

Education for All in China:

The Case of Migrant Children in County X

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which migrant girls and boys in China are integrated into the education system in urban areas in the context of implementing Education for All (EFA) policies. It explores the educational experiences of migrant children in urban areas, the government and school reactions to the issue of the education of migrant children, as well as the family-related factors that may affect their education. It aims at identifying the underlying factors that contribute to the disadvantages of migrant children in education.

Social exclusion theory is applied in this study to help understand how and why migrant children are marginalized. The study also uses a gender approach to investigate possible gender differences in migrant children's education based particularly on the Chinese cultural tradition. The study uses qualitative methods in a case study of County X in China, including document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation.

The research findings indicate that the urban education system remains partly exclusive and that migrant children meet several difficulties in integrating into urban society. The household registration system is regarded as one of the major factors that contribute to the marginalization of migrant children in the city. Migrant girls experience the dual disadvantage of being both migrant and female. The study specifically contributes knowledge about the group of 'migrant and left-behind' children. It argues that they experience problems both of adaptation and integration into the urban society and additional disadvantages from being left behind.

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Abbreviations:

EFA	Education for All
P.R. China	The People's Republic of China
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Education for All (EFA)

The notion of education as a fundamental human right was stated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 and the policy of Education for All (EFA) was formulated at the World Conference on EFA in Jomtien in 1990 (United Nations, 1948; UNESCO, 1990). At that time, governments, non-government organizations, civil society and donor agencies pledged to provide basic education for all children, youth and adults (UNESCO, 1990). For lack of progress, the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 adopted the *Dakar Framework for Action* and reset six goals to achieve quality EFA by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). Education was re-affirmed as a fundamental human right and targets and strategies were formulated to intensify the move towards the goals.

Influenced by the worldwide EFA movement, China has registered impressive advances in EFA on the one hand, but has vast problems in terms of marginalized groups that are hard to reach on the other (National Commission of the P.R. China for UNESCO & National Center for Education Development and Research of the P.R. China, 2008). According to official statistics, in 2009, the net enrolment ratio (NER) of school-age children in primary education was 99.4 per cent, compared with 97.8 per cent in 1990. Furthermore, in 2009, the NER for girls in primary education reached 99.44 per cent, which was higher than the NER for boys by 0.08 per cent (Ministry of Education of the P.R. China, 2009). Statistics from UNESCO also indicate that China has achieved gender parity in primary and lower secondary education (UNESCO, 2007, 2009).

Despite these positive developments in China, there remains a striking gap in educational development between the rural and the urban areas, between the western and the eastern regions, and between different social groups. The marginalization in education holds back the progress towards EFA in China (National Commission of the P.R. China for UNESCO & National Center for Education Development and Research of the P.R. China, 2008). This includes the particular issue of education of migrant

children.

1.2 Education of Migrant Children

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies in 1978, the uneven economic development in China has accelerated the flow of human resources from the countryside to the urban areas (Seeberg, Ross, Liu & Tan, 2007). In contrast to the early form of 'single migration', migrant workers have since the 1990s increasingly moved to the urban areas in the form of 'whole family migration'. With this trend of family mobility, a new group of children has appeared in China, the so-called 'migrant children' (Wang & Gao, 2010). According to data from the Fifth Population Census in 2000, there were around 14.09 million migrant children in China, constituting 13.78 per cent of the total migrant population (Wang & Gao, 2010, p. 1). In 2009, the number of migrant children who are under the age of 14 years rose to 43.89 million, or 20.8 per cent of the total number of migrants (National Population and Family Planning Commission of the P.R. China, 2010).

With the increasing number of migrant children, several problems have emerged in the life of migrant children and their educational problems have attracted widespread attention (Wang & Gao, 2010). Generally speaking, the problems of low enrolment ratio, high dropout rate and over-age schooling are widespread among migrant children. According to statistics from the Fifth Population Census in 2000, school-age migrant children who were out of school, constituted around 4.8 per cent, which was higher than the national average of 3.3 per cent (Duan & Liang, 2004, p. 57). In 2003, research on migrant children in nine big cities conducted by the State Council and the Work Committee for Women and Children demonstrated that 9.3 per cent of the migrant children were out of school and nearly half of them failed to enter school at the right age (Duan & Liang, 2005, p. 12). Approximately 46.9 per cent of 6-year-old children had not accessed schooling and 19.7 per cent of 9-year-old children were still in the first or second grade of primary school (Duan & Liang, 2005, p. 13). Furthermore, migrant children who had started working constituted more than 60 per cent of the age group of 12-14 years (Duan & Liang, 2005, p. 13).

The Chinese government regards the inclusion of migrant children into the education

system of cities as an important component of EFA in China (Ministry of Education of the P.R. China & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). The education of migrant children has a great bearing not only on the progress of China's EFA, but also has far-reaching impact on social equity and development (Liu, 2010; Wang & Gao, 2010).

The Chinese government has formulated and implemented several different policies for migrant children's compulsory education (Ministry of Education of the P.R. China & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). From 1996 to 2006, there were six significant policies on the enrolment of migrant children into compulsory education in urban areas based on the basic principle of 'Two Main Areas'. This principle stipulates that governments in receiving areas must take the main responsibility for administering migrant children's education and public full-time primary and middle schools in cities have the main responsibility for receiving migrant children (Han, 2009).

There is, however, no consensus on the definition of 'migrant people' and 'migrant children' (Wan, 2001). For example, Duan and Liang (2005) defined migrant people as those people who have been living in the receiving area for more than half a year but without the local household registration. Migrant children were defined as the migrant population who is under the age of 14 years. Wang and Gao (2010) defined migrant children as 'those children who have the rural household registration and have been staying in the city with their parents or other guardians for more than half a year' (p. 2).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the extent to which migrant girls and boys are in fact integrated into the education system in the city according to the stipulated policies. Migrant people refer to those people who leave the place of their registered household and live in another place for various reasons. According to the distance of migration, migrant people can be categorized into four groups: (1) migration between countries; (2) migration between provinces; (3) migration between cities; (4) migration between districts (Wan, 2001). This thesis pays attention to the migration between districts.

In this thesis, the place where migrant people register their household will be called

the home area (liu chu di), and the place to which migrant people move will be called the receiving area (liu ru di). Therefore, the term ‘home government’ refers to the government of the place where people register their household and the receiving government refers to the government of the place to which people move.

According to *The Provisional Measures on the Schooling of Migrant Children and Adolescents* (1998), ‘migrant children’ refers to those children who have the capability of learning, have been staying in the receiving area with their parents or other guardians for more than half a year, and who are in the age range of 6-14 years old (or 7-15 years old) (Ministry of Education of the P.R. China, 1998, Article 2).

Furthermore, migrant children are grouped into three categories according whether they are: (1) ‘migrating with parents’; (2) ‘migrating with a single parent’; or (3) ‘migrating with other guardians’. This thesis focuses on all three categories of migrant children from rural areas. The migrant children are categorized by sex and migrant girls are compared with boys with respect to gender differences in education.

1.3 Gender Tradition in China

In ancient Chinese society, there were many strong gender-specific notions, such as ‘men are born superiour to women (nanzun nvbei); ‘men should work outside the home to create wealth, while women should stay at home and be in charge of housework (nanzhuwai nvzhunei); ‘women are supposed to be a virtuous wife and nice mother’ (xianqi liangmu); ‘a woman should obey her father, obey her husband, and even obey her son’ (sancong side); ‘a man is assessed by his talent and achievement and a woman by her appearance’ (langcai nvmao); ‘A woman without talent is a virtuous one’(nvzi wucai bianshade) (Guo, 2000; Liu, 2006a).

These gendered perspectives rooted in Confucianism expressly reflected the gender inequality and social injustice in China. People thought that only a boy could promote family development and maintain family kinship. It was taken for granted that only men could receive education and participate in social and political activities, while ancient Chinese women had to stay at home and obey the men. They were excluded from schooling and also denied their right to social activities (Guo, 2000).

Since the implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy in 1979, several studies have shown that ‘the only-child policy has had an unintended consequence of engendering a child-centered culture with a strong belief and shared interest among the urban community in educating the only child regardless of the child’s sex’ (Falbo & Polit, 1986; Liu, 2006a, p. 491). According to Tsui and Rich (2002), there is little gender difference related to education between single-girl and single-boy families in modern urban China. Girls and women can go to school in the same way as boys and men, and gender parity has been achieved in primary and lower secondary education (UNESCO, 2007, 2009).

However, several studies on gender and education have indicated that gender inequality still exists in present-day China and creates disadvantages for the education of girls (Liu, 2006a, 2006b). Liu (2006a, 2006b) indicates that the deep-rooted gender-specific expectations based on the division of the sexes still exist in China and influence both girls’ and boys’ development of their full potential as individuals. Seeberg (2007) notes that girls and women in China have new roles as ‘mothers of development’ and this indicates the possibility of significant cultural change. However, Seeberg (2007) argues that these new roles are ‘built on a narrowly utilitarian assessment of female lives’ and women are seen as the ‘means’ for reducing poverty, but rarely considered as ‘ends’ in themselves (Seeberg et al., 2007, p. 113). Tan’s (2010) study on migrant children and education shows that migrant girls are more likely to be bullied in schools and that such offenses negatively influence migrant girls’ academic performance. In contrast, migrant boys are more likely to be neglected by parents and teachers than migrant girls (Tan & Yu, 2010).

In the light of previous studies, this study investigates the gender differences with particular regard to migrant girls’ education and discusses gendered relations and stereotypes in schools, families and society based on the Chinese cultural tradition.

1.4 Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which migrant girls and boys are integrated into the education system of urban China. It explores the educational experience of migrant children, the government and school reactions to

the issue of the education of migrant children, as well as the family-related factors that may influence the migrant children's integration into urban society.

The following overall research question guided the study:

In the context of implementing EFA policies, to what extent are migrant girls and boys integrated into the education system in urban areas?

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- What kinds of educational experiences do migrant girls and boys have in urban schools?
- What initiatives do the government and schools take in order to create an inclusive and adaptable education for migrant girls and boys?
- How do family-related factors influence the education of migrant girls and boys?

The term 'fully integrated' in the overall research question covers two aspects, that is, the extent to which the urban society accepts migrant children without any exclusion and the extent to which migrant children can adapt to urban life. Being 'fully integrated' means that migrant girls and boys can get equal access to education and enjoy the same quality of education as urban students.

The study uses a qualitative approach to a case study in County X of China. The research methods for collecting the data include document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation. The documents include official policies, regulations, school reports and plans in County X. The fieldwork was carried out in one primary school and one middle school. In each school, three head teachers were interviewed in order to investigate their perspectives on and strategies for the education of migrant girls and boys. Observations were made in one class in each school. Semi-structured interviews were held with three migrant girls and three migrant boys in each class aiming at exploring their school experiences in County X. Migrant children's parents were interviewed in order to explore their perceptions of their children's education.

1.5 Definition of Urban and Rural Area

In China, the delimitation of an urban and a rural area is in accordance with the administrative division of China. According to the *Constitution of the P.R. China of 1958*, the administrative division of China was as follows: (1) The country was divided into provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities; (2) Provinces and autonomous regions were divided into autonomous prefectures, autonomous counties, counties, and cities; (3) Counties and autonomous counties were divided into townships, nationality townships¹ and towns (P.R. China, 1958, Article 30).

In 2006, the National Bureau of Statistics of the P.R. China provided a delimitation of the urban and the rural area based on the administrative division of China. According to *The Provision on Delimiting Urban and Rural Areas (2006)*, all regions in China are categorized into urban or rural areas. Urban areas in China include cities, counties and towns, whereas rural areas include townships and villages (National Bureau of Statistics of the P.R. China, 2006). In this thesis, the term ‘city’ is sometimes used in a broad sense referring to all urban areas.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Most previous studies on migrant children and education focused on the migration between provinces and much attention has been paid to migrant children in big cities. For example, Goodburn (2009) conducted a case study of the schooling of rural migrant children in the capital of China, Beijing; Liu and Shen’s study (2010) focused on the psychological problems of migrant children in Beijing; Wang and Gao (2010) conducted a big research project on the issue of migrant children’s integration into urban society in Nanjing, which is the capital of Jiangsu Province and located in the eastern coastal area of China; Deng and Lin’s study (2010) focused on the family environment and mental health of migrant children in Xiamen, which is an important city of China’s south-east coastal areas and has a huge migrant population.

¹ Nationality townships are the ethnic minority regions under the regional autonomy in Mainland China, at the township level of administrative regions.

In my search through the China Academic Journals' Full-text Database, I found that very few studies are concerned with migrant children in small cities or counties. The significance of this thesis is, therefore, that it pays attention to the migration between cities and districts and provides understanding of the educational situation of migrant children at the county level.

The thesis specifically contributes knowledge about the group of 'migrant and left-behind' children, which, I believe, is a new and emerging special group in contexts such as County X. It explores their emergence and also investigates the particular difficulties they experience in the urban areas.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis has seven chapters. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 introduces the significant policy of reform and opening-up, the household registration system, and the decentralized education system in China. It also provides an overall review of the policies on the education of migrant children by analyzing their strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework based on social exclusion theory and a gendered perspective. Chapter 4 introduces the research methodology undertaken for the study and details the whole process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 is concerned with the life situation and schooling experience of migrant children, highlighting the difficulties they encounter in their education. Chapter 6 explores the government and school reactions to the issue of the education of migrant children, as well as the family-related factors that may influence the migrant children's integration into urban society. Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the study.

Chapter 2: The Policy Context for the Education of Migrant Children from 1978 to Today

This chapter presents the policy context for the education of migrant children in China from 1978 to today. It firstly introduces the policy of reform and opening-up, the household registration system and the decentralized education system from a historical perspective. It then provides a brief review of policies related to the education of migrant children.

2.1 Policies of 'Reform and Opening-up' since 1978

The increasingly large size of the internal migrant population has become one of the most remarkable features in Chinese society over the past decades (Liu, 2008; Yang, 2009). Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies in 1978, China has been experiencing a huge transformation of her societal structures as far as economy, culture and politics are concerned (Yang & He, 2010). 'Reform and Opening-up' refers to the programme of economic reforms called 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' in China (Wikipedia, 2010). It involved the de-collectivization of agriculture, the opening up of the country to foreign investment, the permission for entrepreneurs to start up businesses, the privatization and contracting out of much state-owned industry and so on (Wikipedia, 2010).

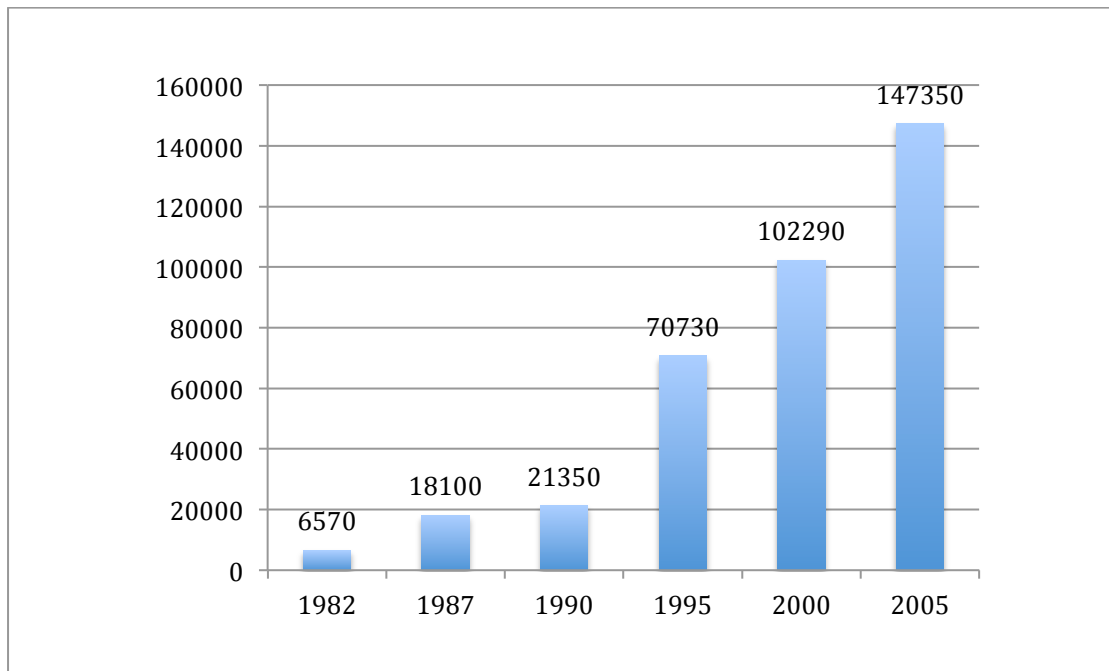
With the transition from a centrally planned to a free-market economy, the collective ownership of rural land has been replaced by a household contract responsibility system (Yang, 2009; Yang & He, 2010). Widespread adoption of science and technology in agriculture has greatly emancipated and developed rural productive forces, resulting in the rapid growth of farm productivity and the increase of surplus labour in the rural areas (Yang, 2009, p. 99). The increasing surplus labour in rural China is regarded as one of the most essential driving forces for the huge migration from the rural to the urban areas (Li, 1997; Liu, 2007).

Meanwhile, the area of cultivated land in rural China has reduced continuously, amongst others, because of the acceleration of urbanization, adjustment in the structure of agricultural production, and in the peasants' housing construction (Li, 1997, p. 355; Duan & Lu, 2006). From 1957 to 1990, the population in China increased by 1.4-2 per cent annually. However, the per capita area of cultivated farmland decreased from around 15.72 acres in 1957 to 7.65 acres in 1990 (Li, 1997, p. 355). According to statistics from the Research Office of the State Council, there were around 131 million surplus labour force in rural China in 2006 (Zhong & Lan, 2009). At the same time, the rise of the modern service sector and tertiary industry in cities promotes the transfer of this surplus labor force from the rural to the urban areas (Yang, 2009).

