Educating China’s Migrant Children:
A Survey of Government Policy, Discrimination and Reform

By

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Abstract

Despite China’s national emphasis on education and the central government’s strict implementation of a 9-year compulsory education law, millions of Chinese migrant children are still excluded from the state-run education system. My thesis will examine the nature and history of this discriminatory education situation facing China’s migrants. After exploring the institutional barriers and policies that created this situation, I use the results of previous studies and two interviews to shed light on the poor schooling conditions found in many of China’s community migrant schools. After being excluded from, or discriminated against in a city’s state-run education system, migrant children have no choice but to rely on underfunded, community-organized schools for their primary education.

Without government funding, or even recognition, migrant schools generally provide sub-standard education to their students. Recently, however, some city governments have implemented reforms aimed at integrating migrant children into their state-run schooling system. In my final section, I will examine two specific reform initiatives that were recently undertaken in the cities of Wenzhou and Pudong. These substantial migrant education reforms are an attempt by the two city governments to provide more extensive social benefits to their migrant populations. Therefore, I argue that the education reforms were motivated by each city’s desire to ensure future economic success by attracting and retaining a more skilled labor force.
# Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1- The Nature of the Problem</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration Trends</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2- The Amity Foundation’s Hongshan School</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3- Sources of the Migrant Education Problem</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukou</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory Education Law</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4- Economic Development as a Basis for Reform</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising Production Costs</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Turning Point</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenzhou Education Reform</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudong Education Reform</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1- Interviews</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2- Wenzhou Circular</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
China’s sudden economic liberalization and reform in 1979 brought a flood of foreign investment and influences. With the goal of rapidly developing and industrializing the economy, the Chinese government relied upon its massive labor surplus and weak labor regulations to entice foreign investment in manufacturing facilities. As more factories were built and demand for low wage labor grew, an increasing number of Chinese peasants were enticed to leave their villages to find factory work in the cities. Many of these agricultural laborers, previously unexposed to influences of the outside world, jumped at the opportunity to benefit themselves and their villages by migrating to a city in search of factory work. This trend of rural to urban labor migration has fueled China’s recent rapid economic development.

However, China’s meteoric development has not occurred without social costs imposed upon the migrant worker population. Throughout the last three decades, migrant workers have been subject to horrendous work conditions, unfair production quotas and many other exploitative practices.

The Chinese government has recognized and instituted policy reforms aimed at correcting many of these exploitative practices. For example, there are now safety standards for working conditions, a universal ban on child labor and an imposed minimum wage. Policies and regulations such as these have positively impacted the lives of the millions of migrant workers who toil in Chinese factories. However, migrant workers in most cities have still not been fully integrated into the urban society. In many cities, these laborers are still regarded as outsiders and are excluded from the urban social benefit system. One example of social benefit
exclusion that has not been universally resolved is the exclusion of migrant children from state-run public schools. Despite recent central government educational reforms, many migrant children across China are still excluded from and discriminated against in China’s state-run education system. These discriminatory practices and situations have attracted the attention of some scholars since the early 1990’s. However, there is still relatively little scholarship that has focused specifically on these second-generation migrants and their access to education.

Some recent reports have used a survey approach to study the migrant education situation in specific cities. The results of these reports such as Chen and Liang (2007), Han (2004), Ding (2004), Wang (2011) and Kwong (2004) help to illustrate both the discrimination against migrants and the wide variety of local government education policies. For example, Wang (2011) outlines the measures taken by the Shanghai, Guangzhou and Zhangjiagang city governments.

In addition to studying the different types of educational situations facing migrant children, recent scholarship has also focused on the policies and institutions that allow for this educational discrimination. As highlighted by Ying Hu and Judit Szente in their 2009 report, China’s Household Registration System (hukou) plays a major role in perpetuating the discriminatory practices against migrant children. According to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, many local governments are slow to grant migrants a permanent hukou because of the stress it places on city infrastructure and the social benefit system. Therefore, the migrants are left only with a temporary hukou, effectively ensuring their prolonged status as a
migrant. Many scholars agree that it is this temporary status that leads to much social and institutional discrimination.¹

One fairly extensive report by Zhiyong Qu and Wang Li, published in 2011, attributes much of the institutional discrimination not only to the hukou but also to certain government education policies. Qu and Li outline different periods of government education policy, arguing that pre-2000 policies largely ignore the issue of education for migrant children. They also argue that recent government policy has been mostly reactionary and has not succeeded in reversing the effects of their earlier policies.

In a 1996 report, *Financial Reform of Basic Education in China*, Mun Tsang explains why early education policies seem to ignore migrants. He argues that in 1985 the central government adopted a decentralized approach to the schooling system, especially for primary schools. China’s first compulsory education law, promulgated in 1986, implements this decentralist approach by mandating that all primary schools be funded and administered by local city governments. Tsang concludes that this strategy of decentralization, which is still being employed today, explains the inconsistency among local governments in their policies toward educating migrant children.

In this essay I will use the combined results of academic studies to provide an overview of the education situation facing migrant children. I will also use a combination of primary and secondary research to highlight the poor schooling conditions and discriminatory practices faced by many migrant children. This first

section will also highlight the common barriers for migrant children in pursuing full inclusion in state-run education. The section will conclude by describing the conditions found at an NGO sponsored, community migrant school in Nanjing. I describe this migrant school by providing my own observations supplemented by interview responses from an Amity employee and a teacher at the migrant school.

The second section will discuss specific institutional policies and influences that have helped to create and perpetuate the discrimination against migrant children. I will analyze the evolution of both the hukou system and compulsory education law. I argue that it is the combination of these two policies, along with the autonomous nature Chinese governance that allows for the continued educational discrimination against migrant children.

Finally, I will conclude my essay by arguing that certain recent education reforms are effectively efforts taken by city governments to ensure future economic success. I will provide two examples of education reform, undertaken in Wenzhou and Pudong, which directly benefit their migrant communities. I argue and provide evidence to support the hypothesis that these education reforms were implemented with the goal of enticing and retaining a more highly educated and highly skilled labor force.
The Nature of the Problem

Migration Trends

Over the past three decades, rural agricultural laborers from China's countryside have migrated to industrialized cities on a scale that has been seen only in China. According to China’s National Bureau of Statistics, there are now over 220 million rural migrants living and working in Chinese cities. The genesis of this recent migration trend can be traced back to the economic reform policies of the late 1970's. After Mao Zedong's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping used his considerable influence within the Communist Party to open China’s boarders to foreign investment and influence. With the goals of modernizing and industrializing China’s economy, Deng initiated reforms that allowed foreign companies to enter the Chinese marketplace and take advantage of China’s low production costs. As a result, the new high demand for unskilled, low-wage workers quickly depleted the urban labor supply.

