such a revised evaluation system will not be effective if there is no financial

backup in place. After all, the recruitment of migrant children requires sufficient funding in the first place. This implies that any future reform of migrant children's education policy should be well-coordinated. Complementary policies or mutually supportive policies should come into force at the same time.

#### **9.4 Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

A majority of the findings in this thesis are based on qualitative data collected in cities C and H. There are both strength and limitations in the qualitative approach. The qualitative data can provide detailed information on how individuals make decisions and how people from different groups interaction with one another (Chapter 1). This is particularly useful to understand the process and results of implementation of migrant children's education policy, given the limited amount of research on this issue. However, an intrinsic limitation of qualitative data collected via in-depth interviews lies in its small sample size. As mentioned at different points of this thesis, some of the findings may not be generalised to other schools or cities in China, because the sample is based on purposive sampling rather than representative sampling, and the sample size may not be large enough for some particular issues discussed in the thesis (e.g. students' academic performance).

Perhaps the limitations relating to the generalisation of research findings could be overcome by pursuing further research on the same topic but with different samples. In particular, future research might focus on the implementation of migrant children's education policy in mega cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. As noted in Chapter 1, these cities harbour the largest number of migrant children and education for these children has always been the focus of media reports and academic debate.

Another possible direction for further research relates to the children that are excluded from urban public education. The migrant children interviewed in this thesis are those who study in urban public schools. Those who attend migrant schools do not fall within the scope of this research. The issue of students in migrant schools is equally important as that of public school students. In June 2011, the Education Committee of Beijing announced that 30 migrant schools in Beijing would be closed. This

announcement triggered a huge debate and criticism from the public, because it means that the children registered in these schools will have to drop out of school. At the time of writing, the Education Committee of Beijing has promised to allocate these children to other schools and not to let a single child drop out (Shangguan, 2011). However, a series of questions remain. The foremost issue is whether the remaining schools in Beijing, irrespective of their status either as public or private schools, really have enough capacity to take in the students from 30 schools. Another question is how to guarantee educational equality in the course of student allocation, given the huge stratifications in the Chinese education system (Chapter 7). With this background, it is arguably very important to pursue further research in relation to migrant school students in order to understand the education experience of this group of children. Some of the issues of particular interest may include their attitudes towards urban life, their aspirations in academic performance, their socialisation with both migrants and urban children, and their psychological well-being. It seems to be of both theoretical and empirical significance to see the extent to which the children in urban public schools are different from those in migrant schools.

There is another group of children, which is closely related to the phenomenon of rural-urban migration, but which has not been given due attention in this thesis, namely those children who do not migrate to cities with their parents. These children are also known as “left-behind children” (*liushou ertong*) in China. The issue of left-behind children also attracted widespread attention from the media and academic research in the previous few years. In September 2011, the whole country was shocked when the media revealed that a 20-month-old baby girl, whose parents were working in the city, was left unattended for 7 days, since her grandma, the girl’s only guardian, suddenly died in the village (Liu, 2011). In the same year, a photo was widely circulated across the country of a 10-year-old schoolgirl who was carrying her 2-year-old cousin to school because she had to take care of him. It turned out that “[The school girl’s] grandparents are raising eight of their grandchildren, all left behind by parents seeking jobs as migrant workers” (Li, 2011). On the basis of this thesis, further research seems to be needed in relation to education for these left-behind children. Some questions may include: what are the underlying factors behind the decisions of parents to bring their children to cities with them or not? What is the

attitude of left-behind children toward their education? What are the impacts of living with non-parental guardians on their psychological well-being? These questions could all be explored through comparisons with what is already known about migrant children in urban public schools.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