In China's economic reform, priority has been given to cities while the rural areas have been neglected. Since the 1990s, the big cities in eastern China, especially in the coastal areas, have been developing rapidly, whereas the rural areas lag far behind (Seeberg et al., 2007). As indicated by the data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the income gap between urban and rural areas has been continuously widening. In the period from 1995 to 2000, the annual growth rate of per capita income of urban residents reached 10.5 per cent, whereas that of rural residents was only 5.9 per cent (Shen, 2011, p. 2). In 2007 and 2009, the per capita income of urban residents was 3.33 times higher than that of rural residents (Shen, 2011, p. 2).

The striking income gap between urban and rural areas has accelerated the flow of human resources as an increasing number of rural farmers leave their lands and move to cities in search for jobs (Seeberg et al., 2007; Yang, 2009). According to the data from the population census of China, there were around 21.35 million internal migrants in China by 1990 and 102.29 million by 2000 (Duan, Yang, Zhang & Lu, 2008, p. 32). According to the *2010 Report on China's Migrant Population Development*, the migrant population rose sharply to approximately 211 million by 2009 and 78.8 per cent of them came from rural areas (National Population and Family Planning Commission of the P.R. China, 2010).

Figure 2.1: Size of the Migrant Population in China 1982-2005 (Thousands)



Source: Population Census of China (Duan et al., 2008)

2.2 The Household Registration System

The institution that affects migrant farmers in China the most is the household registration system, which is a ‘major component of the Chinese socio-political structure and a key feature of Chinese social and cultural life’ (Pong, 2009, p. 246).

The household registration system started in the 1950s and was formally established by *The Regulations on Household Registration* (1958) for the purposes of population monitoring and migration control (Du, 2008; Chan, 2010; Yan, 2010). Each person has a registered household, categorized as ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ according to their regions of residence and family relationship (Li, 1997; Chan, 2010). ‘*The Regulations*’ (1958) decreed that people’s migration must be registered and approved by their home government (Chan, 2010). People are restricted to the place where their households are registered and not allowed to change their household identity freely (Goodburn, 2009).

Besides the function of calculating and regulating the population, household

registration also determines several kinds of welfare service, including housing, employment, social insurance and education (Goodburn, 2009; Yang, 2009). Urban residents can enjoy these kinds of welfare, which are not accessible to rural residents. Rural farmers are both excluded from these welfare services and unable to transform their household from a rural to an urban one freely (Yang, 2009; Guo, 2010; Yan, 2010). As Chan (2010) indicates, the household registration system 'has segregated the rural and urban populations, initially in geographical terms, but more fundamentally in social, economic, and political terms' and 'it is the foundation of China's divisive dualistic socio-economic structure and the country's two classes of citizenship' (p. 357).

Policies on migration have changed several times. From 1979 to 1983, the Chinese government rigidly restricted the migration of rural workers through the household registration and employment system; from 1984, some subsistence farmers began to be allowed to work and do business in cities as long as they could afford their own daily subsistence; from 1992 onwards, the government adjusted the strategy and policy to encourage, guide and regulate orderly migration, and reformed household management in small counties and towns; with the coming of the 21st century, the national government has put efforts into establishing a unified and equal labour market for rural and urban employment (Du, 2008; Yang, 2009; Yan, 2010).

However, all these reforms and adjustments are carried out within the system of household registration. The dual social structure of rural and urban has not been broken down (Chan, 2010). With the open migration policy, an increasing number of rural farmers move into the urban labour market and live in the city. But their migration is a spatial movement, rather than an identity transformation (Yang, 2009, p. 99). Under the decentralized financial system, the local government provides public goods to the local people according to their household registration. Migrant rural workers with a rural household are denied their right to social resources and welfare in the city. Because they have moved, they also fail to enjoy the welfare services offered by their home governments where their households are registered (Yang, 2009, p. 100). Due to various policy reforms, some cities have begun to provide limited welfare services to migrant workers. But, for most migrant workers, their rural identity is still a barrier separating them from urban people (Chan, 2010). This

includes their access to education.

2.3 The Education System of China

2.3.1 Nine Years of Compulsory Education

China's education system is composed of four parts: basic education; secondary vocational and technical education; higher education; and adult education (Ministry of Education of the P.R. China & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008, p. 3).

As presented in Figure 2.2, basic education includes: three years of pre-school education; nine years of compulsory education consisting of primary and lower secondary education¹; and three years of higher secondary education including ordinary senior middle school education and secondary vocational and technical education. According to the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (2006), the entry age for primary education is when the child is six or seven years old.

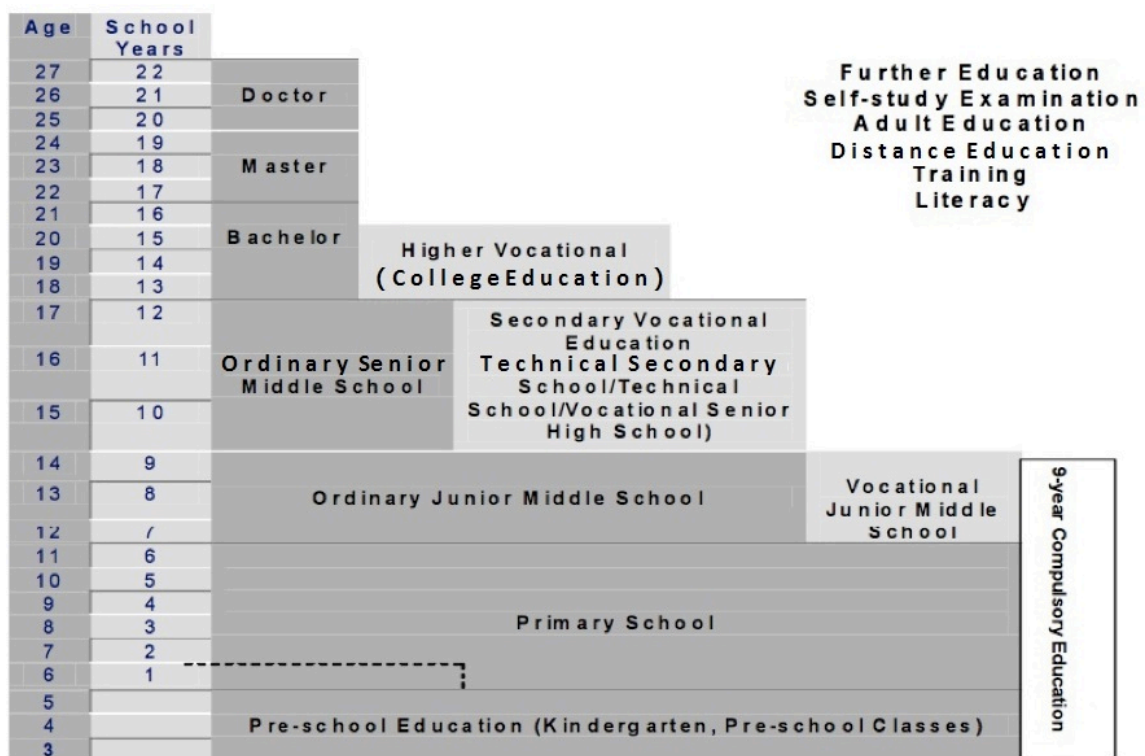
Higher education includes undergraduate education (four years), junior college education and higher vocational and technical education (two-three years), and graduate education (a Master's degree is two-three years, a Doctor's degree is three years) (National Commission of the P.R. China for UNESCO & National Center for Education Development and Research of the P.R. China, 2008).

Since 1986, with the promulgation of the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (1986), China began to universalize nine years of compulsory education. She set up the goal of 'Two Basics' in 1993, that is, universalizing nine years of compulsory schooling and eradicating illiteracy among the young and middle-aged groups by the end of the 20th century (National Commission of the P.R. China for UNESCO & National Center for Education Development and Research of the P.R. China, 2008).

¹ In China, most provinces implement six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education, whereas some provinces implement five years of primary education and four years of lower secondary education.

The *Compulsory Education Law* (1986) stipulated that the local governments under the leadership of the central government shall assume responsibility for compulsory education (Article 8). The *Amended Compulsory Education Law* (2006) clarified that the governments of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government shall make overall plans for the implementation of compulsory education, whereas governments at the county level shall play the main role in the implementation and administration of compulsory education (Article 7). It also stipulated that local governments at various levels shall ensure that school-age children and adolescents enrol in a school near the places where their households are registered (Article 12). Besides, based on the principle of ‘enrolling in a nearby school’ (jiujin ruxue), students can only be allowed to enter a school of the district where their households are registered (Feng, 2007).

Figure 2.2: The Chinese Education System

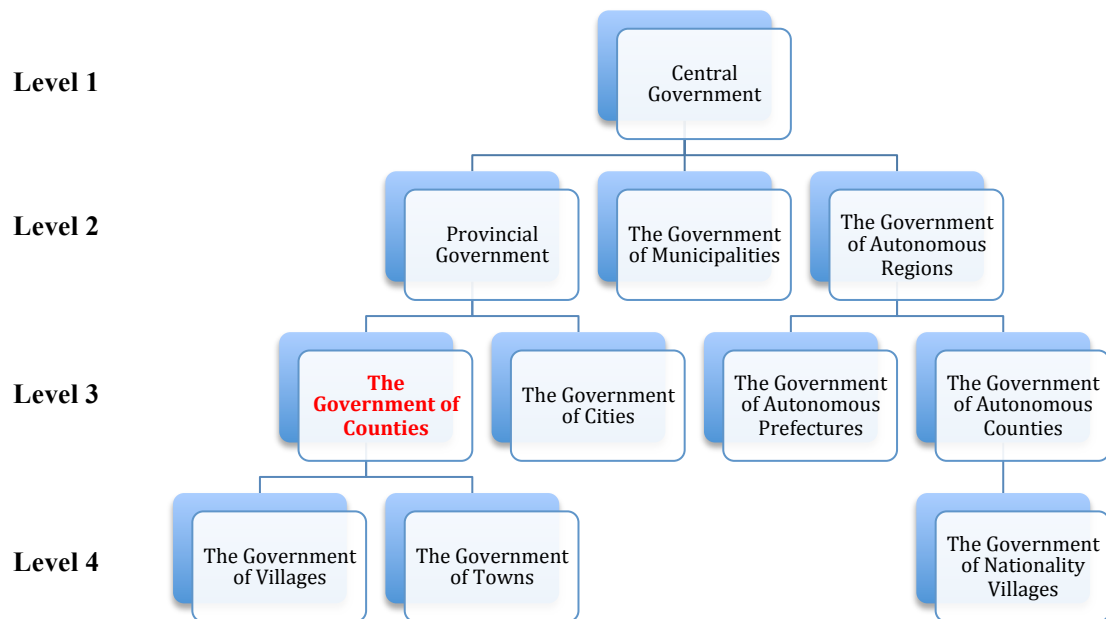


Source: Ministry of Education of the P.R. China & Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008

2.3.2 The Decentralized Education System

The Chinese education system is decentralized and localized. Figure 2.3 shows the decentralized government structure of China. Below the central government, there are local governments at different levels. In this study, the government of County X is at the third level of the Chinese government structure.

Figure 2. 3: Chinese Government Structure



Source: Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954)

Based on the decentralized education system, the home governments of the places of rural children's households must take the responsibility for the compulsory education of rural children. However, when rural children migrate to the city, the home governments are no longer responsible for their education, because they no longer live in the hometown. Yet, the receiving government has no obligation to provide education for migrant children, because they are not registered in the receiving area (Feng, 2007; Han, 2009).

Furthermore, the financial system of compulsory education in China is also localized and decentralized. The local government of districts and counties are mainly responsible for managing the fund for compulsory education and allocating

educational resources to the local population. This localized and decentralized financial system has led to an unequal distribution of financial resources for compulsory education in both the rural areas and the urban areas (Han, 2009). Educational opportunities and resources in the city are allocated to the local people according to household registration. The enrolment of migrant children in urban public schools would lead to a decrease per capita of total educational resources, which is the main reason why urban public schools refuse to enrol migrant children (Liu, 2010). As indicated by Han (2009), the emergence of the problems of migrant children's education has reflected the 'disadvantages of separate management systems between city and countryside' (p. 15).

2.4 Migrant Children's Schools

Since the urban public schools are often inaccessible, private education is an option for migrant children. Yet the tuition fee is too expensive for most of the migrant parents who are mostly low-income workers in the city (Ren, 2007). Migrants, therefore, have to find another way of getting their children into school. This has led to the emergence of so-called migrant children's schools, which are schools especially for migrant worker's children (Wang & Gao, 2010).

This kind of school is operated privately and welcomed by migrant parents because of the low school fee and some convenient services, such as registration at any time, tuition payment by instalment and school bussing (Ren, 2007; Wang & Gao, 2010). Migrant children's schools undoubtedly provide more schooling opportunities for a huge number of migrant children who are at risk of dropping out of school, and also make a substantial contribution to the universalization of compulsory education (Wang & Gao, 2010). Yet most of the migrant children's schools are criticized for their poor environment and low quality. There have also been continuous, heated debates over their legitimacy and validity (Zhong & Wu, 2007).

Firstly, only a few migrant children's schools have the legal permit for education, while most of them run illegally (Wang & Gao, 2010; Xu & Yang, 2010). In Chengdu, a 2003 study demonstrated that only two private migrant schools had met the criteria for government licensing of a private school, and they had difficulty in renewing their

licenses (Goodburn, 2009). As noted by Yao (2010), there were 41 migrant schools in Beijing in 2008 and only 20 of them had been granted licenses.

Furthermore, these schools do not have good teachers and are often short of teachers. Many of them do not even have the teacher's qualification certificate (Ren, 2007; Pang & Wang, 2010; Xu & Yang, 2010). Besides, the education environment and infrastructure of migrant children's schools are extremely poor. Due to lack of finance, migrant children's schools often use a rented or rebuilt abandoned factory in the suburban district as a classroom building and most schools have no canteen, playground or library (Li, 2010; Xu & Yang, 2010). The deficiency of basic infrastructure and teaching equipment not only has a detrimental effect on the teaching quality, but also hampers the development of students (Ma & Sun, 2007; Xiao, 2008).

2.5 Review of Policies on Migrant Children's Education

During 1986-2006, seven national policies have addressed the issue of the education of migrant children in China, each of which will be presented below. This helps to understand the gap between stated policy and the existing practice as outlined above.

1) *Compulsory Education Law of the P.R. China (1986)*

In 1986, the National People's Congress of China published the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1986)* and began to universalize nine years of compulsory education, including six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education. According to the law, 'all children who have reached the age of six shall enrol in school and receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race' (P.R. China, 1986, Article 5).

This is echoed in the affirmation in the *National Constitution of China (1954)* that all citizens 'have the duty as well as the right to receive education' (Article 46) and women should 'enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, in political,

economic, cultural, social and family life' (P.R. China, 1958, Article 48). These two documents protect the children's right to education by law (Han, 2009). Noticeably, in the *Compulsory Education Law of China* (1986), the articles were made for 'all children', without any specific regard to the migrants or girls (Han, 2009).

2) Regulations on the Implementation of the Compulsory Education Law (1992)

Since the 1990s, with the number of migrant children growing, their issues have attracted increased attention from both the government and the public. The *Regulations on the Implementation of the Compulsory Education Law* (1992) stipulated that children and teenagers at the right age for compulsory education who live in areas which are not their household residence, according to the relevant regulations of the government in their living areas, can apply to study on a temporary basis in a school. The number of years they can study on a temporary basis is in accordance with the regulations of the areas of their household residence (P.R. China, 1992, Article 14).

However, in order to study on a temporary basis, migrant families have to submit a number of official papers, such as a temporary residence permit, and pay an additional temporary school fee (Zhong & Wu, 2007; Goodburn, 2009). While the regulation suggested a temporary way of addressing the educational problem for migrant children who are rejected by the urban public schools, they failed to clarify the fundamental problem between the home and the receiving governments of who should take the responsibility for the compulsory education of migrant children.

3) Provisional Measures on the Schooling of Migrant Children and Adolescents (1998)

As specific laws and regulations became imperative, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Security issued the *Provisional Measures on the Schooling of Migrant Children and Adolescents* (1998). As the first specific law for migrant children, the 'Provisional Measures' (1998) gave a clear definition of 'migrant children', referring to those children who have the capability of learning, have been staying in the receiving area with their parents or other guardians more than half a

year, and who are in the age range of 6-14 (or 7-15) years old (Article 2).

It urged governments in the receiving areas to be responsible for migrant children's compulsory education (Article 4); and it stipulated the responsibility of migrant parents to ensure that their children receive compulsory education according to the regulation of the receiving government (Article 6). Furthermore, the *'Provisional Measures'* stipulated that public schools could charge an extra fee for temporary study (Article 11). Migrant children are, therefore, still excluded from urban public resources and benefits.

In addition, it should be born in mind that the *Regulations on the Implementation of Compulsory Education Law* (1992) and the *Provisional Measures on the Schooling of Migrant Children and Adolescents* (1998) both stipulated that the number of years of compulsory education, which migrant children actually receive in the receiving area, should be in accordance with the length of compulsory education in their hometown where they registered their household residence (Article 14 and Article 4). This means that in the case that the hometown offers five years of primary education and the city offers six years, the migrant child would be enrolled in only five years of primary education in the city.

