

Stratification of education for rural-urban migrant children: New trends of population control policy for China's super large-sized cities

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Abstract

This paper provides a contextualized interpretation of recent policy developments governing China's largest size cities and evaluates its impact upon the status of migrant children's education in China. By teasing out its ramifications for educational equity, this paper reveals previously neglected but integral facets of the recent population control policy pertaining to China's largest size cities. Our aim will be to show that this most recent policy has unwittingly brought many aspects of change to the character of migrant children's education without sufficient critical reflection. This new population control policy has gradually infiltrated the very institutional structures and contexts of geographic isolation which circumscribe the opportunities which migrant children require to gain access and equitable treatment. Constructive analysis and exposure of the newly created problems arising from the policy will be initiated to galvanise alternatives and more empathetic options for the development of a more efficacious pathway to future directions of policy reform. It is to be hoped that the information provided will serve to advance governmental and institutional understanding of the subtleties of inequity that have emerged from the current policy of Chinese urbanization, facets of which that have to date not been appropriately acknowledged.

Key words: internal migrant children; equity; policy; urban China

Introduction

Given China's rapid economic development and the social changes engendered, it is perhaps unsurprising that Chinese society has recently experienced a transformation of urbanization. In March 2014 the Chinese government released the “National New-type Urbanization Plan (2014-2020)”, and targeted 60 percent of its people for whom it is predicted will be living in urban cities by 2020 (National People’s Congress, 2014). In China, all the cities were organised into five categories based on population demographics, including Super Large-sized Cities (With a population in excess of 10 million persons); Extra Large-sized Cities (5-10 million); Large-sized Cities (1-5 million); Medium-sized Cities (0.5-1 million); and Small-sized Cities (below 500 thousand) (State Council, 2014).

Among the seven super large-sized cities (such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen), the rate of urbanization development has proved to be too rapid to adequately provide quality education, housing, and medical facilities for such a large number of urban residents. Given these circumstances, it was within the same year (July 2014) that the State Council issued another official document to “regulate migrant populations in the super large-sized city”. The goal of this policy decision was to maintain a balance in the process of developmental urbanisation amongst different population levels of cities, with the well-intentioned aim of ameliorating the problems of social inequalities which have arisen in the super large-sized cities. Below we took two examples of the population control policy among the super large-sized cities.

Chinese capital Beijing

In the Capital of Beijing, as early as 2004, the government has enacted “Overall developmental program of Beijing city (2004-2020)” which target the population within 18 million by 2020. However, to present, this targeted number has been greatly exceeded, with

21.7 million in 2016 already. Therefore, the increased rate has dropped sharply because of the strict control policy. In 2016, the local government issued a new policy titled, “Overall developmental program of Beijing city (2016-2035)”. It is designed to restrain the population of urban residents at 23 million by 2020, while in 2016 the figures had already reached 21.7 million (Beijing Municipal Government, 2016). Compared to the population increase of approximately 200 thousand people annually during the years, 2005 to 2015, the Beijing government's current policy of intensive population suppression has intensively diminished the number of people who are admitted. This measure of this population control has resulted in acute disparities in human equity. The intake of migrants has been severely restricted and only 24 thousand people were admitted in 2016, a decrease of ten times from what it was in previous years. Among rural-urban migrants, those people who were permitted to enter were allowed to do so by virtue of their very high Social-economic Status (SES) standing in the community (Lu & Zhou, 2013). Since only rural-urban migrants from the highest SES echelon are being admitted, it is clear that migrants of lower SES demographics are being deprived of the opportunities, especially quality education, to which the new migrants will have access.

Shanghai city

Shanghai city, being a “model of equity” and at the forefront of educational innovation and development in China has recently legislated the promulgation of population control (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The latest regulations referred to as the “Shanghai Urban Areas Design Plan (2016-2040)” is expected to monitor and stringently delimit its residential population at 25 million (24 million in 2016). Moreover, this circumscription of the population numbers has been calculated to remain stable without any further increase in the next two decades. Since the policy of

population control has been promulgated in the aforementioned cities, the issue of the particular ways in which the education of rural-urban migrant children is currently being determined has not played the role of national importance and concern that it should. According to the reformed policy in Shanghai for example, if rural-urban migrant children are to be accepted into the system of compulsory education in urban areas after 2014, it is of paramount importance to make explicit that their parents must have “legitimate, steady (long-term) residences” and “legitimate, steady jobs” (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2015). This means that for many migrant workers who are employed in temporary jobs, or have not paid urban social insurance, their children will inevitably become victims of inequity by being excluded from the privilege of urban education as before.

