

How has Hu-Wen regime addressed education of migrant children?

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Starting from the late 1970s, China's economic liberalization and reform led by Deng Xiaoping introduced a transition towards a capitalist market. At the same time, an increasing number of peasants moved from rural areas to highly developed metropolitan areas, catering to numerous job opportunities (Mou et al. 2011). The peasants with rural Hukou migrating from rural to urban areas are migrant workers but are employed in urban workplaces. Hukou is a sign that represents where individuals register their household, which can be categorized into rural Hukou and urban Hukou. Significantly, migrant workers have contributed enormously to boost rapid economic growth but they suffered from severe discrimination and marginalization because rural Hukou prevent them from receiving any benefits provided to urban dwellers.

Similarly, migrant children, the offspring of migrant workers, are facing a series of social barriers and problems compared to children living in urban areas. According to the All-China Women's Federation, the number of migrant children increased 41 percent from 2005 and reached 35.8 million in 2010 (China Labour Bulletin 2014).

Problems mainly fall into the category of institutional discrimination, tightly restricted access to education, and lack of access to social services or benefits. Among possible challenges faced by migrant children, limited schooling opportunity is the most pressing one due to the long-standing Hukou system and the decentralized

nature of Compulsory Education Law that particularly differentiates rural and urban children.

In response to the concern that migrant children will continuously follow the same road of discrimination and marginalization as their parents, leaders of Chinese Communist Party regime regards migrant children's educational as the pivotal issue since receiving education is a basic human right and all other rights could be realized based on education. Due to the roaring number of migrant children moving to cities, education of these migrant children has become the prominent challenge faced not only by migrant parents but also the whole educational system. Moving to Hu-Wen regime, with the aim of ameliorating education gaps between migrant children and local children, the central government has shifted from a predominately negative outlook to a more positive one.

During 2003 to 2013 period, even though several problems still left to be resolved in dealing with education of migrant children, top leaders under the Hu-Wen regime have made tremendous efforts intending to effectively improve education for migrant children via implementing a series of regulations and laws, which could be divided into three categories: namely increasing funding and access to urban education policy, equal opportunity policy and school support and social integration policy.

It has been witnessed that government led under Hu-Wen regime has made considerable efforts in gathering more financial resources to ameliorate migrant

children's education via implementing a series of policies. At the beginning of the Hu-wen regime, the 2003 Notice articulates three prominent sources of funding, which are municipal financial departments, partial of city education financial resources and donations from companies, organizations and individuals (Liu 2007). It is undeniable that the 2003 Notice serves as a vital role in paving the way of obtaining abundant financial resources for migrant children education.

According to the 2003 Notice, the Zhejiang provincial government designed to distribute the subsidies based on the extent of regional economic development. In other words, the most highly developed region receives 20 percent financial support, while the other 3 categories receive 30 percent, 50 percent, and 70 percent corresponding to descending level of economic development (Liu 2007). Hence, the method that Zhejiang province implemented the central government's policies, which strongly confirms the effectiveness of dealing with educational funding to promote funding for migrant children's education.

The good work on further addressing educational funding for migrant children continues during the Hu-Wen regime. In 2006 the Ministry of Education issued its Revision of Chinese compulsory education law. It is stated that local governments have responsibilities to provide funding (Regnia 2011). To further facilitate the law, a *Notice on improving work for the abolishment of tuition fees for children of compulsory age in cities* was issued in 2008. Taking effect in 2009, the brand-new notification enables migrant children to pay zero tuition fees (Regina 2011). Based on

those aforementioned laws, 151 schools were officially transformed to schools where only migrant children can attend, among which have the opportunity to receive 2000-5000RMB subsidies due to enrolling one more migrant child (Lan 2014). Besides subsidy for migrant schools, subsidy for migrant children reveals an increasing trend. In 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2012 four years, subsidy initially lay at zero and then rose to 2000RMB, and later to 4500RMB and finally reached 5000RMB (Chen and Feng 2013).

Diverting from the holistic view of funding progress achieved under the Hu-Wen regime to a single project, Sunshine Primary school, as a migrant school registered under Songjiang district in Shanghai, is well-funded by local government to burden 67% of the total cost, indicating migrant children are able to pay reasonable fees for decent education (Regina 2011). Hence, migrant children who attend SPS would be less worried about quitting school due to high cost. Based on policies or laws regarding with gathering financial resources to handling migrant children's education, the Hu-Wen regime has effectively handled educational concerns among migrant children.

In reality, not only funding, but also equal access to school is identified as one of the crucial components of the education of migrant children. To accommodate educational inequalities given by the previous law, several policies or laws formulated during the Hu-Wen regime, to a large extent, effectively satisfied migrant children's educational demands. Overall, the Hu-Wen regime has undergone a process in four

steps: “restricted access–differential treatment–equal treatment–legal support”. Basically, educational equality can be traced in the dominant aspect under the Hu-Wen regime, which is the equal access to schooling.