4) State Council's Decision on Reforming and Developing Elementary Education (2001)

In 2001, the *State Council's Decision on Reforming and Developing Elementary Education* (2001) regarded education of migrant children as a weak link in universalizing compulsory education nationwide (Han, 2009):

“We should pay more attention to resolving the problems of migrant children receiving compulsory education. Governments in receiving areas must take the main responsibility: administering migrant children's education and ensuring that public full-time middle and primary schools in the city receive migrant children. We should adopt various ways of resolving the problems and protect migrant children's right to compulsory education” (State Council of the P.R. China, 2001, Article 12).

The *'State Council's Decision'* (2001) was the first document to put forward the principle of 'Two Main Areas', which clearly designated that the governments in the

receiving areas have the main responsibility for migrant children's education (Han, 2009). It also stipulated that public full-time schools should receive migrant children and that other types of schools are only a supplement (Han, 2009). Besides, this document also indicated that 'there is a need to continue to focus on education of girls in rural areas' (Article 12).

5) *Suggestions on How to Do Well the Further Work of Ensuring Migrant Children's Compulsory Education (2003)*

In 2003, the State Council issued a document on *Suggestions on How to Do Well the Further Work of Ensuring Migrant Children's Compulsory Education (2003)*. This document clearly detailed the responsibility of the government in the receiving areas and designated each department's specific responsibility (Han, 2009). The education departments should integrate migrant children's education into the work of universalizing nine years of compulsory education as soon as possible; the financial departments should allocate enough funds to support migrant children's education; and the departments of labour and social security should supervise and inspect the implementation of the *Provisions on the Prohibition of Child Labour (2002)*, and punish illegal employment of child labour (State Council of the P.R. China, 2003, Article 4).

While the '*Suggestions*' (2003) was implemented at the local level, some restrictions were added. Taking Zhejiang province for instance, the Zhejiang government stipulates that migrant children who have guardians where their households are registered should receive their education in those places. Other migrant children, who want to apply for study at urban public schools, have to satisfy two requirements. One is that their parents or guardians should by law have temporary residence permits and have lived in the receiving area for more than one year; the other is that their parents must not violate the family planning policy and must be in the possession of marriage and child birth certificates (Government of Zhejiang Province, 2004, Article 3). There is no provision for education of children who fail to meet these requirements.

According to this policy, if migrant parents violate the family planning policy by giving birth to a second child, the first child is denied the right to education. This regulation violates the provision in the *National Constitution* that 'citizens of the

People's Republic of China have the duty as well as the right to receive education' (P.R. China, 1958, Article 46).

6) State Council's Suggestions on Resolving Issues of Migrant Workers (2006)

The *State Council's Suggestions on Resolving Issues of Migrant Workers* (2006) was to ensure that migrant children receive compulsory education on an equal basis (State Council of the P.R. China, 2006, Article 21). It restated that the governments in receiving areas play key roles in guaranteeing migrant children's compulsory education and urged governments in receiving areas to integrate migrant children's compulsory education into the local education development plan as well as financial budgets.

Besides, it emphasized that urban public schools should treat migrant children in the same way as urban children with regard to cost and administration (State Council of the P.R. China, 2006, Article 21). This is the first document issued by the central government stating that public schools are not allowed to charge migrant children for temporary enrolment or any other additional fee (Han, 2009).

7) Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Amended in 2006)

The *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* was amended at the 22nd Session of the Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress in 2006. The new *Compulsory Education Law* (2006) confirmed that 'Compulsory education is the education which is implemented uniformly by the State and shall be received by all school-aged children and adolescents. Compulsory education is a public welfare that shall be guaranteed by the State' (P.R. China, 2006, Article 2).

Compared with the original version, the amended *Compulsory Education Law* (2006) abolished the tuition or miscellaneous fees for compulsory education. Besides, with regard to migrant children, it stated that:

'If parents or other legal guardians work or live in areas which are not their registered household residence, and migrant children receive their education there, the local

governments should provide equal conditions for them to receive compulsory education. The specific ways of implementation are decided by provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities' (P.R. China, 2006, Article 12).

The publication of the *Compulsory Education Law (2006)* is a milestone in the educational development of China. It signifies that China is beginning to provide free compulsory education nationwide (Cai, 2007).

2.6 Conclusion

Since the implementation of the policy of reform and opening-up in 1978, the increase of surplus labour in the rural areas, combined with the enlarged gap in economic development between rural and urban areas, gave rise to the huge migration from rural to urban China. The household registration system and the decentralized education system contribute to the marginalization of migrant children in urban society.

The Chinese government has implemented a series of policies to address the educational issue of migrant children, which have been changing from an exclusive to an inclusive perspective. Policies are increasingly focused on resolving the specific problems and gradually integrating migrant children into the urban education system. The formulation of the principle of 'Two Main Areas' has enabled the realization of migrant children's nine years of compulsory education. However, gaps and contradictions still exist between the central and the local level, and between the central policy and the local implementation. This is partly due to the deeply rooted traditional social and gender related exclusionary mechanisms.

Chapter 3: Understanding Social Exclusion and Gender

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the analysis of the education of migrant children. Social exclusion theory is used to understand how and why migrant people are marginalized in urban society and to identify the relationship between different dimensions of social exclusion. One of these relates to the issue of gender in schools, families and society, particularly as related to girls.

3.1 Social Exclusion Theory

Social exclusion, as a sociological term, refers to ‘the marginalization of individuals through economic deprivation and social isolation’ (Tomasevski, 2003, p. 198). This term is used to denote those people or areas suffering from ‘a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health, poverty and family breakdown’ (Tomasevski, 2003, p. 199).

According to Kabeer (2000), social exclusion has multiple aspects. First, it often refers to ‘problematic groups’ (e.g., beggars, rural landless or asset-poor, the long-term unemployed, retrenched women workers, ethnic minorities); second, it entails ‘problematic conditions’, such as poverty, unemployment, and isolation; finally, it refers to ‘problematic processes’, including political, social, economic and cultural aspects (p. 83). According to Kabeer (2000), it is significant to recognize the internal connections between people, problems and processes.

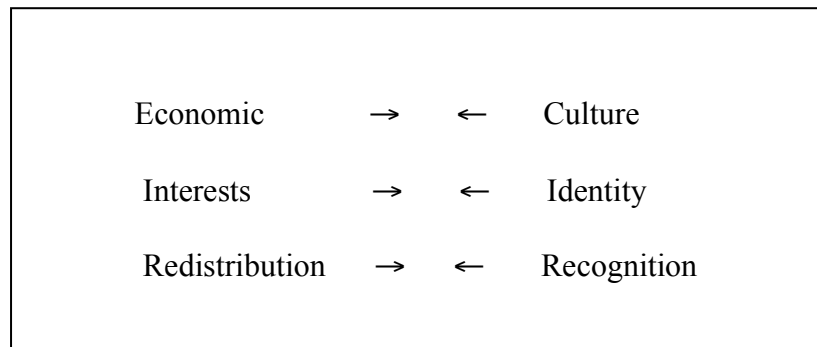
3.1.1 Forms of Social Injustice and Exclusion

According to Kabeer (2000), the dimensions of social exclusion range from economic forms of injustice to cultural forms (Figure 3.1). At the economic end, forms of injustice stem from exploitation, marginalization and deprivation. Poor people, who are denied adequate standards of living, experience economic forms of injustice and disadvantage. At the other end, cultural forms of injustice concern the representation, interpretation and recognition of people’s identity. It refers to the fact that dominant

social groups seek to impose dominant values on certain groups of people. For instance, people with HIV often live with discriminated and despised identities. They often face difficulties in making friends, finding employment and participating in social activity.

In addition to primarily economic and primarily cultural forms of injustice, there is a hybrid form, which gives rise to bivalent social groups. In this case, ‘economic disadvantage is bound up with cultural-valuational disadvantage’ (Kabeer, 2000, p. 85). It refers to social groups who are marginalized both in economic terms and are denied recognition of their identity, such as particular castes.

Figure 3.1: Framework of Forms of Injustice



Source: Kabeer, 2000, p. 85

Understood within this framework, migrant workers and their children in China could face both economic and cultural challenges and experience hybrid forms of disadvantage. Firstly, in economic terms, most migrant people, especially those from rural areas, are usually assigned to low-income physical work in the city (Peng, 2010; Chen, 2011). In 2008, the average wage of urban employees was 2,436 RMB (≈383 US dollar) per month, whereas the average wage of migrant workers was only 1,156RMB (≈182 US dollar) per month (Peng, 2010).

Furthermore, according to the *Labour Law of China*, the maximum weekly working hours are 44, yet 89.8 per cent of migrant workers have more than 44 working hours weekly (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010). Migrant workers also experience that their employers delay the payment of their salary (Jian & Huang, 2007; Zhao, 2009; Peng, 2010; Chen, 2011). According to the *2009 Monitoring*

Report on Migrant Workers in China, most migrant workers have no social insurance and the proportion of employers paying endowment insurance, work-related injury insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance and maternity insurance for migrant workers was respectively, 7.6 per cent, 21.8 per cent, 12.2 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 2.3 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010).

In addition, according to Kabeer's (2000) framework, migrant people also experience disadvantages and injustices that stem from the cultural-valuational dimension. When living in an urban society with a rural identity, migrant people are at high risk of being set apart from urban people (Feng, 2007). The household registration system divides China into a dual society, namely 'the rural' and 'the urban' (Liu, 2006c). Rural migrant people are generally denied membership of the urban society and looked upon as 'outsiders' (Du, 2008; Goodburn, 2009). As the urban areas are more developed than the rural in terms of economy and culture, expressions, such as, 'peasants are pitiful', 'rural areas are impoverished and deprived', and 'farming life is miserable and terrible' are common (Li, 2004). Therefore, because of their rural lifestyles, rural accents and different kinds of values, migrant people often suffer various forms of discrimination from other groups in the cities (Feng, 2007; Goodburn, 2009).

3.1.2 Social Exclusion and the Role of Institutions

Kabeer (2000) also discusses the dynamic process of social exclusion. Disadvantage gives rise to social exclusion because of the operation of institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated and values are assigned. Institutions, as the 'rules of the game', deal with the forms of access and the principles of memberships. They distinguish those who can have access to resources from those who cannot, in which ways and to what degree, and determine people's membership and entitlement (Kabeer, 2000, p. 87).

In the case of China, it is the institution of household registration that distributes social resources and assigns people to different identities under a dual social structure. People's identity is based on membership of kinship and community (Li, 2004). As indicated in Chapter 2, the household registration distinguishes urban people who can enjoy the benefit of urban resources from rural people who cannot, and it also restricts

people's identity transformation from the rural to the urban.

According to Kabeer (2000), 'the access and exclusion in one institutional domain can be offset or exacerbated by access and exclusion in another' (p. 87). Institutions in different sites and domains influence each other and combine into a dual process of transformation between entitlement and disempowerment, as well as between inclusion and exclusion. In the case of migrant people, the disadvantages associated with their rural identity within the urban community may be offset, for example, by favourable legislation, or they may be reinforced through the discriminations in the labour markets as indicated by several studies. For example, migrant workers are often paid a lower salary and receive fewer benefits even though they do the same work in the same place as the urban workers (Feng, 2007; Zhao, 2009).

3.1.3 Group Dynamics in Social Exclusion

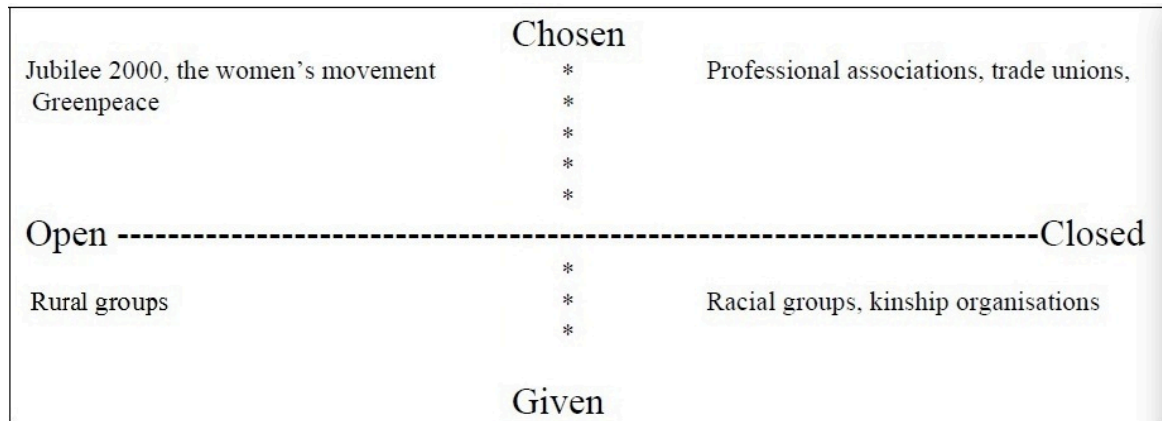
Kabeer (2000) also notes how institutional rules and norms determine people's membership of social groups, define their identity and differentiate their interests. The rules of memberships distinguish between those who belong to groups with access to resources and recognition from those who do not.

As shown in Figure 3.2, social exclusion theory distinguishes between 'closed groups' and 'open groups'. The former refers to 'those best able to achieve objectives by limiting membership on the basis of some technical, economic or social criteria' (Kabeer, 2000, p. 89). An 'open group' is the one 'best able to achieve objectives by expanding membership' (Kabeer, 2000, p. 89). Folbre (1994) sees group membership as sharing economic positions and cultural identities. It distinguishes between 'chosen groups' in which 'individuals can join and exit of their own accord', and 'given groups' that are 'less easily joined and abandoned' (Kabeer, 2000, p. 90). As appears in Figure 3.2, race is at the closed end in a given category: people are born into specific racial groups. Their racial identities are immutable and have implications for the fate of their lives.

In the case of China, as discussed before, the household registration system distinguishes between urban and rural groups (Du, 2008). Rural people are born into rural households and given their rural identity based on kinship and community (Li,

2004). Yet the membership is not totally immutable and could be changed under certain conditions. For instance, if rural people can buy a house in the city, they could transform their household into an urban one.

Figure 3.2: Groups of Social Exclusion



Source: Adapted from Kabeer, 2000, p. 90

However, this does not mean that the urban group is at the open end and can expand its membership in an unlimited way. There are various requirements, related, for example, to the economy, education and career, for the transformation from a rural to an urban membership in China (Goodburn, 2009). The fact is that very few rural people can meet all the requirements for household transformation which makes urban membership an exclusive one (Guo, 2010). Migrant people in China illustrate particularly well the difficulty of transforming identity and membership from a rural to an urban one.

3.1.4 Education and Social Exclusion

According to Tomasevski (2003), education has a close relationship with personal and social development. Without education, people may have difficulties in gaining access to employment, and be excluded from social security schemes and political representation (p. 32). 'Migrant people' is one of the problematic groups that have lower educational accomplishments. According to official statistics, 64.8 per cent of migrant workers in China only completed lower secondary education and 10.6 per cent only received primary education (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010). Being poorly educated is one of the most important reasons for their marginalization

in the labour market (Zhao, 2009).

The lower educational accomplishment of migrant people to some extent reflects their social exclusion. As indicated in the 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report, ‘marginalization in education is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities’ (UNESCO, 2010, p. 135). In China, as the educational resources are unevenly distributed between the urban and the rural areas, migrant people from the rural areas usually receive fewer and poorer educational resources and thus probably have lower educational accomplishment (Jin & Liu, 2011).

On the other hand, education can be a way out of poverty and a strategy to reduce social exclusion. According to human capital theory, education or schooling can equip individuals with knowledge and skills and thus increases productivity. Thus education ‘offers an important means of social mobility, particularly for the poor’ (Sparkes, 1999, p. 33). Brandsma (2002) indicated that the lack of equality in access to good education can increase the chance of being excluded and also highly determines the further educational career and development (p. 23).

In general, the denial of education can be both the reason for and the result of social exclusion and ‘education can be a means to retain or to eliminate inequality’ (Tomasevski, 2003, p. 195). Disparities in education opportunity combined with other areas, such as economic deprivation, may reproduce social inequalities and schools can perpetuate marginalization (UNESCO, 2009, 2010). To eliminate social inequality and discrimination, education must be more inclusive, especially for those particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as migrant people, girls and women, as examined later (UNESCO, 2010).

3.2 Gender Theory

3.2.1 The Multiple Meanings of Gender

Feminist perspectives argue that gender is an element of social relationships that affects men and women, and that it ‘affects all women negatively regardless of social class and ethnicity’ (Stromquist, 2009, p. 45). In Kabeer’s (2000) social exclusion framework, gender is a bivalent category of social injustice. At the economic end,

gender structures the unequal distribution of labour, property and other social resources; it also affects the labour market and social divisions. ‘Gender also encompasses elements of injustice which stem from the dominant values of a society’ (Kabeer, 2000, p. 85). The devaluation of women makes them suffer from a range of harms in the forms of gendered violence, attitudinal discrimination, sexual harassment, etc. (Kabeer, 2000). In general, women and girls therefore often experience injustice and disadvantage rooted in different aspects of social life, including education.

Unterhalter (2007) has outlined different meanings of gender associated with education. Firstly, gender can be used as a noun to describe, for example, the uneven presence and absence of girls and boys in schools. Secondly, gender as an adjective covers the range of social relations and institutional norms which result in particular forms of actions and consequences in school. For instance, the gendered relationship within a household may provide girls with fewer resources and opportunities for education. Thirdly, gender can be used as a verb and represent a form of action and a process of identity formation. For instance, girls and boys enact gender in different ways. People of the same sex also perform gender differently in different settings and in accordance with social circumstances (Unterhalter, 2007, p. 3). This study uses the perspective of gender as an adjective to examine the gendered relations that shape and maintain educational inequality.