| <b>Local Government Officials</b> |   |              |               |                   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Code</b>                       | <b>Government Body</b>                                      |              |               |                   |
| A                                 | Education Bureau of Municipal Government of City C          |              |               |                   |
| B                                 | Education Bureau of Municipal Government of City C          |              |               |                   |
| C                                 | Statistical Bureau of Municipal Government of City C        |              |               |                   |
| D                                 | Public Security Bureau of Municipal Government of City C    |              |               |                   |
| E                                 | Finance Bureau of Municipal Government of City C            |              |               |                   |
| F                                 | Finance Bureau of Municipal Government of City H            |              |               |                   |
| G                                 | Statistical Bureau of Municipal Government of City H        |              |               |                   |
| H                                 | Public Security Bureau of Municipal Government of City H    |              |               |                   |
| I                                 | Education Bureau of Municipal Government of City H          |              |               |                   |
| <b>School Principals</b>          |   |              |               |                   |
| <b>Code</b>                       | <b>School Code</b>  |              |               |                   |
| A                                 | YC  |              |               |                   |
| B                                 | FO  |              |               |                   |
| C                                 | TS  |              |               |                   |
| D                                 | TW  |              |               |                   |
| E                                 | QT  |              |               |                   |
| F                                 | College T   |              |               |                   |
| <b>Teachers</b>                   |   |              |               |                   |
| <b>Code</b>                       | <b>Position in the School</b>                               |              |               |                   |
| A                                 | Class Teacher in Middle School TS                           |              |               |                   |
| B                                 | Class Teacher in Middle School TW                           |              |               |                   |
| C                                 | Class Teacher in Primary School FO                          |              |               |                   |
| D                                 | Class Teacher in Primary School YC                          |              |               |                   |
| E                                 | Executive Principal in Primary School YC                    |              |               |                   |
| F                                 | Director of Teaching Affairs Management in Middle School QT |              |               |                   |
| <b>Students</b>                   |   |              |               |                   |
| <b>Code</b>                       | <b>School Code</b>  | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Hukou Type</b> |
| AA                                | YC  | 5            | Male          | City H            |
| AB                                | YC  | 5            | Male          | Rural Hukou       |
| AC                                | YC  | 5            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AD                                | YC  | 5            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AE                                | YC  | 5            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AF                                | YC  | 5            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AG                                | YC  | 5            | Male          | Rural Hukou       |
| AH                                | QT  | 7            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AI                                | QT  | 7            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AJ                                | QT  | 7            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AK                                | QT  | 8            | Male          | Rural Hukou       |
| AL                                | QT  | 8            | Female        | Rural Hukou       |
| AM                                | QT  | 8            | Male          | Rural Hukou       |
| AN                                | QT  | 7            | Male          | Rural Hukou       |
| AO                                | QT  | 7            | Female        | City H            |

|    |    |   |        |             |
|----|----|---|--------|-------------|
| AP | TW | 7 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| AQ | TW | 8 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| AR | TW | 7 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| AS | TW | 8 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| AT | TW | 7 | Female | City C      |
| AU | TW | 8 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| AV | TW | 8 | Female | City C      |
| AW | TW | 8 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| AX | TW | 8 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| AY | TW | 7 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| AZ | FO | 5 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BA | FO | 5 | Female | City C      |
| BB | FO | 5 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BC | FO | 5 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BD | FO | 5 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BE | FO | 5 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BF | FO | 5 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BG | FO | 5 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BH | TS | 7 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BI | TS | 7 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BJ | TS | 8 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BK | TS | 8 | Female | Rural Hukou |
| BL | TS | 8 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BM | TS | 8 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BN | TS | 8 | Male   | Rural Hukou |
| BO | TS | 7 | Female | City C      |
| BP | TS | 7 | Female | Rural Hukou |

**Migrant Parents**

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Occupation</b> |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| A           | Male          | Shop Owner        |
| B           | Female        | Hotel Cleaner     |
| C           | Male          | Factory Worker    |
| D           | Male          | Factory Worker    |
| E           | Female        | Stall Owner       |
| F           | Male          | Shop Owner        |

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions

### Interviews with government officials in local education bureaus

- Which government agency is responsible for allocation of education funding?
- How does the government distribute the funding to urban public schools?
  - How is the funding for education audited? Is it based on the *hukou* population or the long-term residence population (*changzhu renkou*)?
  - Can you explain in detail the process of funding allocation?
  - Can urban public schools meet migrant children's demand for education?
  - What are the difficulties and challenges in funding allocation?
  - Do local governments take any measures to address this issue?
- Are there local policies to address the issue of providing funding for migrant children's education? What are they?
  - You just mentioned certificate requirements in local government policies. What if migrant families do not meet these requirements?

### Interviews with school principals

- How many migrant children are there in your school?
  - How many classes are there in your school?
  - How many students are there in each class?
- Does the school take in all migrant applicants?
  - How many new students are there in this year?
  - How many applicants are there in this year?
  - Where are migrant children going to study if they cannot study in your school?
- How are migrant children recruited in your school?
  - Does your school hold exams to select migrant children?
  - Does your school charge school selection fees or any other fees?
  - When do students start to apply for study places in your school?
- How are migrant children allocated to each class?
- What does the school do to help migrant children with social integration?
- Can migrant children adjust to the new environment?
  - Are there any differences between migrant and urban children?
  - Compared with urban children, do migrant children have any virtues?

- Do migrant children have any special needs?
- Can migrant children communicate with teachers well?
- Do migrant children have any difficulties in language?
- Do migrant children and urban children get along well?
- What is the attitude of urban parents towards rural-urban migrants and the policy?
  - What about migrant parents? Do they co-operate well with the school?

### **Interviews with class teachers**

- How are migrant children recruited in this school?
  - How many children are there in this school?
  - What is the percentage of migrant children in this school?
  - What are the challenges of rapid increase in the numbers of migrant children?
  - What are migrant children's family backgrounds?
  - What about their examination results?
  - Do migrant children's family backgrounds have any significant impacts on their examination results?
- How are migrant children allocated to each class?
- What did the school do to help migrant children with social integration?
  - You just mentioned that some migrant parents contact you by phone. What is the percentage of migrant parents who do this?
  - How often do they talk to you by phone?
  - Apart from phone calls, are there any other methods by which migrant parents and you contact with each other?
- Can migrant children adjust to the new environment?
  - What is your understanding of "adjusting to the new environment"?
  - Do migrant children have any difficulties in language?
  - Do they have any other barriers in adjusting to the new environment?
- What are the virtues and weaknesses of migrant children?
  - You mentioned some migrant students may have low self-esteem. How do you know this?
  - What are the possible reasons for low self-esteem?
- Do migrant children and urban children get along well?
  - What makes students become good friends?