Our research goal

The impact of the foregoing policies has served to compromise the opportunities to which rural-urban migrant students were previously entitled. This being so, the disparities in equity and the problem therein engendered in urban school settings have aroused considerable attention. Recent studies discussing the policy and its implications for migrant children’s education have expressed concern that the migrant population is increasingly suffering from the affliction of social exclusion in urban China (Hu & West, 2015; Yiu, 2016). However, these articles have been focused predominantly on the premise of rural-urban migration across all the cities of China without acknowledging and incorporating problems of regional difference. Since 2014, the disparate policies of population control across cities in China have been somewhat arbitrary. This being the case, we shall argue in this present paper that an analysis of the new policy-perspective pertinent to the problems of migrant education in the super large-sized cities of China is of paramount importance. Once this dimension of the problem has been illuminated, our aim will be to fill this

hiatus and critically explore the emergent problems of inequity which haunt the latest population control policy now being implemented in super large-sized cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Our objective is to make transparent and explicit the covert issues of equity embedded in the policies relevant to super large-sized cities, with the aim of providing a sufficiently clear account of the philosophical issues to assist policy makers with a rationale for resolving them.

In this first section, we provide a brief review of the changes and features of policies relating to migrant children of super large-sized cities since the beginning of the rural-urban migration in the 1980s. Our objective here is to familiarise readers have a general background regarding the evolution of migrant policy and its ramifications affecting the educational opportunities for migrant children at different stages of their own development. The second section elucidates the changes and emergent problems associated with the latest population control policy on migrant children's education in super large-sized cities. The third section further discusses the influences of the policy on migrant children's education, and provides an account of implications potentially pertinent for governmental and institutional understanding of the marginalisation of equity that have arisen from the current policy of Chinese urbanization.

The changes and features of policies relating to migrant children

In this paper, we apply social exclusion theory to explain recent Chinese policy and its influences on migrant children's education. The concept of social exclusion figured prominently in the policy discourse of the Western world in the mid-1970s, with the aim of taking into account people unable to adjust to mainstream society. The following years the concept was frequently redefined and more groups were included such as migrant populations, school dropouts, and unemployed youths (Aasland & Flotten, 2001). The concept was later adopted by the European Union in the late 1980s as a key concept in producing social policy, as a response to the crisis of the welfare state over the

last decades in both official and development discourses.

Given the accumulation of past research in this area, we shall define and operationalize the concept of social exclusion as the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially expelled or ejected from full participation in the society within which they reside. It has been proffered that there are different levels of social exclusion that depend on the extent to which certain individuals are alienated from society by their own choice, or by groups, organisations, communities and institutions such as schools. There are social indicators of disenfranchisement, the degree of invited participation, and how the degree of participation in different arenas of the society should be considered in relation to each other (Aasland & Flotten, 2001; Cameron, 2006). The issue gained considerable leverage when the China Government recognized exclusion/inclusion as a policy issue of migrant populations (Wang, 2009). Historically, there exists a dualistic class system which has institutionally embedded a hiatus between rural and urban areas, thereby covertly dividing Chinese people into agricultural and non-agricultural groups. The system of household registration (Hukou) inhibits migrant people from obtaining equal resources in terms of welfare, employment, and public goods attainment, in comparison to urban residents (Wei & Hou, 2010). Over the decades (1980s-present) policies related to the education of Chinese migrant children have passed through different stages.

Stage 1: Social exclusion and policies related to migrant children's education

Since China's "Economic Reform and Open Policy" in the early 1980s, rural people have migrated to urban areas, thereby increasing the population of its major cities significantly. The earliest model for dealing with migrant children's education was initiated and mainly controlled by the Chinese household registration system (Hukou) (Chan & Zhang 1999). The exclusive education of migrant children has become a social issue predominantly because of the educational inequities embedded

in Hukou (Wang, 2009). Because of the formidable barriers imposed by the system, there was little internal migration to urban schools because most migrant students were confined and thus obliged to accept the available education in their own localities. Therefore, migrant children were deprived of the right to equal access to public schools in cities, and moreover, they were obliged to pay high extra fees to attend public schools, or turn to unlicensed, profit driven migrant-run schools (Goodburn, 2009).