3.2.2 Gendered Social Relations

Unterhalter (2007) maintains that gendered schools and societies give rise to injustice in education: ‘gender structures the political economy and social conditions surrounding schools. The gender politics of power have particular consequences for children’s wellbeing and gender dynamics often mean that the outcomes of schooling are distributed unfairly’ (p. 6). Stromquist (2009) also highlights asymmetrical power relations between men and women as one of the factors contributing to social injustice and education inequality.

Different factors contribute to the construction of the unequal gendered relations in education. Poverty is considered the ‘major factor in the denial of schooling to girls’ (Unterhalter, 2007). Low-income families have fewer resources to invest in their

children's education, nutrition and other assets. Challenged by famine and diseases, they exclude education from their considerations (Tomasevski, 2003; UNESCO, 2010). Sometimes, poor students may get access to school, but they often drop out because of educational costs (UNESCO, 2010). Other factors, such as lack of transportation, shortage of teaching staff and deficient school infrastructure also impact on the completion of schooling (UNESCO, 2010).

Although poverty and deprivation have negative influences on the education of both girls and boys, the gendered dynamics within households may contribute to the higher likelihood of girls leaving school before boys (Unterhalter, 2007, p. 7). Stromquist (2009) also maintains that it is 'gender as a social construct that differentiates the impact of poverty' (p. 39). In a poor family, even though there is no bias regarding children's education and that parents want to educate their daughters, limited resources will go to boys before girls (Unterhalter, 2007). This is because boys are less vulnerable, need less transport, and cost less in terms of a school uniform.

Both Stromquist (2009) and Unterhalter (2007) highlight that the sexual division of labour is an important factor that restricts girls' opportunities to and in education. In most rural areas, girls in poor families have to assume the bulk of the domestic chores, such as cleaning the house, taking care of siblings and weaving clothing. Doing housework takes up time and holds back their education (Stromquist, 2009). Some parents also believe that education keeps their children away from domestic duties (Stromquist, 2009, p. 45). Unterhalter (2007) stresses that, whereas girls are usually assigned responsibilities for working inside the house, boys often take responsibilities for working outside which allows for more flexibility. Thus boys are more likely to be able to combine housework with school attendance (p. 8).

Cultural tradition is another essential factor explaining the exclusion of girls from school. In some countries, such as ancient China, the perception that men are superior to women leads to the marginalization of women in education (Liu, 2006a). Tomasevski (2003) shows, for example, how social norms can confine girls' education. In Uganda and Nepal, being educated is a barrier to girls' marriages. Girls who have received formal schooling will get less money in marriage and may have to contribute more to the bridegroom's family (p. 160).

The gendered relations in schools contribute to persistent injustice and disadvantages for girls. As Unterhalter (2007) notes, there has been ‘gendered assumptions about what girls should learn, whether they can learn, and what the outcome of their learning will be’ (p. 8). Teachers may assume that girls are less clever than boys and think that boys have a greater potential for academic achievement in math and science (Liu, 2006b). This kind of assumption often means that girls fail to get knowledge in some crucial subjects and get inadequate support from their teachers (Unterhalter, 2007).

Besides, the curriculum content may reflect gender inequalities as well. A number of studies demonstrate that women are mentioned less frequently than men in textbooks; women and girls are most often depicted as conducting domestic chores in the family while men are frequently portrayed as doctors, scientists and explorers; women and girls are often described as being passive, soft and shy, while men and boys are depicted as being brave, courageous and adventurous (Commission for Gender Equality, 2007; Song, 2009; Yan, 2011). A gendered curriculum potentially expresses perceptions that women are inferior and subordinate to men. This stereotype may lead girls and women to continue their subordinate role in social life (Yan, 2011).

Furthermore, compared to boys, girls have a higher likelihood of leaving school because of their vulnerability. Gender-based violence in schools is one of the main contributors to girls leaving school. Chege (2007) perceives gender-based violence as the mechanism by which unequal power relations are maintained. Her studies in Africa document a number of cases where girls are being raped, sexually abused, and sexually harassed by their classmates and even by their teachers. She concludes that teachers have been a major constructor of violence in schools and ‘schools have been transformed into spaces where girls are denied equal freedom from sexual violence and the right to become learners on equal terms with boys’ (Chege, 2007, p. 67).

Besides, according to Unterhalter (2007), it is argued that the absence of women in decision-making concerning curriculum, learning and teaching maintains the gendered form of institutions (p. 8). This also relates to the unequal social division of labour with more men than women engaged in administrative and managerial positions in school (Du, 2007). Unterhalter (2007) argues that women’s participation in politics and decision-making may expand access to school, enhance the quality of

teaching and learning, and improve the evaluation of schooling (p. 10).

As Unterhalter (2007) notes, the gendered dynamics of households, schools, as well as economic and political relations can intersect to exacerbate gender inequalities and reproduce gendered relations. Stromquist (2009) indicates that there is insufficient attention to the underlying causes and mechanisms that create and sustain gender asymmetries in power and that more understanding is needed of the fundamental and interrelated causes of gender discrimination in society. This includes attention to schooling as a site where gender asymmetry is reproduced.

3.3 Conclusion

The above framework for understanding social exclusion and gender will be applied in the analysis of migrant children and particularly girls. Migrant workers and their children in China face both economic forms of disadvantages and also experience injustice along the cultural-valuational dimension. The institution of household registration is central to a social exclusionary mechanism because of the dual social structure. Migrant people who are given a 'rural' identity meet difficulties in accessing urban social resources and often experience discrimination from urban people. Education can either be the result of social exclusion or be a means to reduce social exclusion. Besides, gender is a bivalent category of social injustice. The gendered relations in households, schools, and societies intersect and create huge difficulties for the education of girls.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

As presented in the introduction, the research strategy adopted in this study is a case study analysed using qualitative methods. According to Bryman (2008), the research design provides ‘a framework for the collection and analysis of data’ (p. 698). It represents the structure that guides the implementation of the research methods and the analysis of the gathered data (p. 30).

4.1 Research Strategy

Different research strategies serve different research purposes. According to Bryman (2008), there are two dominant research strategies in social research, that is, the quantitative and the qualitative strategy. These two strategies are consistent with distinctive epistemological and ontological orientations. Quantitative research is a strategy with focus on the collection of numerical data. It represents a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research with emphasis on the testing of theories (Bryman, 2008, p. 22). It is closely related to a natural science model, in particular positivism, which ‘advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). It is also concerned with objectivism, which ‘implies that social phenomena confront us as external facts that are beyond our reach or influence’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 18). The quantitative research method should therefore be as objective and value-free as possible (Bryman, 2008).

By contrast, qualitative research is a research strategy ‘that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 22). It has an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research and predominantly stresses the generation of theories (Bryman, 2008, p. 22). It also entails interpretivist commitment that ‘requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 16). Furthermore, qualitative research has a constructionism consideration and thus ‘embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 22). Besides, mixed methods have become increasingly popular in recent years. It

combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative strategies (Bryman, 2008, p. 603).

This study applies a qualitative strategy for three reasons. Firstly, as mentioned before, the purpose of the study is to explore the extent to which migrant children are in fact integrated into education in the city. 'Integration' is a gradual and continuous process. Whereas the quantitative approach frequently presents a 'static view of social life that is independent of people's lives' (Bryman, 2008, p. 160), the qualitative approach can help to examine the dynamic process from exclusion to inclusion and how it is unfolding and evolving over time.

Secondly, this study investigates migrant girls and boys' schooling experiences in urban schools. The qualitative approach is particularly important when collecting data on subjective perceptions and personal experiences.

Finally, this study attempts to compare the education of migrant girls to that of boys from a gender perspective. The qualitative approach allows girls' voices to be heard and focuses on their experience (Bryman, 2008, p. 396). According to Bryman (2008), in qualitative research, girls are not treated as objects to be controlled by technical procedures, but as active participants who can interact with researchers (p. 396).

4.2 Case Study Research Design

4.2.1 Why Case Study?

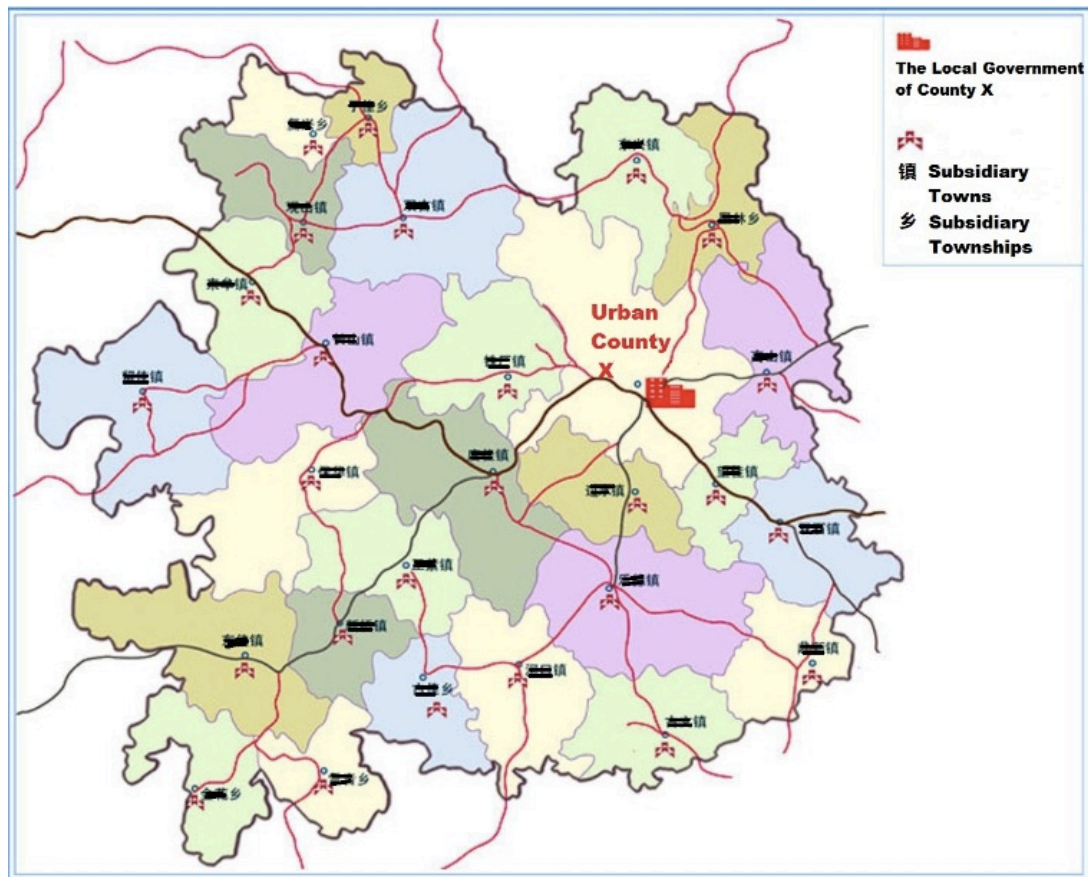
This study is based on a case study. As indicated by Yin (2009), case study is the preferred method when: '(a) "how" or "why" questions are being posed; (b) the investigator has little control over events; and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context' (p. 2). Therefore, the research questions in this study are posed as 'how' and 'why'. The phenomenon of migrant children at risk is indeed a serious problem in real life. Furthermore, China is a vast country with the largest population in the world. It is problematic and impractical to conduct research at the national level. Thus, case study research design is preferable.

4.2.2 Why County X?

This study takes County X, located in the southwest of China, as a case for detailed examination. There are several reasons for choosing County X. Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction, there are four forms of migration according to the distance of migration. Much research has been conducted on the migration in the eastern big cities at the provincial level. In contrast, very little attention has been paid to the migration between cities and districts. The migrant children in small cities, especially those in counties, have so far had little attention by researchers, despite the fact that migration within provinces is considerable in China. According to the data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, 709,200,000 migrant workers migrated within provinces in 2009, amounting to 48.8 per cent of total migrants in China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010).

4.2.3 The Context of County X

Figure 4.1: The Administrative Map of County X



Source: The local government of County X

As shown in Figure 4.1, County X mostly consists of the urban County X (where the local government is situated), 20 subsidiary towns and six townships. It has an area of approximately 1,609 square kilometers and a population of 7,000,000 in total.

The economy of County X is mainly based on agriculture and industry. According to the 2011 government report, the per capita annual disposable income of urban residents in County X was around 13,020 RMB (\approx 2,047 US dollars) in 2010, whereas the per capita annual income of rural farmers was only 5,560 RMB (\approx 874 US dollars) (Government of County X, 2011). The income gap between the urban and the rural people was strikingly huge and this might be one of the main factors that contribute to the migration from the rural to the urban area.

In this study, the term County X only refers to the urban district of this county. It has an area of around 8.5 square kilometers and about 135,000 permanent residents. There are around 4,000 immigrant people in urban County X, including approximately 1,477 migrant children.

4.3 Research Method

As Bryman (2008) indicates, a research method is ‘a technique for collecting data’ (p. 31). This might include structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations, etc. This study uses document analysis, semi-structured interviews as well as observation.

4.3.1 Document analysis

The term ‘documents’ covers a wide range of materials. Documents can be categorized as personal documents (diaries, letters and autobiographies, etc.), official documents deriving from the state, mass-media outputs, etc. (Bryman, 2008).

In this study, the relevant documents have included official documents, such as government policies, regulations and plans. A qualitative content analysis has been used to interpret the documents. Firstly, I selected the government documents related to the theme of migrant children and gender differences from the Education Bureau of County X. Afterwards, I developed a table listing the policies in chronological order

and analyzing the differences between the policies (Appendix 1). This shows the change and deficiencies in government policies in terms of education of migrant children (see further in Chapter 6).

4.3.2 Interviews

According to Bryman (2008), ‘the interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research’ (p. 436). This study employed semi-structured interviews as the main instrument to collect data. Before interviewing, the interview guides were drawn up (Appendix 2, 3, 4). All the interview questions were open-ended and flexible. During the process, some questions in the guide were re-worded or rearranged. A number of new questions led to detailed and rich answers and opinions.

The interviews with the teachers and migrant children were conducted in mandarin Chinese, whereas the interviews with the migrant parents were conducted in the local dialect. All interviews were taped with a recorder and other key information was noted in a notebook, such as the non-verbal communication with the interviewees, including body language, facial expressions and so on. The interviewees’ tone, facial expression and gestures all helped to explore their opinions in more depth.

4.3.3 Observation

Observation is another instrument to collect data in social research. According to Bryman (2008), the major type of observation used in qualitative research is unstructured participant observation. It means that the participant observer immerses him- or herself into a social setting, observing people’s behaviour, listening to their conversation and asking questions (Bryman, 2008, p. 402).

In this study, participant observation was conducted in one primary school class and one lower secondary school class. The purpose was to observe the participants’ behaviours in class, such as how migrant girls and boys performed in class, how migrant and urban students got along, and how teachers interacted with migrant and non-migrant students.

In this case, I assumed an overt role of observer-as-participant with little participation in the class. As the classroom is a non-public closed setting, I relied on two key informants who helped me access the setting and provided support in the progress of the fieldwork. I took notes during the whole process of observation. The notes recorded the events, behaviours and my initial reflections in detail.

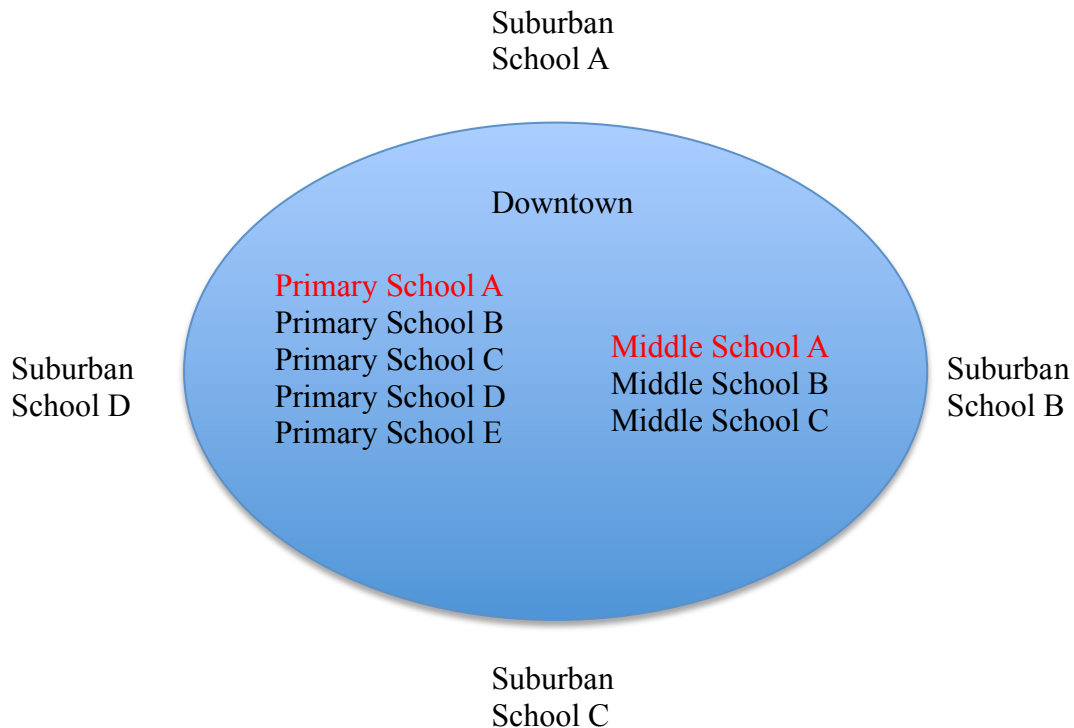
4.4 Sampling

According to Patton (1990), “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on selectively small samples ... selected purposefully” (p. 169). This study focuses on the group of migrant children and has selected the units by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling through which the involved participants have been sampled for a specific purpose, rather than on a random basis. The research participants are usually sampled at different levels or classifications in order to have a variety in the sample (Bryman, 2008, p. 415).