- What is the attitude of urban parents towards rural-urban migrants and the policy?

### **Interviews with students**

- The interviews with students started with a series of close-ended questions relating to students' basic information.
  - How old are you and what grade are you in?
  - Where are you from?
  - (For migrant children) When did you come to this city?
  - What are your parents' occupations?
  - What are your parents' levels of education?
- How long do you work every day?
  - Why do you have so much homework to do?
  - Do you have time to play?
  - Do you feel you are under the pressure?
- What was the result of your last examination?
  - What was your score ranking in the class in your previous examination?
- Are your parents strict on your study?
  - What do you mean when you said they were strict?
  - Do they hold any expectations for you?
  - Do your parents provide any support in your study?
- How are students allocated to each class?
  - How many students are there in your class?
  - How many boys and girls are there in your class?
  - How many migrant and urban students are there in your class?
  - Why did you choose to study in this school?
  - How were you enrolled into this school?
- Do you have any difficulties in study?
- Do migrant students or urban students get better exam results?
  - You said migrant students got better exam results. Why is that?
- (For migrant children) Are you used to the new life in this school now? Do you have any difficulties in communicating with other people?
  - How do you like this school?

- Compared with your previous school in the village, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this school?
- What do you think of the teachers in your school?
- Do you know anyone who has difficulties in adjusting to the new environment in this school?
- (For migrant children) Do you receive any support from the school to help you get used to this new environment?
  - What do you do when you have psychological difficulties? Will you talk to your teachers? Why?
- Can you tell me who your best friends are? Are they migrant or urban students?
  - What make you become good friends?
  - Are there any differences between migrant and urban students in your class?
  - Have you ever been to urban (or migrant) students' homes?

#### **Interviews with migrant parents**

- Is it difficult to find study places in urban public schools? What happened?
  - What were the certificates required when your child applied for this urban public school?
  - What do you think of these certificate requirements?
  - Did your child attend any entrance examinations?
  - Did you pay school selection fees?
  - Does your child get along well with urban children at school?
  - Do you know anyone whose children were denied by urban public schools? What happened?
- Do you think education is important?
  - Why do you think education is important?
- What are your expectations for your children in the future?
- Do you have friends who are urban residents?
  - Have you ever attended any big events of urban residents (e.g. marriage and funeral)?
  - What do you think of urban residents?
- If you run into difficulties, will you ask urban residents for help?

- You said you never asked urban residents for help. Can you please explain why?
- Then if you need help, whom will you ask for help? Why?

### Appendix 3: The Construction of Education and Infrastructure Indicators

It was mentioned in section 6.3 that the infrastructure, school capacity and school facility indicators in city H were derived via principal component analysis (PCA). This appendix elaborates on the methods of constructing these three indicators.

Infrastructure indicator was derived from the following variables: the number of landline users, the number of mobile phone users, the number of broadband users, the transport mileage, the number of buses, industrial power, water supply, public green fields, green fields in built-up areas, total length of roads, total areas of roads. School capacity was derived from three variables: the number of schools, the total areas of schools and the number of professional teachers. School facility was derived from three variables: the number of computers, total volumes of books and total value of school equipment and instruments. All these variables were retrieved from Statistics Yearbooks of City H.

Then, the comprehensive indicators in each year were computed as follows:

$$Y_s = \sum(a_{si} * X_{si})$$
$$Y_c = \sum(a_{ci} * X_{ci})$$
$$Y_f = \sum(a_{fi} * X_{fi});$$

Where  $Y_s$ ,  $Y_c$ , and  $Y_f$  denote the comprehensive indicators gauging infrastructure, school capacity and facility;  $X_{si}$ ,  $X_{ci}$  and  $X_{fi}$  denote the variables to construct these comprehensive indicators;  $a_{si}$ ,  $a_{ci}$  and  $a_{fi}$  denote the principle components corresponding to each variable. The principle components were calculated using the STATA software package.

Finally, the indicators were normalized into the same scale so that they are comparable. This study chose to normalize the indicators into the interval [1, 6], which was based on the following equation:

$$Y_{\text{norm}}=(Y_t-Y_{\text{min}})/(Y_{\text{max}}-Y_{\text{min}})*5+1$$

Where  $Y_{\text{norm}}$  denotes the normalized values of comprehensive indicators,  $Y_t$  denotes the indicators in a specific year and  $Y_{\text{max}}$  and  $Y_{\text{min}}$  denote the maximum and minimum values of indicators in the time vectors of indicators.