This situation of urban labor shortages and increasing foreign investment in the early 1980's is considered the beginning of China’s modern rural migration phenomenon. It is estimated that in 1980 alone, roughly 2 million peasants migrated to China’s cities in search of work. This figure continued to grow rapidly as more

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foreign companies moved their production plants to China. Because factory jobs became more plentiful in Chinese cities, the total number of rural migrants exploded, reaching 60 million in 1993 and 100 million in 2000.\(^5\) Now the number is estimated at over 220 million people, or 16.5 percent of the total population, accounting for a significant portion of China's total labor force.\(^6\) While the overall trend of rural to urban migration shows no signs of slowing,\(^7\) there does seem to be a significant change in some specific migration trends and even in the composition of migrants themselves.\(^8\)

Recent statistics suggest that migration as a family unit, as opposed to individual workers, has increased dramatically in the past two decades. In 1997 children composed only 6.7% of total migrants, while in 2006 that figure reached 14%.\(^9\) One can infer from this that an important change has taken place in the nature of China's internal migration; migrant laborers are increasingly reluctant to leave their children behind in the countryside. Migrant workers are more likely now than in previous decades to bring their entire family unit as they move into the cities.\(^10\)

This recent phenomenon of family unit migration has many characteristics, chief among which is a change in the average period of migration. Whereas migrant workers were once content to work in the city for a few years before returning home to their villages, now they are much more likely to establish a permanent home in

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\(^5\) Qu and Li, *Compulsory Education of Migrant Children*, 224  
\(^6\) Juan, *Mass Migration*, 1  
\(^7\) Juan, *Mass Migration*, 1  
\(^9\) Qu and Li, *Compulsory Education of Migrant Children*, 225  
\(^10\) Wang, *Revisiting the Education*, 223
their destination city. Consequently, many cities across China have seen large migrant communities formed in city outskirts or “suburbs.”

This recent trend of changing permanent residence coupled with the ever-increasing number of migrants has placed an unexpected burden on Chinese cities to accommodate the growing number of migrant children. One aspect that has been particularly difficult to handle for city governments is the provision of compulsory education to migrant children.

Barriers:

Due to the highly decentralized nature of China’s educational administration structure and the general difficulty in surveying the entire migrant population, it is very difficult to know exactly how many migrant children are facing educational discrimination. However, in recent years it has become obvious to both scholars and government officials that large numbers of migrant children in many of China’s most industrialized and economically progressive cities are being discriminated against in the state-run education system. This discrimination can take multiple forms, ranging from complete exclusion from the system to a total lack of attention paid to migrant students in the classroom.

One indicator of migrant education discrimination is the out-of-schooling rate as provided in the Fifth National Census. This indicator shows the percentage of

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11 Wang, Revisiting the Education, 224
13 Qu and Li, Compulsory Education of Migrant Children, 233
migrant students who either dropped out of school or were not provided schooling between the ages of 6 and 11.\textsuperscript{14} According to this survey, the out-of-schooling rate for migrants was about 4.8%, while the national average was only 3.3%.\textsuperscript{15} It is also important to note that this figure does not take into consideration the migrant students who still technically attend school but were forced by city governments to attend illegitimate and underfunded migrant-only schools.\textsuperscript{16}

A study published in 2011 by Henan Cheng found a large number and variety of barriers that migrant children face when pursuing a state-sponsored education.\textsuperscript{17} Most glaring are the significant institutional barriers that are imposed and perpetuated by the central Chinese government.\textsuperscript{18} These barriers include the household registration system and the decentralized nature of the entire Chinese education system. The institutional barriers and their consequences will be discussed at length in the third section of this thesis as they are undoubtedly the most important factors in migrant education discrimination. However, Cheng argues that there are also some significant socio-economic, psychological and cultural barriers that prevent migrants from experiencing full inclusion in state-run schools.\textsuperscript{19} These barriers are much more difficult to quantify but can nonetheless present obstacles to the inclusion of migrant children in the education system.

\textsuperscript{14} Qu and Li, \textit{Compulsory Education of Migrant Children}, 229
\textsuperscript{15} Qu and Li, \textit{Compulsory Education of Migrant Children}, 229
\textsuperscript{16} Qu and Li, \textit{Compulsory Education of Migrant Children}, 230
\textsuperscript{18} Cheng, \textit{Educational Barriers}, 290
\textsuperscript{19} Cheng, \textit{Educational Barriers}, 270
In general, migrant laborers’ socio-economic status is lower than that of permanent urban residents. This situation is not surprising given the low amount of education required for migrant jobs and the lack of wealth that has been transferred to China’s countryside.20 Cheng argues that this socio-economic gap between migrant workers and city residents presents multiple problems for migrant children in the education system. For example, in many of China’s cities migrants largely live in migrant communities, which are normally located in the most impoverished section of a city. This often means that migrant students cannot freely choose which government public school to attend and are left with only the poor quality public schools.21

Another socio-economic barrier that migrants face is the nature of migrant-specific work. Often, migrant-held jobs require very little skills or education. This means that migrant laborers are highly interchangeable and there is often quick turnover for these types of jobs. Therefore migrant students are often forced to change residences, and therefore schools, within a city as their parents pursue employment.22 This situation makes it difficult for children to find any continuity or comfort in pursuing their education.23 Additionally, the simple nature of migrant jobs is conducive to child labor exploitation. According to Cheng, one alternative to pursuing an education in a sub-standard public school or informal migrant school for migrant children would be to work in a factory alongside their parents.24 While this

20 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 291
21 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 291
22 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 292
23 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 297
24 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 292
type of child labor exploitation is now illegal in China, it has certainly not been eradicated. Unfortunately the children most susceptible to this type of exploitation are migrant children who have already struggled to join the state-run public education system.

In addition to these socio-economic barriers, Cheng cites numerous psychological barriers that also likely effect educational attainment for migrant children. Cheng hypothesizes that many migrant children suffer from a lack of motivation and self-esteem. These problems are likely a direct result of a child’s status as a migrant student in an urban setting. Many migrant children are alienated because of their migrant status and after some time begin to genuinely view themselves as second-class citizens. These psychological problems are then exacerbated by a lack of parental involvement and a lack of school or community support. Migrant parents work long hours in exhausting conditions and presumably have little time or energy to properly care for their children. Therefore it is easy to see how migrant children can feel neglected and alone after spending many years in a new city.

Finally, Cheng discusses cultural barriers and how they might affect migrant schooling opportunities. Most obviously he highlights the detrimental qualities of language barriers. Standard Mandarin Chinese, which is now the educational standard across China, is often not emphasized in China’s village schools as much as it is in the cities. This language gap ensures that many migrant children struggle to

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26 Cheng, *Educational Barriers*, 295
27 Cheng, *Educational Barriers*, 297
28 Cheng, *Educational Barriers*, 294
understand or communicate with other students and teachers after arriving in the city. Cheng also argues that the value of education is often deemphasized in the migrant community. This community feeling can subconsciously hurt a migrant student’s motivation to work hard or even attend school. He also notes that many permanent city residents have strong biases against migrants and ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, migrant children often experience this discrimination firsthand after enrolling in state-run schools. Discrimination in public schools from both teachers and other can represent an additional psychological barrier for migrant students. It negatively affects their psyche and seriously hurts their chances at succeeding within the state-run education system.

The Amity Foundation’s Hongshan School

As a natural response to the previously mentioned barriers, many migrant communities have established their own migrant-specific schools. In general, the schooling conditions of these community schools are far below that of the state-sponsored public schools. However, despite their many deficiencies, private migrant schools offer an alternative means of education for migrant children who have been excluded from or discriminated against in public schools. Due to the unofficial nature of these migrant schools, there are no reliable statistics or studies that can include every type migrant school. Studies have shown, however, that there

29 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 293
30 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 298
are many models of administrative structure and funding sources for community migrant schools. One migrant schooling model that has been used on a large scale in Nanjing is the NGO sponsored migrant school.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of academic research available on this specific type of school; therefore I will describe the schooling method used by one Nanjing-based NGO, The Amity Foundation. My description of this NGO and its sponsored migrant school is based on a combination of personal experience, and two interviews.

The Amity Foundation, founded in 1985, is a Christian-based organization that promotes education, social services, health and rural development for Chinese minorities. Because of Amity's emphasis on minorities, many of their projects are located in the underdeveloped Western provinces. However, one important aspect of Amity's education-related work is to support private, community migrant schools in Nanjing. According to Amity's migrant school liaison, Wendy Wu, Amity once supported more than ten private migrant schools in and around Nanjing. However, Amity now supports only three total migrant schools, two of which are private, primary migrant-specific schools.