The sampling issues are closely related to the units of analysis (Bryman, 2008, p. 375). In this study, the units of analysis included the local government, schools, classes, students and families. As shown in Figure 4.2, there are a total of 12 schools in County X at the primary and secondary levels. They are all public schools. Eight of them are located downtown, including five primary schools and three secondary schools. The other four schools in the suburban districts have both primary and lower secondary levels.

This study was conducted in one primary school and one lower secondary school. There were two criteria for the selection of the schools. Firstly, the target schools were supposed to be located downtown. As the study is focused on the integration of migrant children into urban society, the public school downtown has the most predominant characteristics of an urban society and reflects the difference to the rural school. In suburban schools, the distinction to the rural area is less significant as most of the students come from the countryside. Secondly, in order to ensure that the sample size was large enough, each target school had to have more than 50 migrant students.

Figure 4.2: The Location of Schools in County X



Following these criteria, I selected Primary School A at the primary school level and Middle School A at the lower secondary school level. According to statistics from the Education Bureau of County X in 2009, the two schools had the highest number of migrant children: Primary School A had 75 migrant students and Middle School A had 118 migrant students. In each school, three head teachers were selected as interviewees since their classes had the largest number of migrant children.

Furthermore, one class in each school was selected for participant observation and three migrant girls and three migrant boys were interviewed. The selection of the target migrant students followed the head teacher's suggestion. To ensure the variety in the sample, students were selected with different family backgrounds, class performance and achievement in assessment and examinations.

In each migrant family, only one of the parents was selected for interview. Most of the interviewees were mothers, because fathers were engaged with work or not at home. In addition, in two cases, I interviewed their grandmothers instead as the migrant children live with their grandmother while their parents live in another city.

Figure 4.3: Participants in the Study

Schools	Teachers	Migrant Students	Migrant Parents	Total
Primary School A	3	6	6	15
Middle School A	3	6	6	15
Total	6	12	12	30

4.5 The Procedure of Data Collection

The fieldwork was conducted in County X during 20 September 2010 to 31 October 2010. I accessed the Education Bureau in County X with the reference letter from the Department of Educational Research at the University of Oslo. The leader of the Bureau gave me a stamped reference letter to contact schools and provided me with a number of local government documents on the issue of migrant children. Document analysis in the Education Bureau of County X was finished by the end of September 2010. This was followed by the preparation of the observations and interviews during the first week of October.

From 8 to 17 October, fieldwork was carried out in Primary School A. As shown in Figure 4.4, the first step was to interview three head teachers, aiming at investigating their perspectives on and strategies for the education of migrant children. The three teachers were from three different classes of grades 4, 5 and 6 respectively. Their classes had the largest number of migrant children in each grade.

Secondly, observation was conducted in the grade 5 class, here referred to as Class A, from 11 to 15 October. This was because the grade 6 class was under pressure of graduation examination and the head teacher did not want her students to be affected by the research, and because the grade 4 class had fewer migrant children than the grade 5 class. I took detailed notes during the observation and highlighted what confused me. Based on my observations, I added some interview questions for migrant children, in order to check whether I had understood their behaviours

correctly or not.

Afterwards, I interviewed three migrant girls and three migrant boys from different family backgrounds and with different academic achievements in order to examine their life and educational experiences in County X.

Finally, interviews were conducted with migrant children’s parents in order to explore the parents’ perceptions of their children’s education, and to corroborate the information provided by migrant children.

Figure 4.4: The Organization of the Fieldwork

Time	Site	Data Collection
20 to 30 September	Education Bureau	Document analysis
8 to 17 October	Primary School A	Day1-3: Interviews with teachers
		Day 4-8: Observations in Primary Class A
		Day 9: Interviews with migrant students
		Day 10: Interviews with migrant parents
22 to 31 October	Middle School A	Day1-3: Interviews with teachers
		Day 4-8: Observations in Middle Class A
		Day 9: Interviews with migrant students
		Day 10: Interviews with migrant parents

From 22 to 31 October, the same procedure was repeated in Middle School A, which has the largest population of migrant children among all the schools in County X. Three teachers were selected for interviews. With the consent of the head teacher, observation was conducted in Class B of grade 3 and interviews were held with three migrant girls and three migrant boys in this class, as well as with their parents.

4.6 The Procedure of Data Analysis

The data collected from the fieldwork were processed as of 1 November 2011. As mentioned before, after analysing the government policies on migrant children, a table listing the policies according to publication date was developed and the significance and deficiencies of each policy were recorded. After that, interviews were transcribed into text from the recorder and translated into English. I had occasional difficulties in finding words in English for some of the dialect expressions of the interviewees.

The data were subsequently coded by having read through the initial set of transcripts twice and making notes. All data were categorized and analyzed in relation to the research questions and related to the general literature before developing more general ideas.

4.7 Reliability and Validity of the Data

According to Bryman (2008), there are three prominent criteria for the evaluation of social research, namely reliability, replication and validity. Even though it is argued that these three criteria are more concerned with quantitative research, qualitative researchers also seek to apply the concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative research with little change of their meanings (Bryman, 2008, p. 376).

Reliability is concerned with the issue of whether the results of a study can be repeated (Bryman, 2008, p. 31). I used triangulation in the development of measures, resulting in greater confidence in findings. For example, I often checked my observations with interview questions to corroborate whether I had correctly understood what I had observed. I interviewed migrant children as well as their parents in order to crosscheck the consistency between the children's opinions and those of their parents. Besides, in the process of and after the interview, I often checked my understanding with interviewees to ensure that I understood them correctly.

Validity, as another important criterion of research, is concerned with the 'integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research' (Bryman, 2008, p. 32).

There are two aspects of validity in qualitative research: ‘internal validity’ refers to whether there is a good match between researchers’ observations and the theoretical ideas they develop; ‘external validity’ is concerned with the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings (Bryman, 2008, p. 376).

To ensure the validity of the data, I paid much attention to the design of the interview questions and to the general selection of participants. It was important that the interview questions responded to my research questions and that the interview data provided answers to my research questions.

The external validity is concerned with the generalization of the qualitative findings. The ‘case study’ research design raises the issue of how the findings can be generalized to other settings. Furthermore, as the sample in this study is rather small, there is an issue of how it can be considered as representative of a population. Nevertheless, some of the findings of this study support those of other studies on education of migrant children, for example, the findings that migrant children experience cultural discrimination in urban society is echoed in the study by Wang and Gao (2010) as well as in that of Feng (2007).

4.8 Ethical Consideration

As Bryman (2008) indicated, ‘ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved’ (p. 113). To meet the ethical standards, one of the principles is to make sure that no harm to participants is made and approval from the participants is gained before doing the research (Bryman, 2008, p. 118). The reference letter from the University of Oslo helped me access the Education Bureau of County X, and as requested by the leader of the Education Bureau, I have used the pseudonym of County X and have not indicated the actual location of County X in the Map (page 35).

The stamped support letter from the Education Bureau meant that the two headmasters accepted my fieldwork in the schools and that I got help from one of the teachers. All participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the research and their own role. The anonymity of all participants helps to protect their privacy.

After finishing the research, all interview recording and relevant data will be destroyed. The Education Bureau of County X will receive a summery version of the thesis in Chinese.

Chapter 5: The Life and Educational Experiences of Migrant Children in County X

This chapter describes the life experiences of migrant children in County X in order to explore the reason for their migration and their perceptions of life in County X as compared with life in their hometown. It also examines the educational experiences of migrant children related to accessing urban public schools, the school environment, teachers' attitudes, their relationship with classmates and friends, and parental involvement in their schooling. The chapter mainly aims at examining possible difficulties encountered by the migrant children and whether these are different for migrant girls as compared with migrant boys.

5.1 The Life Experiences of Migrant Children

5.1.1 Why Migrate?

The study includes twelve migrant families, who live in County X with a rural household registration. As shown in Figure 5.1, among the twelve migrant families, half of the children (six) had migrated with both of their parents. Four migrant children came to County X with their mothers while their fathers went to another city to find work. Two migrant children (both girls) live in County X with their grandmothers.

Six of the 12 parents indicated that they came to County X in search of work. They were all farmers in the rural area. Four parents mentioned that the driving force in hunting for a job in the city was the deficiency of farming land in their hometowns. As mentioned in Chapter 2, with the trend of industrialization and urbanization in China, the cultivated land in the rural areas has reduced continuously (Li, 1997; Duan & Lu, 2006). The government appropriates farmers' land for industrial or urban construction. Landless farmers are therefore forced to move to the cities in search of work (Duan & Lu, 2006). As indicated by one of the migrant mothers, after their land

had been appropriated for highway construction, she and her husband worked in a small nearby factory. Soon afterwards, they were laid off and had to move to County X in order to search for other work opportunities.

Figure 5.1: Children’s Migration According to Guardian

Guardian	Number of girls	Number of boys	Total
Both Parents	3	3	6
Mothers	1	3	4
Grandmothers	2	0	2
Total	6	6	12

Four migrant families indicated that they moved to County X to have ‘better living conditions’, which to these parents meant earning more money and providing better education for their children. Taking the migrant girl Lily for instance, while her father went to Guangzhou in search of work, her mother took two daughters to County X as soon as she had a temporary job. Lily’s mother explained: ‘her father is working in Guangzhou now and sends money back every month. As family conditions improved, I decided to move to County X. It is close to my hometown and has better education. The most important thing is that my daughters can speak Mandarin here, instead of the dialect.’

The remaining two migrant families had a unique experience with migration. A few years ago, the migrant parents moved their whole family to County X as they got jobs. After a while, the parents went to the eastern big city in order to earn more money and their children were left behind in County X with their grandparents. This meant that these two children are migrant children without a local permanent residence in County X; they are also regarded as left behind children because their parents left them in the care of grandparents.

When asked for the reasons for staying in County X, Chow’s grandmother explained: ‘In spite of the fact that my daughter and son-in-law have gone to work as construction workers in Hainan, Chow and I decided to stay here rather than go back to the countryside. It was really not easy to get Chow into middle school A. We made

great efforts to do so and there is no reason to give it up.’

Generally speaking, the reasons for migration are many and diverse. Before the 1990s, rural people migrated to cities with the simple goal of finding a job in order to survive (Wang & Gao, 2010). Nowadays, most of them may be pushed by a stronger motivation regarding further development for themselves and for their children in terms of education.

5.1.2 Where to Live?

Among the twelve migrant families, only three have a relatively better economic situation and have been able to buy their own house in County X. The other nine families have no permanent residential place and live in rented housing in suburban districts. Most of their rented apartments are tiny, dark and in bad condition. Lan and her parents huddle in a tiny room of 10 m². After her younger brother was born, four family members now live together with no space even for a desk. Lily and her mother and younger sister live in an apartment built on a small mountain in the suburban district of County X. Zhang’s family rents a room at the outskirts of County X. It takes around one hour for Zhang to walk to school every day. Meng’s family moved five times within five years in County X. Her mother said: ‘we are moving for various reasons. Once the landlord did not want to rent the room to us, or the buildings were to be rebuilt or knocked down, so we had to move. And, if we can find cheaper housing, we move as well.’

While seven children migrated to County X directly from their hometown, the other five had lived in more than two places before moving here. They have migrated between cities because their parents change jobs frequently. All the migrant children said they do not like moving and they also confirmed that moving affects their study negatively, because ‘sometimes I have to stop my study and help my parents to move furniture from the old place to the new house’, ‘sometimes moving house means changing the school. It takes time for me to get acquainted with the new study environment and it is quite uncomfortable at the beginning’, and ‘I have no friends when I come to a new place and I always feel lonely.’

5.1.3 Life in the City vs. Life in the Hometown

According to the data from the fieldwork, most of the migrant children are long-term residents in County X. Nine migrant children have lived in County X for more than three years, while two boys and one girl have been here for one-three years.

When asked which place they like the most, the city or the hometown, four migrant children preferred the hometown (three girls and one boy). They like the hometown because this is the place where they grew up and where they have relatives and friends. They showed great affection for their hometowns and found living in the hometown to be freer and more interesting. Comparatively speaking, these four children regarded life in County X to be boring and lonely, even though they are now used to living here.

The three migrant girls who do not like County X clearly indicated that they felt ‘uncomfortable’ in the city: ‘I so much miss the time when I was in my hometown, where I have many friends and relatives. Here I feel lonely and uncomfortable.’ When asked what ‘uncomfortable’ meant, one girl answered: ‘it is not as free as in my hometown. There are many rules and differences when one lives in the city. I never regard myself as a member of County X, and the people here do not regard me as a member either.’ For example, she explained that ‘in the city you have to speak in a low voice, otherwise the other people will regard you as a rude person’ and ‘I can run barefoot in the hills in the countryside, but I cannot do this in the city.’

Among the other eight migrant children, five confirmed that they like County X and the remaining three said that they like their hometown for some reasons and County X for others. Most of the children from Primary School A indicated that the city is more beautiful than their hometown. The students from Middle school A expressed that here they can live in a better condition. In fact, all of them gave the same reason but in different ways. According to Chan, ‘in my hometown, I have to walk five kilometers to get to school. It is really hard to walk through the steep mountain path. In contrast, I think here [County X] it is much better, both in terms of general life and study.’

5.1.4 People in the City vs. People in the Hometown

When comparing the people in the hometown with those in County X, only one girl and two boys said they like people in County X. For example, they said: ‘they dress well’, ‘they are polite’, and ‘they can speak Mandarin to me while rural people are rude.’

The other nine migrant children like people in their hometown because they are kinder, friendlier and more affectionate. In contrast, they regarded urban people as being insincere, hypocritical, selfish and snobbish. One migrant girl, Meng, talked about her experience in County X: ‘one day, I walked into a shop with my mother. The shop assistants were very arrogant and unfriendly to us. When we were leaving, they said we were definitely from the countryside because we were dressed poorly.’

Generally speaking, in this study, most of the migrant children like County X because of the better living conditions. From their responses, it seems that they have adapted well to the city life. However, as three migrant girls (i.e. half of the interviewed girls) and one boy do not like County X, it seems that migrant children, especially girls, also face difficulties in adapting to the different lifestyle in the city. Discrimination and negative attitudes from urban people have considerable bearing on migrant children’s perception of their identities in the city.

However, when asked the question whether they would like to go back to the hometown and live there again, eleven children said no, including those who like the hometown and people there. Meng explained: ‘I will not go back to the countryside. It was not easy for my parents to move me from the countryside and send me to an urban school. They have great expectations for my future. All people should pursue a better life.’ Similarly, the other migrant children who liked their hometown more also preferred staying in the city. Even though they have great affection for their hometown, the perception that the city is better than the countryside is deeply rooted in their mind.

5.2 The Educational Experiences of Migrant Children in County X

5.2.1 How to Access an Urban School?

All the migrant children in this study have no permanent residence in County X. According to the policy of enrolling in a nearby school, they do not meet the qualification for entering an urban school and ought to have gone to the school close to the place of their household registration. However, all migrant parents confirmed that, independent of gender, their children managed to get access to an urban public school through placement by the Education Bureau.

Nevertheless, many migrant parents confirmed that they had problems with the administrative procedures when seeking to get their children into an urban public school. According to the local policies in County X, migrant parents who want to send children into urban public schools should apply to the Education Department. They must submit four documents, including the original copy of the child's residence card, the residence certificate stamped by the home government, the parents' work certificate, and their temporary residence permit. Some parents found it difficult to provide all these documents, especially the work certificate. As most of them do casual and temporary work for private businesses in County X and some of them have some form of self-employment, they do not know how to get a work certificate or who can provide it. Besides, it usually takes a long time to get an official stamp on the documents.

This is exemplified by the experience of Wen's family. Wen came to County X with his parents three years ago. After a while, Wen's father went to Tibet to work there. Wen and his mother live in County X alone and his mother produces handmade ornaments to make a bit of money. Wen's mother said: 'I had trouble getting the so-called work certificate. I have no job and my husband is not here. I went to several government departments and asked what to do. It was really difficult. After several complicated procedures, I finally got the stamped certificate that explains my situation.' Five other migrant parents experienced the same difficulty when they had to submit the four supporting documents.

5.2.2 Schooling Experiences of Migrant Children

1) Perceptions of Changing School

Changing school is often a problem in migrant children's education (Zhao, 2005; Wang & Gao, 2010). Eleven migrant children in this study joined a public school from another school, leading to an interruption in their study. All of them, whether migrant girls or boys, said that they did not like to change school and felt uncomfortable in the new environment. They encountered many problems, such as feeling lonely because they had no friends, experienced new instruction methods, had difficulty with the strict discipline in the urban school, could not catch up with classmates, and found the examination difficult.

Yam, a migrant boy from Primary School A, said that there are more home assignments in the urban school than in the hometown school and felt that the competition was very fierce. Jing, a migrant girl from Middle School A, said: 'when I first came here, I had no idea about how to write a composition. The teacher always said that I did not use the proper format. I was so confused because I did not know what the proper format is.'

2) Perceptions of the School Environment and Infrastructure

All twelve migrant children indicated that the environment and basic infrastructure of the school in County X are much better than those of their hometown school. In the urban school, the buildings are more beautiful, there are green plants around the school, and there is a spacious playing field for sports. The classrooms in the urban school are also bigger and brighter, and there is a library and computer room in contrast to their hometown school. All migrant children confirmed that they are happy with the environment and infrastructure of their schools in County X and that they can access all the school resources and services in the same way as the urban students.

3) Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching

As to the teaching quality in the urban school, all migrant children regarded it as 'good'. The migrant children thought teachers from the urban schools are more competent and helpful in teaching. They instil knowledge through examples and are

good at helping students to think independently. Migrant children, including both girls and boys, indicated that they had become used to the ways of teaching in the urban school.