In 2001, the State Council circulated an official notice of “Decision on the Development and Reform of Elementary Education”, and push local governments to provide school education for all children under their jurisdictions (State Council, 2001). This policy was based on the following two premises, colloquially known as the “Two Mainlines”: (1) the “education of migrant children is mainly the responsibility of the recipient city” and (2) “migrant children should be educated mainly in urban public schools”. This national directive urged every recipient city to take immediate action to deal with the issue of migrant children. Even so, there have been evidenced reports that children migrating from rural regions were excluded from urban public schools (Chen & Yang, 2010; Yang, Huang & Liu, 2014), and as a consequence, the majority of migrant students received education in the segregated migrant schools (Liu & Jacob, 2013; Wang & Holland, 2011).

Stage 2: Expanding educational inclusion for migrant children

In order to highlight the importance of overcoming disparity and inequality in education, super large-sized cities such as Shanghai responded to the “Two Mainlines” policy effectively. The government was ambitious and gave the impression that “Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education” were available and committed to making the changes required to accommodate migrant children appropriately in Shanghai's urban schools. This became known as the “golden era of migrant education”. Public schools were encouraged to expand their capacity to

enroll school-age migrant children in their neighborhoods.

Another crucial initiative entitled the “Three-Year Action Plan (2008-2010) for Compulsory Education of Migrant Children” was launched by the Shanghai government (Shanghai Ministry of Education, 2008). With the three year plan: (1) local public schools located in migrant communities were encouraged to expand their class sizes; (2) new primary and junior secondary schools were built; (3) reduced the documentary and financial requirements for migrant children to attend public schools (Shanghai Education Commission, 2008). It is reported that 150,000 new school places were provided for migrant children and the percentage of migrant children enrolled in public schools was increased by 30% (Zhang, 2013).

Except for the increase of public school admission, the government in super large-sized cities embarked on projects to reform migrant children’s schools and strived to improve the education quality for all migrant students. Shanghai is the first city in China to put forward such reform measures in China and also introduced a series of positive effects for migrant children’s education. Within the following three years: (1) 162 migrant schools have been reconstructed and managed by local government; (2) Improving teachers’ qualifications so that 80% of the staff has at least a diploma and above; (3) All of the migrant schools are aligned with the Shanghai curriculum, syllabus and assessment, all of which were implemented in public schools to strengthen classroom practice; (4) Effective programs were made to improve the educational quality of migrant schools, including facility provision, teachers’ professional development training, and community involvement (Shanghai Ministry of Education, 2010). These initiatives made salient contributions to the integrity of Shanghai's migrant education programs. The reform achievements not only include the expanding school admission rate, but also the students’ academic achievement levels, and a much improved level of social harmony between migrant and local people.

Shanghai set an admirable and persuasive example for other cities in China, and the “Shanghai Model” was highly revered as a benchmark for affording educational inclusion opportunities for migrant children. According to the official data by 2012, all migrant children were enrolled in free compulsory education in Shanghai, including 74.72% of the migrant children receiving compulsory education in Shanghai were enrolled in public schools and 25.28% attended government authorized migrant schools (Shanghai Ministry of Education, 2013). In other super large-sized cities such as Beijing (the capital), it was estimated that 70% of migrant children were enrolled in migrant schools by 2012 (Lai et al., 2014). These reform measures adopted since 2004 have continued to be implemented in super large-sized cities until the recent new policy of “Population Control” in 2014.

Stage 3: Population control policy in super large-sized cities: the demise of the ‘Golden Days’ of migrant education

With the development of urbanization in China, it was decided that the new national directive should legislate that the megacities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou need to implement population control. In Shanghai, a new credit-based residence system was piloted in 2013 (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2013), which is different from the Chinese traditional Hukou system. The system introduced a credit system which allowed migrant populations who have “legitimate steady (long-term) residences” and “legitimate steady jobs” the right to gain credits towards their applications for Shanghai Hukou and participation in compulsory education.

The new policy accelerates the differentiation inside the migrant population. According to the residence system and other related policies, there are three types. The first type identifies people who have a Shanghai Residence Permit; the second refers to those who apply for a residence permit and points; the third differentiates migrant workers who have no qualification for a residence

permit but are eligible for temporary registration. Migrant people have different rights of public service, based on the basis of the category type to which they belong (Wang & Holland, 2011). To gain these permits, a migrant person needs to document that they have paid urban social insurance, or paid taxes if their status is self-employed. By the end of August, 2014, about 1.07 million people applied for a Shanghai Resident Permit, and 4.56 million filed for temporary registration (Meng & Ma, 2015).