During the summer of 2010, I received a grant from Haverford College’s Center for Peace and Global Citizenship to travel to China and work as a volunteer with the Amity Foundation. The first three weeks of my summer were spent teaching English at one of Amity's two sponsored migrant schools, The Hongshan School.

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33 Interview responses from Miss Li and Wendy Wu are located in Appendix 1
With little knowledge of or experience with China’s migrant workers, I was surprised at the poor schooling conditions and low quality of education at this school. I taught four classes, each with more than 60 students. Myself and the other volunteers were given no teaching materials other than chalk and a blackboard to write on. Other teaching materials - books, maps, etc. - appeared to be quite dated and in poor condition. Without access to running water, students and teachers alike were forced to use a dilapidated outhouse. These schooling conditions are far inferior to those of even the poorest public schools; it is this large gap in schooling conditions between migrant community schools and state-run public schools that inspired me to further research this topic.

Interviews with one of Hongshan’s teachers, Miss Li, and with Amity’s employee, Wendy Wu, have provided valuable firsthand insights into the causes of The Hongshan School’s poor quality. According to Ms. Wu, the two primary schools are both privately owned and operate on a very tight budget. The schools have not received government approval so they are not eligible to receive government funding. This means that tuition and charitable donations are the only sources of funding for the schools. One semester’s tuition ranges between 500 and 1000 Yuan, or between 80 and 160 dollars. This tuition places a burden on migrant families who do not earn a high salary, but the tuition is still barely enough to cover each school’s operating costs. This small operating budget also puts a tight constraint on the quality of teachers that each migrant school is able to hire.

The responses by Miss Li help to illustrate the background and caliber of teachers that migrant schools, such as the Hongshan School, are able to attract on
such a tight budget. Her responses also shed light on the many challenges that both migrant teachers students face in migrant community schools. Miss Li is a migrant herself and has been living in Nanjing for about eight years. After struggling to obtain a secure job as a regular public school teacher, Miss Li settled with a position at another migrant school and worked there for six years. Attracted by a higher salary and slightly better schooling conditions, Miss Li moved to the Hongshan School in 2010. Her experience working as migrant schoolteacher in Nanjing is not unique. Many migrant schoolteachers are under qualified to teach in regular public schools and are left with no choice but to teach in a migrant school. There is also a much higher turnover rate for migrant schoolteachers than for public schoolteachers. This is due to the fact that migrant schoolteachers often use migrant schools as short-term employment while they pursue better, more respectable employment opportunities. This lack of continuity in teachers from year to year certainly has a detrimental effect on the education of migrant students.

Miss Li’s responses also illustrate the unreasonable expectations placed on migrant teachers, considering their lack of support and materials. Miss Li explains that all school facilities and educations materials are outdated. She also mentions that she works from 7am to 4pm every day, leaving her very little excess time or energy with which to prepare lessons or grade exercises. These poor conditions place a heavy burden on teachers like Miss Li. She lacks any support or resources with which to help her students succeed. Unfortunately, these poor conditions and

35 Han, Survey Report on the State of Compulsory Education, 39
36 Han, Survey Report on the State of Compulsory Education, 45
37 Han, Survey Report on the State of Compulsory Education, 45
38 Cheng, Educational Barriers, 293
lack of resources seriously hurt the chances of Hongshan students graduating and attending a state-sponsored middle school.\textsuperscript{39}

Miss Li estimates that only about 10% of Hongshan students are able to attend middle school in Nanjing. Attending middle school in Nanjing requires students to pass the regular middle school entrance exam and obligates the parents to pay many extra schooling fees. Unfortunately, most students have not received a good enough education to pass the test and many parents cannot afford the additional schooling fees. The remaining 90% of Hongshan students either drop out of school to live and work in Nanjing, or they return to their home province to continue their compulsory education. While Miss Li’s experience is limited to these two migrant schools in Nanjing, her experience and observations are representative of migrant schools and schoolteachers across China. Whether migrant schools are NGO sponsored, privately owned or charitably supported, they are all underfunded and struggle to provide an education that meets the standards of regular public schools. A lack of funding and support for migrant schools inevitably leads to a low quality of education, which seriously hurts each student’s ability to transition to a regular middle school.\textsuperscript{40} Students who cannot pass the entrance exam or cannot afford the extra fees are then unable to continue their education in the city. This exclusion from city education at such a young age leaves the migrant children in a difficult situation.\textsuperscript{41} They must return home to their farm or village be raised by

\textsuperscript{39} Wang, \textit{Revisiting the Education}, 227
\textsuperscript{40} Wang, \textit{Revisiting the Education}, 227
\textsuperscript{41} Wang, \textit{Revisiting the Education}, 227
their grandparents or they will likely become an uneducated, low-skilled worker like their parents.

**Sources of the Migrant Education Problem**

The main sources of this serious education gap facing many Chinese migrant children can be traced back to two important central government policy initiatives. The first is China’s household registration system, often referred to as the hukou system, which was promulgated in 1958.\(^{42}\) Still currently in effect with few changes from the original 1958 law, the hukou system stipulates that every Chinese citizen must hold a residency permit, or hukou.\(^{43}\) This residency permit specifies where citizens are allowed to apply for work, their housing situation and social benefits.\(^{44}\) In addition to the hukou system, a second policy that has both helped to create and exacerbate the migrant education situation is the first 9-year compulsory education law, instituted in 1985.\(^ {45}\) When drafting this law, Deng Xiaopeng sought to use education as a tool to rapidly improve China’s national situation and bring China’s development on par with other already developed nations. While the 9-year compulsory education system is considered a success for greatly benefitting many Chinese students and improving China’s education system, it was drafted in a time


\(^{43}\) Fan, *Migration, Hukou and the City,* 66

\(^{44}\) Fan, *Migration, Hukou and the City,* 66

\(^{45}\) Qu and Li, *Compulsory Education of Migrant Children,* 234
when rural to urban migration was a relatively rare phenomenon.\footnote{Qu and Li, \textit{Compulsory Education of Migrant Children}, 234} For this reason, both the hukou system and original 1985 9-year compulsory education law seemingly at best ignore and at worst contribute to the problems surrounding the education of migrant laborer’s children.\footnote{Qu and Li, \textit{Compulsory Education of Migrant Children}, 234}

Hukou

As part of the 1958 law, “Regulations on Household Registration in the People’s Republic of China,” the Chinese central government instituted a nationwide registration system, called the hukou system.\footnote{Fan, \textit{Migration, Hukou and the City}, 66} Originally instituted as a measure to keep track of all Chinese citizens, the hukou required that all Chinese workers obtain a hukou permit and be classified as either an ‘agricultural’ or ‘nonagricultural’ worker.\footnote{Cheng, \textit{Origins and Social Consequences}, 654} Food and work allocations were then determined according to a workers’ hukou status, quickly making the hukou an important part of every Chinese citizen’s life.\footnote{Fan, \textit{Migration, Hukou and the City}, 66}

In the decades after its creation, China’s registration system incorporated very little flexibility. According to the law a citizen’s hukou status was determined by their parent’s status. This policy strongly encouraged workers to remain in their village of origin, as switching hukou permits was often very difficult or even
impossible for most Chinese peasants. Additionally, finding work and residency in a new place was impossible without first obtaining a new hukou, effectively ensuring very little population movement throughout China’s interior.