As some of the migrant children explained: here (County X), learning is more interesting and fun. Our English teacher teaches us to sing English songs instead of only asking us to memorize English words. The teachers in the hometown school only taught us how to read a word whereas teachers in County X explain what the word means and elaborate on the content of the curriculum. According to one of the children, ‘here I have made great progress in my study. When I was in the countryside, I only scored around 60 in the examinations. Here, I get a very high score, almost 90¹.

As to the teachers’ attitudes, most migrant children found the teachers in the urban school to be responsible and treating them alike, independent of gender difference. Teachers paid great attention to them by asking them to answer questions in class, warning those who are absent-minded or sleeping in class, encouraging them if they fail their examination, etc. Lan, a migrant girl from Primary School A, stated that: ‘in this school, the teachers, especially in Chinese and mathematics, are stricter and more responsible than the teachers in the countryside school. If I do not do my assignments well, the teachers will coach me after class until I understand.’ Chow also explained: ‘the head teachers in my hometown school only care about the excellent students and not those who do not get a good grade in the examination, like me. In contrast, in my present school, the head teacher still pays attention to me even though I am not excellent in my study.’

However, many migrant children confirmed that there are also differences among the teachers in the urban school. Only the head teacher pays attention to all children, whereas other teachers might focus only on the outstanding students. This is attributed to the school evaluation and examination system. The head teacher is in charge of the whole class and takes more responsibility for students than other teachers. The head teacher therefore needs to promote the all-round development of all students in all subjects.

¹ The scoring system is from 0 to 100, 100 being the maximum.

In contrast, some other teachers may only attach importance to his/her own course and often focus on those students who are excellent in his/her course while neglecting others. In general, some teachers are more focused on getting a good evaluation to help their own personal development, rather than teaching the students. This does not amount to direct discrimination of migrant children, because it concerns urban students who do not make great achievements as well. However, migrant children with a relatively poor educational background are more prone to be in the group of poor students. If most teachers maintain the preference of outstanding students, migrant students are more likely to remain marginalized.

4) Perceptions of the Curriculum

The term curriculum here mainly covers two aspects: one is the subjects of the formal curriculum, the other is extra-curricular activities. All migrant children regarded the formal curriculum in urban school as diverse. In some rural schools, the curriculum is very limited, including only some major subjects, such as Chinese and mathematics. All migrant children confirmed that no English course is offered in their hometown school. They were all happy to gain different kinds of knowledge and skills in the urban school, such as a foreign language, natural science and art; but they also found it difficult to catch up with their classmates particularly in subjects that they had not had before.

All migrant children said that there are a variety of extra-curricular activities and competitions in the urban school, which are seldom held in the rural schools. These include, for example, arts performances, sports competitions, singing contests, and speeches in English. The teachers in both Primary School A and Middle School A indicated that the purpose of the extra-curricular activities is to promote the all-round development of students.

However, as most migrant children have not developed any talent in the arts or other fields, they do not know how to perform and they are not selected for performances. Lan was the only one migrant student who had attended a talent-training class in dancing. Only Lan and another migrant boy, Yam, indicated that they sometimes participated in extra-curricular activities. The other migrant children said they never or very seldom take part in extra-curricular activities.

When asked for the reasons, most migrant boys indicated that they do not like performing, whereas most migrant girls said that ‘sometimes I want to, but I worry that people will laugh at me’ or ‘I have no idea about how to perform and I do not think I can perform well’. In general, the migrant girls appeared to be more sensitive and less self-confident than the boys.

Only two migrant boys (one is Yam), and Lan regarded themselves as somewhat self-confident. The other nine migrant children thought of themselves as ‘lacking self-confidence’, ‘being ordinary people’, or ‘being nothing special’ and dared not perform in front of an audience. The head teacher explained that Yam had the greatest achievement in his study of all the migrant children, since Yam seemed to be more extroverted and self-confident than the other migrant children. Nevertheless, most migrant children’s potential has not been developed and they have neither the ability nor the self-confidence to take an active part in school activities. This means both that migrant children are disadvantaged in developing their talents and are marginalized in school activities.

5) Perceptions of the Relationship with Classmates and Friends

The interpersonal relationship among students is regarded as an integral part of the school’s hidden curriculum and has influence on students’ development (Shi, 2004). The relationship with classmates thus plays a significant role in constructing the schooling experience of migrant children.

In this respect, there are differences between migrant students at the primary level and those at the lower secondary level, as well as between migrant girls and boys. At the primary level, five of the six migrant children expressed that they would like to make friends with urban students. Their friends would usually be classmates who share the same interest or who live close by. Only one migrant girl said that she would not like to make friends with urban children, because ‘they are weak. When we play games, they always complain that the stones are too heavy and do not want to move them. It is boring hanging out with such “princesses”. And they always come late or do not even show up.’

At the lower secondary level, migrant children associate less with classmates and the

migrant boys seem to be more introverted than the girls. Migrant boys in Middle School A said they did not really know most of their classmates and only had some contact with the desk mates or with those classmates sitting close to them. Zhang said: ‘except for my desk mate, I seldom talk to others’, ‘I have nothing to talk about with most of my classmates’, ‘after class, I go back home alone. It is okay because I have gotten used to that.’

Migrant girls from Middle School A appeared to be more extrovert than boys, and to have more awareness of the differences between the urban and the rural areas in aspects of economy, culture and social life. These girls would like to make friends with nice people; but they would rather make friends with children from the countryside or children who shared a similar family background, because they found some urban classmates to be unfriendly and unpleasant. Meng said that: ‘some urban classmates are not easy-going and always look down on *us*. Therefore, *we* also steer clear of being associated with them.’ The ‘*we*’ and ‘*us*’, according to Meng, ‘referred to those coming from the countryside like me. Most of my friends are from the rural areas and they share the same feeling that some urban students are arrogant and unfriendly to *us*.’

In general, at the primary school level, migrant children accept the urban environment and society more easily, and are more active in making friends with urban children. A teacher indicated that this is because primary school children are too young to notice the difference between different social classes and family backgrounds. At the lower secondary level, there is a clear difference between urban and rural students. The migrant boys are introverted in class and only talk to a few friends. Migrant girls appeared to be more active in relating to their classmates, yet mainly with those who share a similar family background.

5.3 Conclusion

In general, most migrant children come to County X because of the better living conditions and better quality education. Most of them have adapted to the life in County X, yet discrimination and negative attitudes from urban people are barriers to their integration into the urban society. All migrant children managed to get into the

urban public schools by providing four required documents, which was difficult for their families. Being in the urban school meant that all migrant children could access the school resources and services in the same way as the urban students. They have generally adapted to the ways of teaching and have benefited from the different curriculum in the urban school. Teachers generally treated migrant children in the same way as the urban students.

However, migrant children still experience difficulties in the process of education, since they are affected by frequent change of school and sometimes experience discrimination from urban classmates. Migrant children generally do not participate in extra-curricular activities in the urban schools because the school disregards the fact that most of the migrant children have not developed their talents and potential in the arts or other fields. Some of the factors explaining the difficulties of migrant children are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Barriers to Migrant Children's Integration into the Education in County X

This chapter aims at identifying some of the underlying factors that contribute to the migrant children's disadvantages in education and prevent their integration into urban society. This will be done from the perspectives of the government, the family and the school.

6.1 Institutional Barriers to Integration

As stated before, the household registration system and the decentralized education system both contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of migrant children in cities. They experience disadvantages during the whole process of education despite the fact that guaranteeing the equal right of migrant children to nine years of compulsory education is at the centre of the local government's concern.

From 2004 to 2010, there were three significant policies related to the educational issue of migrant children in County X (Appendix 1): *The Notice on Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker's Children* (2004) by the Education Bureau of County X; *The Notice on Addressing the Relevant Problems on the Schooling of Landless and Jobless Rural Farmers' Children* (2005) by the Education Bureau of County X; *The Notice on Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker's Children* (2007) by the local government of County X in 2007.

These three policies provide a framework for addressing the enrolment issue in migrant children's education, while also setting restrictions to getting migrant children into urban schools.

6.1.1 Additional Procedures for Enrolment

The Notice on Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker's Children (2004) prescribed that the Administrative Department for Education in County X should take the responsibility for assigning migrant children to urban public schools. No extra fee for migrant children's enrolment should be charged (Education Bureau of County X, 2004).

'*The Notice*' (2004) defined the target group as 'those rural workers who live in County X without a local permanent residence and whose children *need* to be taken to County X for primary and lower secondary schooling' (Education Bureau of County X, 2004, p. 1). There is no specific explanation of the kind of children who 'need to be taken'. An official of the Education Bureau explained that those children who have guardians (such as grandparents) in the hometown are not encouraged to be taken to County X by their parents. This is because the educational resources in urban schools are allocated according to the size of the local population and large-scale migration would therefore result in increased pressure on urban schooling.

Furthermore, according to '*The Notice*' (2004), migrant parents should provide four documents when registering their children in the urban public school, which, as discussed before, is often difficult for the migrant parents. After approval by the Administrative Department for Education, qualified children can be placed in only four designated schools (Education Bureau of County X, 2004, p. 2).

As an official from the local government explained, the local government does not mean to create difficulties in terms of getting migrant children into the public schools. The reason for asking for the work certificate is to prevent people who are not working in County X from sending their children to the public schools and making use of the limited educational resources. Nevertheless, the procedures do create difficulties in getting migrant children into the urban schools, because of delay in students' enrolment, which negatively influences their study. In this way the government on one hand guarantees migrant children's right to nine years of compulsory education, but also sets limitations to their enrolment in the public urban schools. As Tomasevski (2003) has indicated, 'governments have two faces: they are the principal protectors as well as the principal violators of human rights' (p. 1).

6.1.2 Limited Choice of School

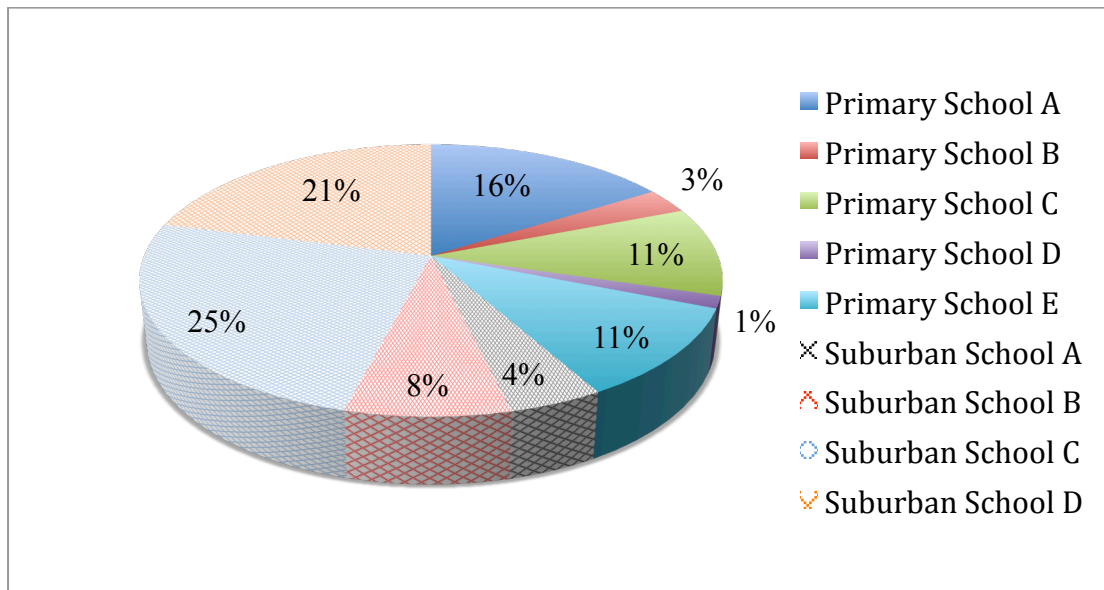
Most of the migrant parents emphasized that the most difficult problem is to choose in ‘which school’ to enrol their children. As shown in Figure 4.2, there are seven public secondary schools in County X, including three in the county centre and four in the suburban area. All parents wanted their children to receive high quality education in the county centre schools.

However, ‘*The Notice*’ (2004) stipulated that ‘after the approval of all the supporting documents, the Administrative Department for Education in County X refer qualified children to four designated schools’ (Education Bureau of County X, 2004, p. 2). The ‘designated schools’ are the four schools located in the suburban area. Even though these four schools belong to County X, their location is close to the countryside or in the border area between the city and the countryside. Compared with the county centre, the four suburban schools have a relatively unattractive environment with poor infrastructure and little teaching equipment. In terms of both evaluation and reputation, the four suburban schools are ranked at the bottom among all public schools in County X. Teachers and students prefer to work or study in the county centre rather than the suburban schools, but migrant children are usually placed in the schools with relatively low quality and reputation, according to ‘*The Notice*’ (2004).

According to the later *Notice on Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker’s Children* (2007), migrant children are no longer referred to the suburban schools, but instead ‘to the public primary or secondary schools in our County, and without charging any extra fee’ (Government of County X, 2007, p. 2). Migrant children seem, therefore, to have more opportunity now to access all urban schools, and not only suburban schools.

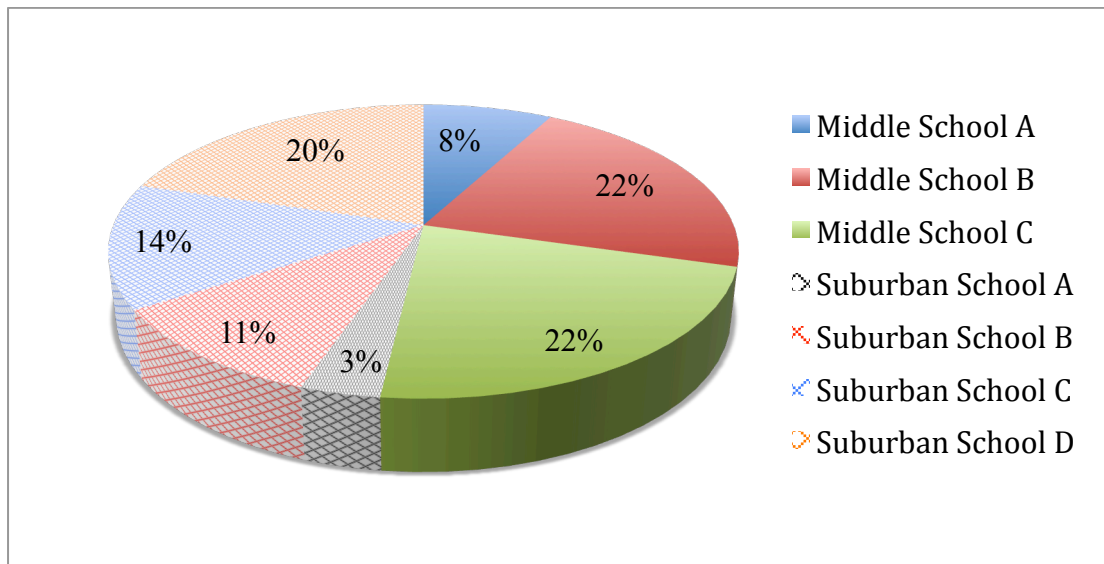
Figure 6.1 shows the proportional distribution of migrant children in the primary schools in County X in 2009. More than half (58 per cent) of the migrant children are placed in suburban schools and the rest in the county centre schools. Figure 6.2 shows that at the lower secondary level approximately half (48 per cent) of the children study at suburban schools and the rest in the county centre middle schools.

Figure 6.1: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Children in Primary Schools, 2009



Source: Data collected from the Education Bureau of County X, 2009

Figure 6.2: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Children in Lower Secondary Schools, 2009



Source: Data collected from the Education Bureau of County X, 2009

Although the Figures show a relatively even distribution of migrant children between the county centre schools and the suburban schools, there are underlying problems.

Firstly, very few of the migrant children get access to the county centre schools through official placement. From the government's perspective, the educational resources and school capacity are determined by the size of the population of the local area. The huge incoming migration adds pressure on education. Furthermore, the difference in educational quality among schools means that the top schools are particularly popular. When placing migrant children, the local government and the Education Bureau first prioritize the local children, and only afterwards consider migrant children who do not have a locally registered household, since otherwise the interests of the local children would be harmed. In reality, since the capacity of each school is limited, most schools have few places left after having enrolled the local children.

In order to get a place in the county centre school, migrant parents, as in the case of Lily's mother, had to stay overnight at the school to be in the front of the registration line. This is the only way that migrant children have a chance to get into one of the county centre schools. The alternative is that they are placed by the Education Bureau, which usually means going to low quality suburban schools. An official of the Education Bureau indicated that, 'nowadays, even though we do not expressly stipulate that migrant children should be placed in the suburban schools, and do provide opportunities for them in the high quality schools, the situation is not that positive. The fact is that, for example, in Middle School B, the top middle school in our county, some classes already have around 100 students, including three or four migrant children. May I ask, how can we get more migrant children into this class? '

Therefore, most of the migrant children who manage to access the popular schools take advantage of their social relationships. Migrant families with relatives or acquaintances in County X tried to mobilize their social capital to help get their children into the best school. Two-thirds (4) of the interviewed migrant parents from Middle School A confirmed that they had asked for help from friends and relatives when getting their children into the urban schools. This is well exemplified by Zhang's experience. Zhang came to County X with his parents five years ago and now study at Middle School A. When talking about their experience of getting Zhang into primary school, his parents emphasized how difficult it was. 'We wanted to transfer Zhang from the hometown school to one of the primary schools at the centre of

County X. But all schools rejected our application for the reason that there was no place available. We had to figure out another way, since otherwise Zhang would be registered in one of the suburban schools. We asked for help from acquaintances and friends. Thanks to God, we succeeded.’