In 2003 at the beginning of Hu-wen regime, the State Council issued its *Notice on suggestions on further improving education for migrant children* intending to ensure that local governments must offer education to migrant children in their areas (Regnia 2011). The existence of this policy legally guarantees that migrant children own equal rights to pursuing education as their cohorts living in urban areas. Due to the implementation followed by guidelines from the central government, an increasing number of migrant children are provided opportunities to study in urban public schools according to the survey conducted by CNIER. Specifically, 1.9 million migrant children are distributed in 12 cities till 2007, which accounts for approximately one third of total children at the age of schooling (Hu 2012).

Later on June 29, 2006, Chinese Communist Party has revised Chapter 2, Article 12 of the Compulsory Education Law. The law explicitly elaborates, “Wherever school-age children whose parents or other legal guardians work or reside in places other than that of their residence registration and undergo compulsory education in their parents’ or legal guardians’ place of work or residence, the local people’s government shall provide such children with the conditions for obtaining equal compulsory education.” (jianwen and jiawei 2010). The newly revised law is considered as a powerful driving legal force in guaranteeing equal schooling and

further elevating educational equality to a new epoch.

Delving into depth to see how local government implements certain policies to promote equal education among migrant children. In 2008, establishing a “three-year action plan for the education of migrant children”, Shanghai government decided to open up public schools to migrant children to promote equal schooling opportunities. It has been witnessed that all migrant schools, located in Shanghai's central districts, were shut down and thus migrant students in these districts were transferred to public schools (Chen and Feng 2013). By so doing, migrant children were able to embrace more choices in terms of receiving education. Thus, various laws and policies under the Hu-Wen regime did give out effective improvements in terms of educational inequality.

When the Hu-Wen regime came to power, it witnessed a great deal of effective work targeting the backup development of migrant school in different aspects to further help migrant children better integrate into new urban environments. For instance, Premier Wen once went to a migrant school in 2003, during which he proposed a slogan, “Under the same blue sky, grow up and progress together” (Lan 2014). Obviously, Wen’s strong voice reflects the unswerving determination from the highest CCP leadership to enable migrant children to adjust to new environments without any distinguished treatments as children who have grown up in urban cities. In sum, though not as powerful as a law or policy, Wen’s words serve as a vital role in

preventing migrant children from marginalized, especially in terms of receiving education.

Later, In July 2010, Hu-Wen administration promulgated *National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2011)*, outlining China's eagerness to be equipped with labor forces that are highly competent to compete in the global market of the 21st century (Regina 2011). The outline established a basic goal of promoting education to be fully prepared for the rapid changes in today's world, showing the Hu-Wen regime's endless efforts on educational concerns. Overall the National Outline is considered as a long-term development goal to promote every aspect of educational issues.

Among all factors that may stimulate education in the long run, top leaders of Hu-Wen regime persist in supporting migrant school construction and development to boost the overall standard of migrant children education. Particularly, equipment in migrant schools is highly valued. It has been proved that remarkable improvement has been accomplished when comparing migrant schools in 2006 with the ones in 2001 (Dong 2009).

One typical case lies in SPS, a migrant school located in Shanghai. Even though SPS is a migrant school, interior facilities in classrooms include standard blackboard and lighting and ventilation in 40 square meters. In addition, a single teacher desk, a bookshelf, and uniform chairs and student desks are well organized as those in state schools (Regina 2011). This logistical support showed in SPS indicates a brighter

prospect of migrant children educational circumstances in Shanghai. Thus, the strong equipment support suggests the effective work done by the Hu-Wen regime.

In addition to supporting schools via offering equipment, the Hu-Wen regime decided to foster a more harmonious atmosphere with more migrant children getting involved into urban society. In 2003, specific provisions focusing on helping migrant children to feel more connected to urban environment are mentioned in the policy formulated by both the State Council and the Ministry of Education. Based on the guidelines, governments in local levels possess responsibilities to not only provide education opportunities for migrant children, but also make migrant children to be exposed to extra-curricular and social program for the sake of expanding their views towards the urban area, which would gradually cultivate a sense of belonging. Due to the existence of certain policies to boost social integration beyond resolving educational concerns, it could be anticipated that educational concerns are effectively managed under Hu-Wen administration.

Even though the central government led by the Hu-Wen regime has tried its best to effectively address migrant children's aspiration of receiving educations, a variety of problems are still deeply rooted within the migrant children education scheme, especially development of migrant schools. Firstly, practicing implementations of various policies and laws varies dramatically among different cities. Comparing with Shanghai, Tianjin and Fujian, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Dongguan governments tend to be not willing to invest considerable efforts dedicated to

ameliorating migrant children education (Regina 2011). Due to the differences on policy enforcement in local level, the Hu-Wen regime cannot fully guarantee certain policies or laws are well implemented to truly help migrant children satisfy their education demands. In addition, SPS's overall standard fails to represent the overall standard of all migrant schools since most migrant schools are still struggling with school facilities, curriculum and standard of teaching (Regina 2011)

From what has been discussed above, we may readily draw a conclusion that the Hu-Wen regime has effectively handled education of migrant children through its tenure of office via enacting a series of laws and policies. Both statistics and real cases justify the truth that migrant children education problems are turning to a more positive prospect. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that policies or laws could not immediately turn into reality since policy implementations take place gradually and incrementally requiring a long period of time. At this point, an optimistic attitude towards a bright future is cautiously appreciated according to tremendous progress that has been made in dealing with educational concerns among migrant children (Liang et al).

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