These stringent residency laws remained in effect until shortly after China’s “opening up” reform period that began in 1978. After foreign investment and production plants flooded into China, demand for low-wage labor also increased. When it became clear to the Chinese government that the urban supply of labor would not be able to satisfy the increasing demand, they responded by easing the residency restrictions on rural peasants. One important part of this residency system reform was the creation of a “temporary residency permit” in 1984. This new temporary hukou allowed for agricultural laborers to leave their farms for a short period of time, usually between one and three years, to find jobs in China’s cities. These jobs found in China’s cities often paid a wage that was significantly higher than could be obtained in China’s countryside. The combination of this 1984 residency reform and the subsequent opportunity for a higher wage encouraged many agricultural laborers to temporarily move into China’s cities.

Throughout the rest of the 1980’s and through most of the 1990’s the addition of the temporary hukou seemed mutually beneficial to both the Chinese government

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51 Cheng, Origins and Social Consequences, 657
52 Cheng, Origins and Social Consequences, 657
53 Fan, Migration, Hukou and the City, 67
54 Fan, Migration, Hukou and the City, 67
55 Fan, Migration, Hukou and the City, 66
56 Fan, Migration, Hukou and the City, 67
57 Fan, Migration, Hukou and the City, 69
and the temporary migrants.\textsuperscript{58} Laborers could now move into a city without the concerns surrounding the hukou stipulations regarding obtaining housing, employment and work\textsuperscript{59}. They were free to work in the city for a few years with a relatively higher wage before returning to their village of origin. This opportunity helped to increase the standard of living across much of the Chinese countryside, and in many cases also exposed peasants to urban and western culture for the first time.\textsuperscript{60}

It was not until migration patterns began to change that the temporary hukou status became a major restrictive factor for migrant laborers. As previously mentioned, in the early 2000’s migration trends began to move away from individual migration to migration as a family unit. Accompanying this trend was the tendency of migrants to migrate on a more permanent basis.\textsuperscript{61} Migrant families often became accustomed to more modern, urban life and the higher standard of living that the cities could provide. Unfortunately this tendency also placed a higher burden of city governments to accommodate these new “permanent” migrants.\textsuperscript{62} Because of the high level of decision-making autonomy that exists for Chinese city governments, many city governments sought to save money by limiting their provision of social benefits, such as education and healthcare, to their original urban residents.\textsuperscript{63} This pattern of exclusion from the urban social benefit system for migrant workers spread

\textsuperscript{58} Fan, \textit{Migration, Hukou and the City}, 77
\textsuperscript{59} Fan, \textit{Migration, Hukou and the City}, 75
\textsuperscript{60} Fan, \textit{Migration, Hukou and the City}, 78
\textsuperscript{61} Wang, Revisiting the Education, 223
\textsuperscript{63} China Labor Bulletin, Part 2, 4
across many Chinese cities.\textsuperscript{64} It is for this reason that the education of migrant children has only recently become such a pressing issue in Chinese cities. It was only after the number of migrant children dramatically increased, that city governments gained a large incentive to exclude them from the state-run education system. However, not all the blame for the poor educational opportunities available to migrants can be placed on China’s hukou system. It is the temporary hukou status coupled with the provisions of the first 9-year compulsory education law that allowed for city governments to effectively exclude many migrant children from state-run schools.

Compulsory Education Law

First implemented in July of 1986, the “Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China” was intended to promote equitable and increased development across all of China. In 1986 China was still only recently open to foreign investment but was already beginning its rapid modernization process. In addition to the many economic and foreign policy reforms, Deng Xiaoping also recognized the necessity of wholesale education reform. Under this 1986 compulsory education law, children across all of China were guaranteed 9 years of education beginning at age 6.\textsuperscript{65} Article 5 of the law states that “All children who have reached the age of six shall enroll in school and receive compulsory education for the

\textsuperscript{64} China Labor Bulletin, \textit{Part 2}, 4
\textsuperscript{65} China Labor Bulletin, \textit{Part 2}, 4
prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race.” Additionally, the law stipulates that “the state, community, schools and families shall...safeguard the right of compulsory education of school-age children and adolescents. 

In addition to laying out basic educational provisions and goals, the law also provided a framework for the administration and funding of this complex education system. Using a decentralized approach as a general model, the education law granted high degree of autonomy to local authorities in their implementation of compulsory education. Article 2 stipulates that “Authorities of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall decide on measures to promote compulsory education, in accordance with the degree of economic and cultural development in their own localities.” This article gives wide-ranging decision-making power to local governments in their implementation of compulsory education. Article 8 reiterates this point even more explicitly, saying that “local authorities shall assume responsibility for compulsory education, and it shall be administered at different levels.”

This decentralized approach was also applied to the funding structure for the education system. Article 12 mandates that “local people’s governments at various levels shall be responsible for raising funds for the operating expenses and capital construction investment for the implementation of compulsory education,” adding later that “local

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67 “Peoples Republic of China”
69 Tsang, Financial Reform, 423
70 “Peoples Republic of China”
71 Tsang, Financial Reform, 430
people’s governments at various levels shall levy a surtax for education, which shall be used mainly for compulsory education.” This article further emphasizes the decentralized nature of this new system. Essentially the central government delegated to “lower levels of government the power, responsibility and incentives to mobilize government resources for education.”

Economic Development as a Basis for Reform

Rising Production Costs

As mentioned above, due to the highly autonomous structure of Chinese governance and ambiguity of central government policies, the burden of accommodating a large migrant population often falls upon local city governments. This means that local officials are tasked with developing their own migrant-related policies. Additionally, local governments must rely on their own tax base to fund all migrant-specific social programs and schools. This combination of autonomy, ambiguous government policies and lack of central government funding leaves most Chinese cities with little motivation for including migrant students in state-run schools. Most cities are happy to maintain the status quo, using the hukou loophole, extra schooling fees and considerable bureaucratic red tape as a tool to discourage migrant children from attending state-sponsored public school. However, beginning in the early 2000's, a small number of Chinese cities have broken this mold and made major policy changes concerning their migrant-related education policies. These

72 “Peoples Republic of China”
73 Tsang, Financial Reform, 438
types of policy shifts and reforms are often quite costly to Chinese cities when implemented without central government funding or planning assistance. This recent trend of city governments independently implementing education reform is the topic of my last section. I will use recent demographic and economic trends to explain why certain Chinese cities are now independently implementing migrant-related education reforms.

In the past decade, many Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Dongguan, Wuhan, Kunming, Wenzhou and Pudong have all undertaken major migrant education reforms. While the motivation and pressures for each city to reform are likely quite different, I believe that large, international cities like Beijing and Shanghai undertook mandatory reforms imposed by the central government. China often receives criticism from other countries concerning issues of human rights and worker exploitation. Beijing and Shanghai both began migrant education reforms in 2005, just three years before the Beijing Olympics and five years before the World Expo in Shanghai.74 With the eyes of the international community focused squarely on these two progressive and cosmopolitan Chinese cities, it was likely in the best interest of the central government to overhaul the education system and update their migrant education policies. However, this hypothesis of central government mandated reform applies only to these two economically and socially progressive cities, Beijing and Shanghai, that recently hosted major international events. One must look for other motivations when trying to explain the reforms that have taken place in some second and third tier cities.

74 Wang, *Revisiting the Education*, 223
I have already argued that the combination of a decentralized governance structure and ambiguous central government policies results in highly autonomous decision-making for second and third tier Chinese cities. Many cities have used this autonomy to favor their regular urban residents by alienating and excluding migrants from the social benefit structure. However, as I previously stated, not all cities have continued with this pattern of exploitation and exclusion for migrant residents. Some cities, including the ones listed above, have independently initiated migrant education reform. These types of reforms are often quite costly and logistically difficult for smaller cities to implement. Without intense pressure to appeal to the international community like Beijing and Shanghai, these smaller cities must have some equally compelling reason to undertake major reforms. It is my hypothesis that efforts to promote future economic growth and industrial development have compelled certain smaller Chinese cities to undertake major educational reforms.