On the other hand, even though migrant families have some social relations in the county, their social relations and resources are generally limited. Of the schools listed in Figure 6.2, Middle School B is ranked as No. 1 in County X and only 8 per cent of migrant children get access to this school. A teacher confirmed that most of the non-local students in Middle School B have strong social relations, otherwise they would not have succeeded in the fierce competition to access the most popular school. However most migrant families do not have such strong social relations, which limits their choices.

In the interviews, all migrant children in Primary School A expressed a desire for Middle School B. In Middle School A, most of the migrant parents said that they hoped that their children could study at the best school in County X but failed to get access. Chan’s mother explained: ‘we know it is impossible for us to get Chan into the best middle school here. It takes much money and important social relations to manage to do it. We are happy that Chan can go to Middle School A, which is better than the suburban schools. Even to achieve this, we made great efforts and asked for help from acquaintances who have relations with the school. It is really not easy.’ According to Meng’s grandmother: ‘Middle School B? Who does not want to go? But how can we go? We are from the countryside, without a local household and strong social relations.’

There are two contradictions as far as the education of migrant children is concerned. The first one is the gap between the limited educational resources and the growing number of school-age children in the city. Migration adds pressure on education in the city. The second one concerns the difference in educational quality. An unequal allocation of educational resources results in uneven development of education among different areas and schools. This is reflected in fierce competition to get into the popular schools with good quality.

6.1.3 Government Reactions

According to the data from the Education Bureau, public schools in County X accepted 1,477 migrant children in total in 2007, of whom 932 were in primary education and 545 in lower secondary education. No migrant child was denied access to nine years of compulsory education in public school, confirming the goal of 'zero rejection' in the enrolment of migrant children.

However, 'zero rejection' does not mean that all migrant children are in school. All these three educational policies on the issue of migrant children in County X were concerned with the enrolment problem. No policies have been formulated concerning out-of-school migrant children in County X and there are no official data on their number, which implies that the local government has not yet paid adequate attention to them. Furthermore, no attention has been paid to the problems that migrant children meet after they get into the urban school.

All migrant families in fact confirmed that they did not expect any help from the government, but instead expressed their distrust: 'the government? No, we never have any expectation that we can get help from the government', 'the government will not pay attention to our problem. We can only rely on ourselves'. Although the government does pay some attention to the problem of migrant children at a macro level, it has neglected the voice of the people at the micro level and failed to address what is at the heart of their concern. This demonstrates a gap between the people's expectations and the government's behaviour, and a lack of confidence of the people in the government.

6.2 Barriers in the Family

The family is where children grow up and parents are the children's first educator (Duru-Bellat, 2004). Family background, parental expectations and educational levels, all have a close bearing on children's education and development (Wang & Fu, 2004).

6.2.1 Poor Economic Conditions

1) Who Should Work?

Family income plays a significant role in the education of migrant children (Davis-Kean, 2005). It directly determines their living environment and educational resources. Only three of the families in this study have a relatively good situation with both parents having stable jobs in factories or running their own businesses. In six families, both parents or at least one parent does temporary work, such as selling food, doing odd jobs at home, or working as a porter at building sites. In the remaining three families, only fathers have temporary jobs and mothers stay at home, meaning that the whole family lives on the father's earnings.

Concerning these three families, traditional perceptions of gender roles are very clear. The migrant parents all indicated that: 'it is taken for granted that men should work', 'doing housework is a woman's responsibility', 'men can earn more money than women because they are able to do heavier work than women'. The migrant children also indicated that 'my father can earn more money', 'my mother knows how to look after my little brother', 'my mother can cook delicious food for me, but my father cannot'.

2) Economy and Education

Most of the migrant parents do low-income physical work and earn little money. Parents from nine of the migrant families indicated that they could only afford the basic living costs. The other three families regarded their economic situation as being poor or very poor. Meng's mother expressed her worries, 'I gave birth to Meng at a very old age. Now my husband and I are almost 50 years old while Meng is just at lower secondary school. My husband has a temporary job as a porter at a building site and I sell snacks outside my daughter's school. We both make little money, scarcely covering the costs for rent and food. I cannot imagine what will happen if my husband loses his job. Meng will graduate from lower secondary school next year and go to high school. How can we afford her tuition?'

In China, there is no schooling fee for nine years of compulsory education. All

migrant parents nevertheless indicated that they still have much financial pressure from educating their children. Although the bulk of the educational expenditure is no longer the schooling fee, there are other expenses outside the school. At both the lower secondary and primary schools in County X, each student should pay the school around 100 RMB (\approx 16 US dollars) for books each semester. They also have to buy stationery and several kinds of exercise books. Most of the migrant parents found the textbooks to be very expensive. According to Meng's mother, 'nowadays, for one exercise book, I have to pay 25 RMB (\approx 4 US dollars), which is as much as I make in one day.' The exercise books are not offered by the school but are needed for the examinations. All migrant parents indicated that to afford this, they had to cut down on expenditures for food and clothing.

None of the migrant children at the primary level have private tuition after class and only two of the students at lower secondary level have attended the private tutoring class. Even though tutoring is expensive, these two families support their children's tutoring without hesitation. 'I know it is important for him. Many of his classmates have private tutoring. But the economic condition in our family does not allow us to use a private tutor for him. We can only pay the expenses for the tutoring class, around 150 RMB (\approx 24 US dollars) each month.' Three of the migrant families could not afford the tutoring fee after class and also expressed great worries concerning the fee in high school.

For financial reasons, migrant families are prone to moving frequently in order to look for a cheaper place to live or because their house is to be rebuilt. None of the migrant children indicated that they like moving and they all thought changing location frequently has a negative effect on their life and study. Sometimes, migrant children have to help their parents move, which may take several days and affect their study; they also have to adapt to a new environment which takes time.

3) Economy and Household Registration

In this study, all migrant parents indicated that the biggest pressure in their family comes from limited resources and being a rural household. According to Lan's mother, 'we worry that my young son cannot get into kindergarten in County X because of our rural household. Furthermore, we are poor and therefore we cannot

change to an urban household.’ From most migrant parents’ perspective, household registration is closely connected to having money.

All migrant parents pointed out that, according to existing policy, if you own a house in the city, you can become an urban household. They indicated that they do not have sufficient money to buy a house in the city and even if they had, they would still need money to mobilize social relations to help them become an urban household. In general, it is almost impossible for a poor migrant family to change their rural household.

6.2.2 Lower Educational Level of Migrant Parents

The educational level, behaviours and expectations of parents have a crucial bearing on children’s education (Davis-Kean, 2005). Migrant parents in this study seemed helpless regarding their children’s education for different reasons, amongst others their own lower educational accomplishment.

All migrant parents in this study were originally farmers. Only three migrant mothers had higher secondary education, while four held the lower secondary education diploma. The other five migrant mothers had primary education or even less. All parents emphasized that one of the serious problems in their children’s education is that they are unable to help them in their study. All parents indicated that ‘my child can only depend upon himself/herself in the study, we cannot help him/her much.’ This is because of their own poor educational background. Only three parents said they could sometimes check their children’s home assignments and help them address the problems in their study. The other migrant parents indicated that they had ‘no ability’ to do so.

As Fang’s mother said, ‘we do want to help her with study problems. But what can I do? Her father and I only have primary education. We only know a few words and letters.’ And according to Chan’s father, ‘Chan knows more than us. My wife and I are both semi-illiterates. We cannot do anything in terms of his study.’ Only one migrant child in primary school said she would ask for help from her mother when having problems in her study and that her mother could support her. Her mother is one of the three migrant mothers with higher secondary education.

All migrant parents said they had no clear strategy for their children's education and they did not know how to encourage their children in their study. They often pushed them to study hard in an inappropriate way. For example, most of the migrant parents have told their children that 'if you do not study hard, we will send you back to the countryside! Then you will stay in that poor place forever.' Even if they could not actually do so, the effect of saying so on the children was fear and depression rather than encouragement.

Besides, migrant parents are busy at work and have little time to communicate with their children concerning their studies or dreams. Some migrant fathers who work at building sites have to leave home very early and come back at night. Some migrant mothers who do temporary jobs, such as being a storekeeper or restaurant waitress, always work into the night. Migrant children therefore often stay at home alone after school.

Migrant parents indicated that they only supported their children by giving limited financial support, signing onto children's home assignments without checking them, and attending the parent-teacher meetings if time allowed. Only one third of migrant parents had ever contacted the teachers to hear about their children's performance in school. Most of them did not have time or were afraid to disturb the teachers. Teachers also confirmed that migrant parents seldom showed any initiative with respect to their children's education in contrast to the urban parents. A teacher from Middle School A repeated that migrant parents dared not contact teachers even though they wanted to. 'I always have a feeling that they regard themselves as being inferior to us. They are over-polite and careful when talking to teachers. Actually we have no discrimination and make no difference between students and parents.'

Even if teachers do not discriminate against rural migrant people, migrant people understand this differently. Some parents confirmed that the head teacher of their children is nice and responsible, but they were afraid that the head teacher would be disturbed if they wanted to learn about their children's performance in school. As a migrant mother said, 'I am embarrassed when talking to my children's teacher. Because I come from the countryside and am poorly educated, I do not know how to communicate with teachers appropriately and I think I may say something wrong.' It seems that the perception that there are gaps and distinctions between the urban and

rural has sunk deep into the minds of migrant people.

6.2.3 Different Expectations of Migrant Girls and Boys

1) Having Girls or Boys?

The twelve migrant families had different expectations of their children's education and these differed for girls and boys. In this study, each of the six migrant boys is the only child in his family, whereas four of the six migrant girls have younger brothers or sisters. This means that if the first child is a boy, parents do not have another child; but if the first child is a girl, parents have wanted to have another child. Some of the migrant girls' parents said openly that even though they would be punished for violating the only-child policy, they wanted a second child hoping that it would be a boy because 'family name is very important and only a boy can maintain the family name and promote family development'. The situation of having children outside the state plan can be attributed to the cultural tradition rooted in Confucianism in ancient China (Liu, 2006a).

2) Who Should Receive More Education, Girls or Boys?

All parents of migrant boys indicated that they hoped that their sons would receive as much education as possible, regardless of the child's performance and achievements in school. Even when migrant boys did not do well in their study, both teachers and parents still believed that boys could succeed in their next examination if they made an effort. Most of them hoped that their sons could go to university one day. They explained that because their sons would lead the family into the future, they should receive more education and would thus be able to earn more money. They regarded education as being very important, 'being educated will help my son find a decent job, like being a doctor. It will help make money and change our lives', 'the reason for our poverty is that we are poorly educated. So we hope our son can go to university, find a good job in the city. We do not want to go back to the countryside any more.'

Even though the parents of migrant girls also indicated that education is important and helpful for their daughters' development, the responses regarding migrant girls were

not as positive. Migrant girls' parents showed less confidence in the success of their daughter and had lower expectations of their daughters' development. Most migrant girls' parents said if their daughters fail to do well in their study, they were supposed to stop studying and go to work for money after graduation from lower secondary school.

Migrant girl Meng does not do well in her study and have no confidence in terms of passing the entrance examination for high school. Her mother said they had expectations for their daughter's study but also felt very helpless: 'the high school fee is unaffordable to us. If she is accepted by the best high school in County X, we will try our best to help her, such as borrow money from our relatives. If she fails, we may give it up.' Chow is another migrant girl at Middle School A. Both of her parents work in Hainan and she lives with her grandmother in County X. Chow's grandmother said, 'Chow is not good at her study. We just hope that she can get some basic knowledge at school. It is easier for her to find a job with some education. Her father plans to take her to Hainan for work after she graduates from high school.'

All twelve migrant children clearly expressed that they would like to stay at school rather than work for others. Jing is a 15-year-old girl who has one year of working experience. She dropped out from rural school three years ago because she did poorly and felt that studying was boring and unnecessary. She left school and went to work in Guangzhou for one year. Jing said, 'working was not better than studying. I was tired and homesick after a while in Guangzhou. And then I decided to go back to school.' Even though Jing has returned to school and restarted her study, she is still at risk of dropping out if she fails to make progress.

3) Who Should Share the Housework, Girls or Boys?

Workload at home partly explains that girls have difficulty in school. More migrant girls (3) than boys (1) confirmed that they sometimes would share housework with their parents at home, such as sweeping the floor. All migrant parents hoped that doing housework would not affect their children's education. But migrant girls' parents found that their daughters' housework showed that they are independent, industrious and virtuous, whereas migrant boys' parents did not consider it necessary for boys to do housework well. According to the migrant parents, girls should learn to

do housework well because they would become a wife and mother one day and doing housework would be their main responsibility in a family.

This perspective is clearly related to the traditional notion that ‘men are working outside and women are in charge of housework’ (nanzhunei, nvzhuwai) and ‘women are supposed to be a virtuous wife and nice mother’ (xianqi liangmu). The sexual division of labour in a family leads to a gender stereotype for both girls and boys. As indicated before, most migrant children regarded it as natural that mothers would take the bulk of the housework in the family and that only mothers would know how to do the housework well.

6.2.4 Being Left Behind

1) Why Being Migrant and Left Behind?

This study identified two migrant girls were as being left behind by their parents and belonging to the group of ‘migrant and left behind’ children. The left-behind children and migrant children are two different categories belonging to the group of rural workers’ children, resulting from rural workers’ migration. While moving to cities, some migrant workers would like to take their children along. The children, who migrate to cities with their parents or other guardians as temporary residents, are called ‘migrant children’. Besides, some migrant workers leave their children at home and in the care of grandparents. These children are called ‘left-behind children’. Therefore, ‘migration’ and ‘left behind’ are contradictions in terms. The one who is migrating should not be left behind; and the one who is left behind does not also migrate at the same time.

Two of the migrant girls, however, were in the special situation that they had been left behind by both parents. Several years ago, Chow and Jing came to County X with their parents and grandmothers. After working in County X for a short time, their parents went to eastern big cities to earn more money and left their children in County X with their grandmothers. Chow and Jing therefore belong to a special category of ‘migrant and left behind children’.

There are two reasons why Chow and Jing migrated to County X: the first one is that

their parents wanted them to receive a better education; the other is that, County X is close to their hometown and they have social relations there. When the parents wanted to migrate to farther away bigger cities, they worried that their children could not adapt to the different life style and study environment in a big city. Since they did not want to send their children back to their hometown where education is not as good as in County X, they left their children in County X with their grandmothers.

Generally speaking, the reason for children migrating is that County X has a better education than the countryside, and the reason for children being left behind is that there are fewer difficulties in their education in County X than in big cities. While migrant children are often found in big cities and left-behind children in the rural areas, migrant and left-behind children often exist in small cities or counties. This is because small cities and counties are more developed than towns and villages and it is relatively easier for rural migrants to settle in small cities and counties than in big cities. Therefore, still more and more migrant and left-behind children may emerge in small or middle cities of China. According to a teacher in Middle School A, the number of migrant and left-behind children in their school is growing.

2) Double Disadvantages from Being Migrant and Left Behind

Migrant and left-behind children experience a double disadvantage. Like all migrant children, Chow and Jing face various problems of adaptation and integration into County X. Chow talked about her experience of being discriminated against by urban people and students: ‘some girls in the class, especially those from rich families, are very proud and unfriendly to us. They look down on us because we are from the countryside and dress poorly...The most embarrassing moment is when I go out with them without any money in my pocket.’

Chow and Jing also have disadvantages from being left behind. Much literature on left-behind children regards them as one of the most disadvantaged group in China (Wang, 2006). They suffer multiple difficulties, including personal safety, abuse and psychological problems. A survey shows that the left-behind children account for a considerable proportion of juvenile crime in rural areas. The main factors are attributed to the lack of affection and wardship from their parents, the absence of an effective guardian and moral education. Hence the left-behind children are exposed to

negative social conditions and are therefore prone to violating the school regulations (Wang, 2006). In addition, most left-behind children live with illiterate or semi-illiterate grandparents, from whom they are unlikely to get support in their study and therefore experience persistent disadvantages in education (Seeberg, Ross, Liu, & Tan, 2007).

Chow and Jing both expressed how much they missed their parents whom they had not seen for a long time. Since they had little communication with their grandmothers regarding their study or lives, friends were the only ones with whom they could talk. Chow indicated that her friends are also migrant children from the countryside so they have many things in common. As to Jing, the head teacher considered her as the most problematic student in the class. According to the teacher, she does not study hard and is always the last in the examinations, and often violates school discipline, such as sleeping in class. Jing also often hangs out with her friends who are regarded as ‘bad guys’ from the teachers’ perspectives.

Several factors contribute to Jing’s problems. As mentioned before, Jing took a one-year break from her study and went to work in Guangzhou three years ago. After a while, she felt that working was so tiresome and returned to school. At this time, she lagged far behind her classmates and lost confidence in her study. As her parents both work in another city, no one supports her study and no one keeps her from being negatively influenced by the wrong people. The head teacher has tried to help Jing but it has not worked: ‘at first, I had some talks with Jing and told her what to do and what not. However, this has not helped. As a teacher, I can only be in charge of students in school. I can do nothing after they leave school. Parents are supposed to guard their children. Regretfully, Jing’s parents do not live with her. It is not enough to only draw on teachers to help Jing address her problems.’

For other migrant families, even though migrant parents sometimes could not help their children in terms of study, they could at least take care of their children’s lives by guarding them in a safe environment and protecting them from negative influences of society. However, for Chow and Jing, being left-behind has exacerbated their disadvantages from migration and thus created additional difficulties for their integration into the urban society.