In this final section I will provide two examples of educational reform, both benefitting migrant children, which were recently undertaken in the Chinese cities of Pudong and Wenzhou. These cities are both well known across China for their strong business sectors and progressive economic policies. However, these cities are lesser known and certainly less visible to the international community, than major cities like Beijing or Shanghai. Due to the highly autonomous nature of these city governments, it is likely that their recent education reform initiatives were drafted and initiated without substantial pressure or assistance from the Beijing central government. Therefore, I argue that in addition to the goals of promoting basic
human rights and social equity, Pudong and Wenzhou initiated these recent reforms with the added motivation of ensuring their own future economic growth and development.

Following the opening up and reform of the economy in 1979, China’s economic growth and industrialization has outpaced every other country in modern history. Originally benefitting from a massive labor surplus, Chinese cities enticed foreign direct investment with lax labor laws and low labor costs. This foreign direct investment fueled Chinese growth during the past three decades, making China the world leader in growth of exports and production. Essential to this Chinese model of development was the massive, unskilled labor surplus that existed in both Chinese cities and rural villages. After the majority of the urban surplus was exhausted in the 1980’s, the central government began encouraging rural migration to China’s cities. This strategy successfully bolstered the labor surplus, keeping production costs low and enticing further foreign direct investment. This labor surplus development strategy was particularly successful in China’s two most robust economic regions, the Pearl River Delta and the Yangtze River Delta.\textsuperscript{75}

Since the reforms in 1979, these two deltas have attracted more foreign investment than any other region in China. In 2002 the Yangtze River Deltas’ total gross domestic product (GDP) was 18.7\% of China’s total GDP while the Pearl River Delta accounted for 34.6\% of China’s total exports.\textsuperscript{76} These two economic regions have benefitted because of their natural labor surplus, access to major trade routes


\textsuperscript{76} Sam Ng, \textit{A Tale of Two Deltas}
and progressive economic policies. However, the global economic downturn, which began in 2008, combined with excess labor demand has negatively affected the production and economic growth rates in these two regions.

According to the CHIP (Chinese Household Income Project) surveys conducted between the years of 2003 and 2009, migrant worker income has been steadily rising. Notably, in 2006 and 2009 migrant workers saw 10% and 17.3% wage increases respectively.\(^7\) It is reasonable to infer that such increases were symptomatic of a tightening of the migrant labor supply relative to demand. These percentages in the CHIP survey represent the aggregate percentages for all of Chinese cities. Some areas, including the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas, have experienced an even more dramatic tightening of the migrant labor market.

China’s Pearl River Delta is located in Southern China, including the economic powerhouse cities of Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Macao. As one of the first zones in China opened to foreign investment, the Pearl River Delta has relied on progressive economic policies and low-wage labor to develop its strong regional economy.\(^7\) However, after the financial crisis began in 2008, a sudden drop in demand for exports crippled this regional export-lead economy. Between 2008 and 2010, over 15% of the delta’s 130 Million migrant workers lost their jobs, most choosing to give up their status as a migrant laborer and returning to their home villages. This sudden drop in supply of labor in 2010 coupled with recent growth of foreign consumer demand has lead to huge labor shortages across the Pearl River


Delta. The shortage was so severe that many Guangdong factory owners found it impossible to fill production quotas. Unable to attract workers using traditional methods, factory owners turned to the Guangdong government to help bring back the migrant labor. In an effort to alleviate the migrant labor shortage and reinvigorate the regional economy in 2010, the Guangdong Labor and Social Security Bureau raised the province's minimum wage by 21%.79 This drastic measure was necessary to re-stimulate the regional economy and ensure a continuing regional comparative advantage in goods production.

Experiencing similar migrant labor shortages and associated upward pressure on wages, cities in the Yangtze River Delta are also struggling to attract and maintain a suitably cheap labor force. Including the cities of Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Suzhou, the Yangtze River Delta relies heavily on manufacturing and foreign investment to sustain the regional economy. While the impact of the 2008 crisis was not quite as drastic in this region as in the Pearl River Delta, many Yangtze River Delta cities are seeing a similar rise in wages and prices. According to Suzhou's Major, Yan Li, “Land prices and salaries in Suzhou are much higher than those in the northern Jiangsu area and the country’s western region... Suzhou isn’t able to compete against those pilot cities in terms of investment incentives.” Therefore in order to maintain a competitive advantage in production, Yan explains, “(Suzhou)

must create our own niches by building on our industrial strengths and offering better services.”  

Using this strategy of highlighting “industrial strengths,” Suzhou has implemented policies meant to encourage scientific innovation and welcome high-tech foreign manufactures. These development policies have focused mostly around urban planning and redistribution of industrial parks. Using strategic urban planning, the city government hopes to build a new industrial blueprint for the city that encourages investment in science and sustainable growth. As part of this effort, the mayor has pledged to connect all of Suzhou with a state-of-the-art transportation network by 2020. He also announced a plan to ensure full transparency of future city reforms and decision-making, all aimed at attracting more overseas investors. These policies are meant to help move Suzhou’s production up the supply chain and break their reliance on the increasingly expensive unskilled migrant labor. Because Suzhou was either unwilling or unable to impose a wage increase like that in Guangdong, the city government relied upon other methods to stimulate growth and to attract investment.

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80 Ren, Daniel. "City looks to move up value chain." South China Morning Post 10 01 2009, 16. Web. 27 Jan. 2013. 1
81 Daniel Ren, City looks to move up value chain, 1
82 Daniel Ren, City looks to move up value chain, 1
83 Daniel Ren, City looks to move up value chain, 1
Lewis Turning Point

Many other city governments are now instituting policies with motivations similar to those of Guangdong and Suzhou because competition for labor and for niche competitive advantages has increased. Once content to rely upon low-wage labor to attract foreign investment, city governments must now be more proactive in keeping their economies competitive. It seems odd that a developing economy, built upon the foundation of almost unlimited cheap, surplus labor, could suddenly experience a lack of cheap labor supply. However, this phenomenon has been explained by economists using the Lewis model of development, which applies specifically to “labor surplus,” developing economies, like China’s.

This model assumes a “dualistic economy:” distinct rural-agricultural and urban-industrial sectors, with the former characterized by essentially pre-capitalist conditions, with a marginal productivity of zero in that sector. This implies that substantial rural-urban migration can occur without a) any negative impact on agricultural output, and b) any increase in the urban industrial wage.84 Under these conditions, urban-industrialization can expand and sustain rapid economic development without worries of wage inflation until the state where industrial labor force demand growth surpasses total labor force growth.85

According to the neoclassical reasoning of the Lewis model, as rural migration continues, eventually the productivity of remaining agricultural workers rises, which

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85 Aoyu Bai, China's 'Lewis Turning Point', 1
in turn also adds pressure for the agricultural wage to rise. This implies that continued urban migration can only be motivated by a rising industrial wage. Indeed, many economists are now arguing that certain urban regions in China have reached a point in their development where at the prevailing industrial wage, the quantity of labor demanded is greater than the quantity of labor supplied.

According to a study published in the 2011 China Economic Review, “there will not necessarily be a neat Lewis turning point in a country as large and as regulated as China is.”86 The authors point out that institutional constraints and regionally segmented economies suggest that different geographic areas of China will experience the Lewis turning point at different times. This perspective explains why urban labor supply costs have risen while there is still ostensibly a rural labor surplus.87

Another aspect of the 2011 study attempts to quantify the pool of rural laborers with a high probability of future migration. Using the CHIP surveys conducted in 2002 and 2007, the authors predict that many rural laborers will respond to increasing urban wages by migrating as a family unit for a permanent or long duration. They estimate that by 2020, migrant laborers will constitute roughly two-thirds of the total urban labor force.88 Recent trends also suggest that competition among cities to attract and then retain these new migrants will be high. Cities will want to avoid the old trend of “floating” migrants as these types of workers are unskilled and will not provide the skills necessary to move a city’s production

86 Knight et al, *Puzzle of Migrant Labour Shortage*, 599
87 Knight et al, *Puzzle of Migrant Labour Shortage*, 599
88 Knight et al, *Puzzle of Migrant Labour Shortage*, 599
factories up the supply chain. The authors explain that an unskilled labor force will become increasingly inefficient for China’s cities:

“The solution to this problem which employers in many countries have adopted is to try to stabilize their labour forces by improving the rewards for staying. If long service becomes more economically more efficient, governments have an incentive to permit and encourage it, employers have an incentive to reward it, and migrants have an incentive to acquire it. Long service in turn encourages migrants to settle with their families.”

The policy shifts in Guangdong and Suzhou provide two examples of efforts to “stabilize their labor forces.” Guangdong is using a monetary reward system to encourage migration on a permanent basis while Suzhou altered the city structure to encourage higher technology manufacturing. The authors of the 2011 study argue that creative and drastic measures, such as those taken in Guangdong and Suzhou, will become increasingly necessary for Chinese cities to remain competitive and ensure future economic growth.

It is the thesis of this paper that some migrant education reform initiatives, recently undertaken in second and third tier Chinese cities, are attempts by these city governments to “stabilize their labor force.” However, there is no specific formula or universal methodology for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Suzhou and Guangdong pursued seemingly unrelated policies but both were working towards the same end result. Second and third tier Chinese cities differ drastically in their economic structures and level of development, so their policies must be individually developed and implemented. City governments can use their high level of autonomy

89 Knight et al, Puzzle of Migrant Labour Shortage, 599
to develop and institute policies that are catered specifically to their own circumstances and workforce requirements.

I have argued in previous sections that many Chinese cities have been content to ignore the needs of their migrant community. With a seemingly unlimited supply of cheap labor in China's countryside, cities had little or no motivation to undertake reforms until migrant wages began to rise. The recent trend of increasing wages has motivated an increasing number of Chinese cities to take proactive action. Improving the social benefits, including education, which are provided to migrants is certainly a viable method of enticing and retaining a migrant workforce. I will now discuss specific policy shifts, both relating to migrant education, in the cities of Wenzhou and Pudong.

Wenzhou Education Reforms

Wenzhou is located in a mountainous region in Southeastern Zhejiang with easy access to the East China Sea. Wenzhou is well known across China however, for its history of economically liberal policies. Many Chinese regard Wenzhou as the 'birthplace' of Chinese capitalism because of the success of Wenzhou-based entrepreneurs in the early 1980's. This liberal economic spirit has persisted in Wenzhou through the present day. In 2012, Wenzhou was announced by the central government as the site for a “Comprehensive Pilot Financial Reform Zone.”\(^9^0\) This financial reform program includes major experiments such as the standardization of

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informal financing and the ability for Wenzhou residents to invest directly in foreign companies.\textsuperscript{91} Such progressive economic policies cannot be found in any other Chinese city, solidifying Wenzhou as China’s most progressive and entrepreneurial city.

Despite its unique status as China’s ‘economic guinea pig,’ Wenzhou’s economy is still hugely reliant on traditional manufacturing. Comprising 46.1\% of the city’s total GDP in 2012, the manufacturing sector in Wenzhou has relied heavily of low-skilled migrant workers to fuel its growth. Major industries in Wenzhou include textiles, plastics, shoe wares and simple electronics.\textsuperscript{92} Wenzhou has maintained a competitive advantage in these industries due to their labor-intensive nature and the large supply of cheap labor that flocked to Wenzhou after its economic successes in the 1980’s. Factories in Wenzhou are now experiencing similar wage-related pressures as seen in cities in the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas.

Beginning in 2008, Wenzhou has experienced a slow, but continual rise in wages for low-skilled workers. Low wages are integral to maintaining a competitive advantage in low-priced merchandise markets. This trend of rising wages is quite unsettling to many Wenzhou business owners because Wenzhou has long relied on its manufacturing sector to support the regional economy. Some Wenzhou residents believe the rising wages in Wenzhou necessitate a fundamental change in the structure of Wenzhou’s economy. One resident argues "Wenzhou, in the near future, will probably turn into a financial city instead of the manufacturing hub, as more

\textsuperscript{91} Herrmann, \textit{Wenzhou}, 3
\textsuperscript{92} Herrmann, \textit{Wenzhou}, 1
businessmen transfer their focus, to make investments in all industries.”93 While this type of fundamental shift may be in Wenzhou’s future, it will not solve the short-term wage-related issues facing Wenzhou’s large manufacturing sector.

Rising wages are a direct consequence of a shrinking low-wage labor supply. Wenzhou has not made significant efforts to stabilize the labor force as Suzhou has. A Wenzhou business owner recently told a China Daily reporter:

“I haven’t seen many changes among my business partners, or willingness to upgrade their products for higher prices with better quality but they are still struggling in the tough, low-price market, among other manufacturers.”94

This lack of product upgrade or movement up the value chain means that in the short-term, Wenzhou manufactures are forced to rely upon low-cost production of low priced products. Some Wenzhou factory owners argue that movement up the value chain is inevitable for Wenzhou manufacturers. A professor at Shanghai’s International Business School noted “(Wenzhou) had better enhance the quality of their products with more innovative techniques in order to stand out from tough competition.”95 This strategy is likely to keep Wenzhou competitive in the long run but unlike Suzhou, Wenzhou has yet to make any fundamental changes to its infrastructure or production facilities. Therefore, without the ability to quickly upgrade factories or switch to a financially based economy, Wenzhou must find a way to keep short run production costs down. This responsibility now falls upon the Wenzhou city government as factories have little power to entice workers other than

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93 Ran, Yu. "Making the Shoe Fit." *China Daily* [Hong Kong] 30 10 2012. 3
94 Yu Ran, *Making the Shoe Fit*, 3
95 Yu Ran, *Making the Shoe Fit*, 4
increased wages and benefits, both of which would further hurt Wenzhou’s manufacturing sector. Without Guangdong’s ability to raise the minimum wage or Suzhou’s forward thinking city planning efforts, Wenzhou turned to its education system as a tool to increase the social benefits for migrant workers.

Shortly after its labor supply problems began in 2008, the Wenzhou city government released a circular, which introduced a major policy change intended to improve the quality of schooling for migrant children. While these policy changes are still in the process of being implemented and realized, the intent of the Wenzhou government is clear. Under the pretext of promoting overall societal benefit, the Wenzhou city government has pledged “strict implementation of the ‘Interim Measures for the Administration of Compulsory Education.’”

Guaranteeing full compulsory education to all city residents, both urban and of rural origin, is just one of the many provisions highlighted in this 2008 circular. The Wenzhou government also considered policies and actions that would actively encourage migrant enrollment. Such actions include using radio, television, newspapers and other media to convey the policy shifts to migrant communities. The city government also advocates for the establishment of “specialized agencies” to coordinate the flow of all migrant children into the compulsory education system. Their proactive approach even allowed for “economically disadvantaged students to be exempt or partially exempt from tuition and fees.”