6.3 Barriers at school

6.3.1 Discrimination

According to a number of studies, migrant children are often discriminated against by teachers or classmates because they are from poor areas (Feng, 2007; Pang & Wang, 2010; Zuo, 2010). In this study, there was no obvious discrimination against migrant children from schools and teachers in Primary School A and Middle School A. Teachers said they treat all students in the same way. For example, it was observed that the seats of students were arranged in a random way regardless of their households, sex or examination grade. This seating arrangement was changed every two weeks. This means that each student could be seated in the front of the classroom, but would also take a seat in the back of the classroom at different time.

All migrant children indicated that teachers were nice and always encouraging. However, migrant children still experience discrimination from urban classmates, especially at the lower secondary level. As migrant children have different accents, dress styles and behaviours from those of urban children, they can easily be identified as 'rural people'. In Primary School A, a migrant boy, who always wears patched clothes, was called 'rural guy' by his classmates. Zhang, a migrant boy from Middle School A, who received his primary education in County X, said that his fellow pupils always bullied him when he was in primary school. Zhang once had a fight with a classmate and broke his arm. Zhang never told the truth to his parents, but just said that it was an accident. He explained that 'it was unnecessary to tell the truth to my parents. It was not a big deal and I thought they would not understand me. They may complicate things more'. When asked the reason for being bullied, Zhang explained that this might just be because he was transferred to the school and that his classmates might have thought that he was weak and could easily be made fun of.

At the lower secondary level, discrimination against migrant children is more obvious. All three migrant girls said that they felt discriminated against by some of the classmates. According to the migrant students, urban students who are from rich families do not like to be together with rural classmates. Meng talked about her experience in County X: 'in my class, some students look down on me. I once asked a

classmate to pass me a pen. She responded “why do I have to do that for you? Who do you think you are?” I really felt sad and uneasy because of this.’ Chow also felt that urban girls who dressed beautifully were proud and disliked her. The migrant girls said that this made them feel ‘upset’, ‘depressed’, ‘uncomfortable’ and ‘not wanting to stay here’.

Discrimination may damage migrant children’s self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as hinder their capacity to develop their potential and enhance their performance (Pang & Wang, 2010). It was found that the two migrant boys who displayed self-confidence in this study are the only ones with good grades among all the migrant children. Being excellent in their study may help children build up confidence and overcome the negative influence from discrimination in school.

Besides, it was found that migrant girls often associated self-confidence with their physical appearance and thus attached much importance to this. In the interviews, almost all migrant girls frequently mentioned words related to appearance, such as ‘clothes’, ‘dress up’ and ‘beauty’, whereas none of the migrant boys did. Most of the migrant girls also expressed a feeling of inferiority because they did not have money to buy beautiful clothes and dress up nicely. Teachers thought that girls’ attention to appearance would negatively influence their academic achievement in their study.

In Primary Class A, it was observed that a migrant girl named Fang was the only one who wore the school uniform every day. She was also the most introverted migrant girl and seldom communicated with classmates and teachers. As explained by the head teacher, girls do not find the school uniform nice and comfortable. Therefore most of them do not wear it unless it is required by the school. In most students’ eyes, only students from poor families wear the school uniform because they do not have other clothes. The dress-up style often indicates the economic situation of the students’ families and reinforces differences among students from different family backgrounds. Thus, migrant girls, who are from rural families, often encounter problems of discrimination and feeling of inferiority because of their rural dress style.

Their expectation about appearance may be attributed to a traditional Chinese view that ‘a man is assessed by his talent whereas a woman is judged by her appearance (langcai nvmao)’ (Liu, 2006a, p. 498). There is no rationale for this gendered

standard, yet people take it for granted.

6.3.2 Invisible Disadvantages

The teachers from the two schools said that they treat urban and migrant students in the same way. Schools have no affirmative policies or measures for migrant children because they do not want to indicate that migrant children are different from others or should be defined as a disadvantaged group. However, this can also be interpreted as the schools neglecting the migrant group, and the inequality and disadvantages that migrant children experience in school.

Firstly, schools and teachers do take positive measures to help migrant children cope with difficulties. When first joining the urban school, migrant children face various difficulties and need to adapt to a new study environment. Urban schools have stricter disciplines and more requirements. A teacher from Primary School A said that the most serious problem they encounter with migrant children is that they always violate school discipline. For example, some migrant children say dirty words, some do not obey the teachers' instruction and some may forget to finish their homework. Schools and teachers help migrant children to adapt to the new school environment and discipline when these problems emerge. 'Whoever violates the discipline, we treat them equally. When migrant children first came to our class, they had behaviours that were against school rules. We guide them in the right way, and tell them what they should do and what not, instead of criticizing them. Now, I think they have adapted to the new environment and developed well.'

However, the schools and teachers only help migrant children address difficulties after the issues emerge and become obvious. Schools and teachers are not aware that migrant children experience various invisible inequalities and disadvantages in school. The education migrant children received earlier in the rural area is of poor quality than the one their classmates received in the urban schools. Migrant children come to urban schools with a relatively poorer educational background and less developed potential. Schools only pay attention to how to improve migrant children's achievement in the examinations of some main subjects, such as science and mathematics, but neglect how to develop their practical skills and abilities in other fields, such as arts. Teachers said that almost all migrant children have no talents and

regarded it as their parents' obligation to cultivate their children's talents.

The schools organize a number of extra-curricular activities and encourage all children to take part in school activities. However, most of the activities, such as English speech, dance competition and painting contests, are only focused on elite students. In many cases, only those students who have received professional training in dancing, singing and painting have the opportunity to participate. Most of the migrant children have not developed their potential and talents in arts and thus cannot take part, meaning that schools fail to develop diverse and adaptable activities, and in fact exclude migrant children from participating in school activities.

6.4 Conclusion

Even though all migrant children can access urban schools regardless of their permanent residence, some additional restrictions have increased their difficulties in the registration for urban schools. Migrant children are usually referred to suburban schools of poor quality. The problem is partly rooted in the unequal development of educational quality among different schools, and partly in the asymmetrical power relations of the social structure.

Furthermore, family-related factors reflect a significant distinction between the urban and the rural groups. Economic deficiency is the reason why migrant families live in relatively remote districts, have poor living circumstance and few resources. This has a negative bearing on both the physical and intellectual development of migrant children and impacts their educational opportunities. Due to their lower educational accomplishments, migrant parents seemed helpless regarding their children's education. Influenced by traditional notions, migrant parents perceived the education of girls as being of less value than that of boys.

Besides, even though schools expressed that they want to treat migrant children in the same way as urban students, the education environment is not fully adapted to migrant children. Migrant children experience discrimination from urban students and some other invisible disadvantages. Girls are more sensitive and care more about people's opinions and attitudes. Migrant children's relatively poor educational background and lack in certain talents were not adequately compensated for.

Therefore, the inequalities in the backgrounds between the urban and the migrant children might be reinforced in schools and also exacerbated through discrimination from classmates.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

This study has examined the extent to which, in the context of implementing EFA policies, migrant children are integrated into the education system in urban China. The study particularly focuses on the migration at the district level. It has investigated the life and educational experiences of migrant children, the government and school reactions to the education of migrant children, as well as the family-related factors that influence the education of migrant children in the city. This has been done based on theoretical thinking on social exclusion and gender. The major findings understood within this framework appear in the following.

7.1 Importance of the Household Registration System

This study has shown that migrant children meet several difficulties in being integrated into the urban education system. On the one hand, urban education system has become somewhat inclusive for migrant children, especially in terms of migrant children's enrolment in urban public schools. On the other hand, migrant children have unhappy experiences in the process of integration because urban society continues to be partly exclusive and to discriminate against people from the rural areas.

The study has argued that there are two main difficulties concerning the education of migrant children. The first one is the gap between the limited educational resources and the growing number of school-age children in the city. The second one is rooted in the difference in educational quality among schools. Both difficulties are closely associated with the uneven allocation of social resources and the social status determined by the household registration system.

The household registration system leads to asymmetrical power relations between different classes and is the major institutional barrier for migrant children's integration into urban society. It creates the most significant distinction between the urban and the rural as far as economy, culture and politics are concerned. Even though

some affirmative policies contribute to the realization of migrant children's compulsory education, all are implemented on the basis of the household registration system. In other words, the policies lead to some regulation of the institution, but do not fundamentally change it. The household registration system combined with the decentralized educational institutions remain major barriers to educational equity of migrant children.

7.2 Economic and Social-Cultural Disadvantages

Understood within Kabeer's (2000) framework, migrant families in this study experience both economic and cultural forms of disadvantages in the city. The unequal relations between the urban and the rural areas, which are an effect of the household registration system, mean that rural migrant people have a lower social status and receive fewer social resources, including for education. As most migrant parents are poorly educated and less skilled, which is a result of the unequal distribution of the educational resources and opportunities between the urban and the rural areas, they mainly sell their cheap manual labour and they are more likely to become unemployed. The discrimination in the labour market further exacerbates their economic difficulties.

Migrant families also experience disadvantages stemming from the cultural-valuational dimension. Two factors have a particular bearing on migrant families:

The first one is the values in the urban areas. These values mean that rural people are being looked upon as being poor, dirty and uncivilized. This kind of discrimination has a negative effect on migrant children's life and education. It intensifies migrant children's consciousness that they are different from or even inferior to urban students. It seems that most migrant children has accepted the perspective that they are poorer and less talented than their urban classmates. Based on Kabeer's (2000) framework, the rural group is a 'given group' in social exclusion and its identity is not easily changed. Despite the fact that the urban group is not a totally closed group and that migrant children can transform into an urban identity under certain conditions, it is very difficult for migrant people to become an urban household. The fact that they do not have sufficient money to buy a house in the city and mobilize social relations

means that they have little chance of becoming an urban household.

The second cultural factor that affects migrant families and their children's education is the gendered relation between men and women. This study argues that Chinese traditional notions, such as 'men are born superior to women' (nanzun nvbei), still exist and form gendered relations in China, especially in rural areas. As the rural areas are less developed than the urban one in terms of economy and culture, rural people are more likely to be influenced by the traditional culture and most migrant families hold the traditional perspective that only a boy can maintain the family kinship and promote family development. Therefore, migrant parents have gender-specific expectations and strategies for the education of girls and boys. They regard investing in boys' education as beneficial for family development. In contrast, it is not considered necessary to invest in the education of girls because girls will be married and not be able to contribute to their maiden families. Migrant girls, in particular, experience the dual disadvantage of being both migrant and female in the process of integrating into urban society. Both economic deprivation and cultural discrimination reinforce one another and therefore exacerbate the difficulties of migrant girls in their education.

Besides, the study adds knowledge to the special group of migrant and left behind children, who often live in small cities and counties that are not well-researched areas. It is argued that because these children are both migrant and left behind they face additional disadvantages in the integration into the urban society related in particular to the lack of family support.

7.3 Role of Education

Migrant people's economic and cultural disadvantages are closely related to their lower educational accomplishments. Being poorly educated and less skilled may explain their marginalization in the economy, which again may cause them to not being able to change their situation. Despite the fact that the schools in this study have not paid adequate attention to some of the disadvantages in the background educational experiences of migrant children, the schools have created an equal schooling environment for migrant and urban students as well as for both girls and

boys. This has had a positive influence on the development of most of them.

Education can play a significant role in transforming the disadvantaged situation of migrant children and empowering them to participate in social and political life by equipping them with knowledge and skills. From the human rights viewpoint, as indicated by Tomasevski (2003), education is a fundamental human right and a large number of social problems, such as exclusion in the labour market and the marginalization in political representation, ‘cannot be solved unless the right to education is addressed as the key to unlock other human rights’ (p. 32).

To further assist migrant children to overcome their difficulties in education, as outlined in this thesis, the Chinese government could consider at least the following three areas for possible regulation of government policies. First and foremost, the household registration system should be reformed in order to mitigate the dual social-economic structure of rural and urban areas. Second, it is imperative to balance the educational development between different areas by allocating the educational resources more evenly. Lastly, it is important to promote women’s participation in politics, which might help to make women’s voices heard and protect women’s right and interests.

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Appendix 1: Educational Policies of the Local Government of County X, 2004-2007

Policy	Significance	Deficiency
<i>The Notice on Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker's Children</i> (2004)	<p>1) It defines the target group of 'migrant children'.</p> <p>2) It prescribes that the Administrative Department for Education in County X should take the responsibility for assigning migrant children to urban public schools.</p> <p>3) No extra fee for migrant children's enrolment should be charged.</p>	<p>1) It has no specific explanation of the kind of children who 'need to be taken' to County X and receive education there.</p> <p>2) It prescribes that migrant parents should provide four documents when registering their children in the urban public school.</p> <p>3) It stipulates that migrant children should be referred to the four designated schools of relatively poor quality in the suburban areas.</p>
<i>The Notice on Addressing the Relevant Problems on the Schooling of Landless and Jobless Rural Farmers' Children</i> (2005)	<p>1) It stipulates that urban public schools should not deny the enrolment of the landless and jobless rural farmers' children.</p> <p>2) It prescribes that schools should provide scholarships to the qualified children of the landless and jobless rural farmers.</p>	
<i>The Notice on</i>	1) It defines the target group of	1) It has no specific

<p><i>Addressing the Enrolment Problem in the Education of Rural Migrant Worker's Children</i> (2007)</p>	<p>‘migrant children’.</p> <p>2) It prescribes that the Administrative Department for Education in County X should take the responsibility for assigning migrant children to urban public schools.</p> <p>3) No extra fee for migrant children’s enrolment should be charged.</p> <p>4) Migrant children are no longer referred to the suburban schools, but instead ‘to the public primary or secondary schools in our County’.</p>	<p>explanation of the kind of children who ‘need to be taken’ to County X and receive education there.</p> <p>2) It prescribes that migrant parents should provide four documents when registering their children in the urban public school.</p>
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Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Could you please talk about the basic information about the migrant children in your class, the exact number? How many of them are girls? Where are they from and why did they move to this county?
2. What do you think are the reasons for migrant children joining your school?
3. As far as you know, what kinds of factors could be obstacles to migrant children getting into the urban public school? Could these factors be different for migrant girls and boys?
4. Could you please talk about the class performance of migrant students in your class? Is there a huge difference between urban students and migrant students? Are there any differences between migrant girls and boys?
5. What kinds of expectations do you have of the migrant students and of migrant girls and boys, compared to urban students?
6. Do you give migrant girls and boys special treatment? For what purpose?
7. Could you please talk about the learning achievement of migrant girls and boys compared to urban students?
8. Could you please talk about migrant children's participation in school activities? Have they showed any talents and potential in arts or other fields?
9. What is the relationship between the urban and the migrant students? What are the general attitudes of urban students towards the migrant students?
10. Could you please talk about the self-perception of migrant girls and boys? Are they self-confident?
11. Could you please tell me, among all the migrant children, who are regarded as outstanding students in your class, and who are regarded as being problematic? What are the reasons for this?

12. To what extent do you think migrant parents attach importance to their children's education? As far as you know, what are their strategies on their children's education? Are there any differences between migrant girls' parents and migrant boys' parents?
13. What are the main challenges confronted by migrant children through the whole education process compared with urban students,?
14. What kind of education policies do you think can help expand the educational opportunities or improve educational quality for migrant children? Could these policies have different impacts on migrant girls and boys' education?

Appendix 3: Interview Questions for Migrant Children

Life Experiences

1. What is your name? How old are you?
2. Where is your hometown? Where is your registered residence now?
3. How many people are there in your family? What do your parents do?
4. How many places have you lived in?
5. Which places do you like best? Why?
6. How long have you been in County X? Do you like it here?
7. Compared to your hometown, which one do you like more? Why?
8. What do you think about the people in your hometown and the people in County X?
9. How often do you go back to your hometown? What do you think about going back to your hometown and live there in the future?

Educational Experiences

1. How many schools have you studied at? Which one do you like best? Why?
2. Which school do you like more, urban school or the hometown school? Why?
3. Could you talk about the differences between your hometown school and the present school in County X?
4. Do you like to change schools?
5. What do you think about the environment of your present school?
6. How do you feel about the learning atmosphere in your class?
7. How do you think of the instruction of teachers?

8. How do you think of your relationship to teachers?
9. Could you please talk about your relationship with your classmates? What classmates do you find easy going?
10. Could you please talk about your good friends? How many? Who are they? Where are they from? Why do you become friendly and close?
11. What are your hobbies? Would you like to participate in school activities?
12. Are you self-confident? Why?
13. What do you usually do after school?
14. Could you please talk about the main difficulties you encountered in your study? Who can help you address these problems?
15. Do you think your parents pay attention to your study? In what ways do they support your study? Could they help you address the problem in your study?
16. Do you have goals for your study, or in your life? After finishing primary school, what will you do? Have you ever considered going back to the hometown to study again?

Appendix 4: Interview Questions for Migrant Parents

1. Could you please provide me with some basic information about your family and children?
2. Why did you move to this county? How many children do you have? How old are they? What do you do?
3. How frequently do you move your home?
4. How many times have your children changed her/his school? Why?
5. Are you satisfied with the economic condition of your family? Why?
6. Why did you select the present school in County X for your children?
7. What kind of difficulties did you have in getting your children into this school? How could you address them?
8. What do you think of the educational quality of this school and the quality of the teachers' instruction?
9. In what ways do you get information about the class performance and the examination achievement of your children in school? Are you satisfied with her/his learning achievement?
10. What do you think about your children's participation in the school activities? Do you want them to attend the talents-training class?
11. Are you familiar with your children's friends? Whom does he/she like to be with?
12. Could you please talk about your expectations for your children's education?
13. Could you please talk about the main difficulties you and your children have encountered related to their education? How do you help your children address the problems in their study?

14. Do you think that the government makes efforts to help you address the education problems you meet? Why?
15. How do you perceive the further education of your children? Have you ever considered sending them back to the hometown and study there?