We can see from these policies that the Wenzhou government not only opened their public schools to all migrant children, but is also actively encouraging

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96 Wenzhou Circular (Appendix 2)
97 Wenzhou Circular
migrant children to take advantage of the new policies. The excessive school fees and frustrating red tape that once kept migrant children out of state-run schools were both addressed by these Wenzhou reforms. Now all migrant children are encouraged and even supported in their pursuit of compulsory education. These reforms will undoubtedly be quite expensive for the Wenzhou government but are meant to benefit economic and societal development in the long run. Despite its progressive and liberal economic culture, Wenzhou is not the first Chinese city to undertake these types of migrant education reforms. Four years before Wenzhou released their circulatory and began these reforms, similar education reforms were undertaken in the Pudong industrial zone.

Pudong Education Reforms

Pudong’s history as a city dates back only to 1990 when the Chinese government announced a new initiative to strengthen the Shanghai area economy. Once just a small village of farmers, Pudong now has a skyline comparable to Shanghai’s and has a population of over 5 million people.98 This major development and industrialization has taken place in an extremely short period of time. Enticed by the Chinese government, many foreign manufacturing firms began production in Pudong. These foreign firms were happy to take advantage of Pudong's low wage labor, proximity to the established financial city of Shanghai and easy access to the Yangtze River and Pacific Ocean. With all these factors in place, Pudong was primed

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to be one of many great industrial centers on China’s coast. However, rising costs of production in the mid 1990’s, represented by wage increases and increasing costs of land, threw Pudong’s rapid development into jeopardy.

By 1995, 43 foreign firms were already operating in Pudong. Many of these firms were large, Japanese manufacturing firms who were attracted by Pudong’s promise of low-cost production. As more and more foreign production facilities flooded the Pudong industrial zone, competition for both land and labor intensified. A prominent Japanese newspaper, *The Nikkei Weekly*, noted in 1995 that many Japanese firms were cautious of opening production plants in Pudong. The report uses an example of a Japanese bowling company, which considered moving operations to Pudong. After intense research and planning, the firm found it would be considerably cheaper to employ workers in the city of Guangzhou. They estimated that the monthly wage of a clerical worker in Pudong would be 2,500 Yuan compared to only 1,500 Yuan per month in Guangzhou, or $416 and $250 respectively.99

The rising costs for both labor and land in Pudong during the 1990’s posed a major problem for the Chinese government. The Chinese government then faced a glaring question: How could this new city, built with the expectation of becoming a manufacturing powerhouse, compete with other Chinese cities if the costs of production were so much higher? Having already invested millions of Yuan in Pudong’s development, the Chinese central government continued to support Pudong as a center for manufacturing. In 2000, the central government created a

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new autonomous Pudong district government.\textsuperscript{100} Previously, the Shanghai government had been in charge of Pudong but that system created an unfortunate conflict of interest. Most Shanghai officials were concerned primarily with the development of Shanghai and actually chose to attract new businesses to Shanghai rather than Pudong.\textsuperscript{101} Were this trend to continue, the Pudong development project would almost certainly had failed. However, after 2000, Pudong’s district government was free to promote Pudong specific development, operating autonomously from the Shanghai government.\textsuperscript{102}

One policy shift that began shortly after the formation of the new Pudong government was an overhaul of the migrant schooling system. With a growing migrant population that reached 1.6 million by the early 2000’s, Pudong needed to create an education system that could accommodate and integrate this large segment of their population. Of the roughly 47,000 migrant children that lived in Pudong in 2000, less than half were students in the state-run compulsory education system.\textsuperscript{103} This means that over 20,000 migrant children were forced to attend one of Pudong’s 59 migrant-specific community schools or drop out of the education system entirely. The Pudong government realized that continuing this trend of exclusion for the majority of migrant children would not benefit Pudong’s long-term development. Therefore, by 2003, Pudong’s city government conducted extensive research concerning their migrant population and on the quality of the 59 community migrant

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{100} “Shanghai Pudong”
\bibitem{101} “Shanghai Pudong”
\bibitem{102} “Shanghai Pudong”
\end{thebibliography}
schools.\textsuperscript{104} Through this research and planning, the Pudong government found that the majority of community migrant schools were located in civilian houses and warehouses, with most situated at the city’s outskirts. Almost none of the 59 schools met the health and safety standards that were imposed on regular, state-run school buildings.\textsuperscript{105}

Aside from the substandard school buildings, the Pudong government also uncovered many other serious problems with the community migrant schools. Research uncovered that many of the migrant schoolteachers did not have teaching degrees or even teaching experience. Financing for the schools was almost completely based on tuition payments of 350 to 450 Yuan per month. These tuition fees were not applied on a consistent basis and the accounting system for each school was quite chaotic. Additionally, many migrant schools posed serious health and safety hazards to their students. Overloaded school buses would often break down, block traffic for long periods of time, cause accidents and in one case even catch fire.

The Pudong government also found that sanitation and food safety were major issues for the migrant schools. Due to a lack of funding and availability of proper school buildings, many migrant schools could not provide drinking water to students. Additionally, food preparation and service methods were extremely unsafe. They found that cooked and uncooked food would be handled together and with the same utensils.\textsuperscript{106} The poor health standards and teaching quality of the 59 migrant schools in Pudong, coupled with their desire to attract more migrant labor to the city,

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\textsuperscript{104} Ding, \textit{Overhauling and Regulating}, 14 \\
\textsuperscript{105} Ding, \textit{Overhauling and Regulating}, 15 \\
\textsuperscript{106} Ding, \textit{Overhauling and Regulating}, 16
\end{flushright}
helped to make migrant education reform a top priority for the Pudong district
government.

Armed with these findings and the motivation to maintain a competitive
manufacturing sector, the Pudong city government began implementing reforms in
2003. The government began their project by hosting a meeting of township and
neighborhood leaders. The purpose of this meeting was to explain policies, reforms
and ensure that all parties were willing to work cooperatively to reform the migrant
education system. Using the decentralized approach that is pervasive throughout the
Chinese bureaucracy, the Pudong government tasked each township government
with overseeing the overhaul of their migrant schools. Township governments were
given a high level of autonomy to determine which migrant schools to close, reform
or integrate into the public school network.107

After many months of overhaul and reform, all thirteen of Pudong's townships
had successfully integrated their migrant students into the public schooling system.
These reforms included the demolition of 28 of the original 59 migrant schools. The
remaining schools were completely overhauled and were integrated into the regular
public school system. Two important aspects of this integration included close
oversight by trained government education officials and the use of a single,
standardized curriculum for all schools within each district.108 The Pudong
government also recognizes the importance of continuous management and
oversight of migrant students. They have communicated to the citizens and migrant

107 Ding, Overhauling and Regulating, 19
108 Ding, Overhauling and Regulating, 21
community leaders of Pudong that migrant education will remain a priority for the city government.109

Conclusion

While Wenzhou and Pudong are not the only Chinese cities to have reformed their migrant education policies, there are still millions of migrant children who are discriminated against in China’s cities. Even in a first-tier city like Nanjing, where the city government has actually begun the process of integrating migrant children into state-run schools, there are still many migrant children who must rely upon community migrant schools for their primary education. We can see from my interviews with Wendy Wu and Miss Li that these schools lack the resources and government support that is necessary to properly educate their students. While the poor schooling conditions at a community migrant school, like the Hongshan School, are preferable to no schooling at all, they still cannot provide the education necessary for migrant children to succeed. Miss Li estimates that roughly 90% of the Hongshan School’s students cannot attend middle school in Nanjing. This trend is counterproductive to Nanjing’s future economic and social development. Therefore, I believe the number of China’s community migrant schools will decrease in the near future.

Initiatives, such as those undertaken in Pudong and Wenzhou, will become more popular as cities vie for a sustainable, educated labor force. I have argued that

109 Ding, Overhauling and Regulating, 26
providing more comprehensive and equitable social benefits for migrants is a feasible and compelling method to attract and retain more highly skilled migrant workers. Excluding migrant children from the state-run education system only encourages short-term migration and discourages migrant children from establishing a permanent residence. By overhauling their policies toward migrant children, city governments can both develop and retain a more skilled and experienced labor force. I believe that it is precisely such economic development considerations that inspired the cities of Wenzhou and Pudong to overhaul their migrant education policies. Whether motivated by concerns about future economic development, or by central government mandate, city governments will soon have no choice but to adopt an equitable, inclusive approach for migrant education.
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Appendix 1

Wendy Wu Interview:

How many migrant schools does Amity assist?

I learnt from my colleagues that Amity used to cooperate more than ten migrant schools in Nanjing by providing financial support and teaching facilities. Since I have joined Amity in June, 2010, our division has long-term cooperation with three migrant schools. Two of them are private primary schools, 红山外来工子弟学校/ Hongshan Migrant School and 明光金都外来工子弟学校/ Mingguang-Jindu Migrant School. I remember that you have been taught oral English voluntarily at Hongshan School, right? The third one is quite different. It is known as 百年□校/ Bai-Nian Vocational School (BNVS), which provides completely free vocational training to poor teenagers from migrant workers’ or farmers’ families. Read more via http://en.bnvs.cn/

What is Amity’s role in assisting these schools?

As a non-profit organization, Amity expects to do more to promote education and social services. The two primary migrant schools are private-owned by their headmasters, therefore, they have no access to government funding. We have been trying to provide them as many resources as we can get from the society. The BNVS is a well-organized non-profit vocational school, which has its own donors and fundraising activities. After the BNVS Nanjing School was established in 2010, Amity has been cooperating with them, by providing international volunteers, educational resources, etc.

What is Amity’s relationship with the government? (Does the government tell Amity how to assist the migrant schools?)

The government does not give orders to Amity what we should do or not. The normal situation is that, if we want to do a certain project, we need to check whether proposal is favored by the government policy. NPOs in China are trying to do good things to serve the society as an efficient complementary to the government, which certainly cannot cover all the needs in every aspect of the society.

What are the different sources of funding for the migrant schools? (schools fees, Amity funds, taxes, government grants, etc.)

As I mentioned in the previous questions, the three migrant schools have different sources of funding. For the two primary schools, they charge each student RMB 500-1000 for each semester. They pay the teachers’ salaries and other expenses. The
BNVS is tuition-free. The money comes from their annual charity gala and some long-term partners. I am not sure whether they can get government grants.

Amity used to support the students from migrant school with scholarship.

**Does the Nanjing government allow migrant children to attend regular public school?**

Yes. As a matter of fact, the municipal government encourages more and more migrant children to attend regular public schools if their parents have the “five certificates”, that is, ID cards/身份□, Residence Registration/户口本 (in their hometown), One-child Certificate/独生子女□, Temporary Residence Permit/住□ (in Nanjing), and Labor Contract/合同 (including Business License, in case the parents run their own business).

That’s why fewer and fewer migrant schools continue to exist in Nanjing, for students with the “five certificates” have been distributed to several public schools. The problem is that the students without these certificates—for example, quite a few students have siblings so that the parents cannot apply for a One-child Certificate—have not been covered by the regular public schooling system. It is better for them to attend some migrant school rather than to waste time idly, though generally migrant schools are in poor conditions.

**What are the main challenges of running a migrant school?**

According to my experience in managing the migrant project, I would like to see this question from three aspects:

1. **Government policy.** It will be probably much easier to run a migrant school if the government supports this with certain policies. At present, the Nanjing municipal government encourages to distribute migrant students into regular public schools. As a result, the number of migrant schools is decreasing regardless of whether the number of migrant students is decreasing or not.
2. **Funding.** Tuition paid by the students and irregular donations from the society are unable to cover all the expenses of running a school.
3. **Management.** I do not doubt the good intentions of the headmaster who has been taking all the trouble to run a migrant school. However, I have overheard lots of complaints from the teachers, the students and their parents during my visits to the schools. If some headmaster who treats the school as his or her private property, no one can expect him or her to put the students’ interests in the first place.

The BNVS has set a good model for the migrant schools, but it only provides vocational training. Maybe people believe that the government should be responsible for the basic education for all the civil citizens.
Miss Li Interview:

基本信息 / Personal Information of the Interviewee

李老□□，女，30几□，在南京工作生活了8年（2004-2012），担任打工子弟学校□文老□和班主任。

Ms. Li, in her thirties. She has been living in Nanjing for eight years, working as a Chinese teacher and the head-teacher in one of the schools for migrant workers’ children.

1。你的老家在哪里?
安徽省巢湖市。
Chaohu City, Anhui Province.

2。你□什么当老□?
大学□□范□□。
She graduated from a teachers’ training college. To be a teacher was an expectation for her.

3。你□什么在□家学校工作?
2004 □□后希望到大城市工作，没有教□□格□，不能□公立学校，于是□□了到打工子弟学校教□。
After her graduation in 2004, she left her hometown with the hope of making a living in a big city. When she settled in Nanjing, she realized that she was unable to teach at any of the public schools without the certificate issued by municipal education bureau. She found a migrant school to teach at last.

4。你在□家学校要几年工作?
2004 年先在另外一家打工子弟学校工作，2006 年跳到□一家，已□工作了 6 年。
She has been working at this school for six years after she left the previous migrant school for better conditions and higher salary.

5。你上大学□？（如果上□，什么□的大学？）
巢湖学院/Chaohu University
She graduated from Chaohu University, which used to be known as Chaohu Teachers’ Training College. She studied on education and was trained to be a teacher in her university days.

6. 你在的地方离学校远不远？
不太远，在附近租的房子。
Not very far. She rent a small flat in the same district of her school.

7. 每天来学校麻不麻烦？

半个小○。
Half an hour’s ride of bicycle.

8. 你得学校的□□，教科□□，等等，好不好？学校有足□教室□？足□老□□？

不好。□□很有限，利用率也不高。教科□□参考□□也不多。
每个教室都有很多学生。老□□工作量很大。

The migrant schools in Nanjing are generally in poor conditions. The facilities are outdated, and teachers do not have enough textbooks or reference books. For the school where Ms. Li works, teachers work from 7 am to 4 pm every work day. They have little time to prepare lessons, marking exercises, etc. The classroom teaching and learning is in a very old style, for they have little energy left to make any progress.

9. 一般来□教室有几个学生？
每个教室都有超□50名以上的学生。
There are more than 50 students in each classroom. Most teachers are overloaded.

10. 学生□□小学以后可以上什么□的中学？多少学生上中学？父母□□付□□？
如果能通□□考□，可以在南京上公立的初中，父母需要支付一定的□用，不□只有不到10%的学生□□□的机会。如果回到他□的老家，可以享受九年制□□教育。在当地上公立初中上学，父母不需要付□，但是没有□□陪孩子，他□□就会成□留守儿童。剩下的孩子可能就没有地方□□上学了。

There are several possibilities. First, if the students are able to pass the entrance examination, they will be given the opportunity to enter public middle schools in Nanjing. Their parents need to pay some extra fees, for they do not have the citizenship. The proportion is less than 10%. Second, they can enjoy free middle school education in their hometowns according to the nine-year compulsory education, but their parents need to make money in big cities. So they may become left-behind children, and this may lead to some other social problems. Third, there is still a large proportion of children from migrant workers’ families may stop taking education. We have no specific statistics.