With the stricter “population control policies”, Shanghai has unwittingly raised the requirements for migrant eligibility in regard to their attending schools in the city. This has presumably been done to ease pressures on constrained education capacity. Under this new policy, migrant children need to collect six certificates to be able to gain basic credits (up to 100 points) since 2013, including parent(s)’ employment certificate, temporary residence permit that has been effective for at least one year, the child’s residence permit, vaccination certification, birth certificate, and a household register that proves the parenting relationships. Students are enrolled on the basis of the credits each of them secures; those who cannot submit the six documents are not offered a place. One district of Shanghai official data shows that since the new policy promulgated, there were 7,349 Primary Year 1 applications from migrant children in 2013. Among those who met the requirements, there were only 3,550 enrolled in public schools and 2,116 in authorized migrant schools. The remainder of more than one thousands migrant students was excluded from Shanghai's free compulsory urban education (Shanghai Education Office, 2013).

In contrast, the government of Beijing issued “Further reform of the household registration system” in 2016, and implement “Beijing residence permit” and “points-based hukou system”. For these migrants who achieved integral standards, they were required to apply for “Beijing residence permit” and continue their former rights and social welfare.

However, for those migrants who do not achieve integral standards, their children were not allowed to accept education in Beijing, either public or migrant schools. The “Beijing residence permit” required essential documents including: 1. legal license of the business corporation, 2. diploma, 3. housing certificate, 4. labour contract, 5. social security payment records, 6. individual income tax records, and 7. other supplementary documents. Based on “Beijing residence permit”, a migrant who apply for Beijing Hukou have to conform the “points-based hukou system”. The requirements include: 1. Beijing residence permit, 2. At least 7 years continuous social insurance record, and 3. No criminal record. According to Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau (2014), it is reported that in 2013, Beijing total residence is 21.5 million, including 13.1 million with Beijing Hukou, and 8.02 million migrant people without Hukou. Among these migrant people without Hukou, the percentage of them who pay the social insurance premiums was less than 20%. The remaining migrant people who have not paid the social insurance premiums would be deprived of the rights living in the city anymore. In addition, for a great number of migrant workers who are employed in temporary jobs, there is no possibility for them to secure a residency permit.

Although these higher requirements have with good intentions been instituted across the municipality of super large-sized cities to ease the increasing population pressure on schools, concerns have been expressed that the new policy may make it more difficult, if not impossible, for migrant children to get into urban public schools. It has also been argued that the new policy places additional uncertainty and stress on migrant families with particularly low SES (Lan, 2014). For a large proportion of migrant workers, these two compulsory requirements represent virtually impenetrable obstacles that their children have to overcome to get permission for entry to urban

schools.

Now that we have elucidated the way in which the evolution of migrant education has unfolded, it should be easier to understand and evaluate the impact of the recent population control policies surrounding the education of migrant children in super large-sized cities. In order to comprehend the complexities which have arisen from the current policy, this paper will focus on the context of super large-sized cities and more determinately investigate the influence of population control policies on migrant schools, teachers, and migrant families within a broader framework.

Influences on migrant children's education in super large-sized cities

Impact on the migrant schools in super large-sized cities

Official data in regard to the number of migrant children in some super large-sized cities were utilized to illustrate the changes before and after the population control policy issued. Figure 1 shows the statistics description of new students' enrolment in the city of Beijing and Shanghai in 2008-2016. The first stage is in 2008-2014 that the new students' enrolment was increased continuously before the policy of population control. This period is the time that both government reform migrant schools and set an open environment for migrant populations to reside in urban areas. In contrast, the second stage since the population control policy promulgated the number of new students enrolment decreased sharply. For example, in 2014, the number of primary school students in Shanghai were recorded at 181 thousand and dropped to 155 thousand in 2016.

Similarly in one of the districts where migrant children reside mostly, the number of new students' enrolment kept increase until the policy in 2014 that made a sharp decrease. Another group of the statistics also revealed that the number of migrant children at primary education level has diminished significantly since the population policy was first implemented. Compared to the

years before the policy, the number of migrant children increased. Since the 2014 policy, the number of migrant students had decreased significantly. Specifically, in 2014, the number of migrant students had reached a peak (14.7 thousand), and then decreased sharply to 12.7 thousand in 2015, and 10.8 thousand in 2016.

The decrease in migrant children's enrolment has created a situation in which migrant schools exist on the brink of extinction. For one thing, the attenuation in the numbers of migrant student enrolment in migrant schools has had the following consequences: (1) The size of the classes of migrant students has become very small (e.g. less than 10 students in one classroom); (2) some of the migrant schools have very few Year 1 and Year 2 students, and a few migrant schools do not even have any Year 1 and Year 2 students anymore; and (3) many minimally student-populated migrant schools have relinquished their rights of autonomy and have subsequently been merged into other migrant/public schools. The graph below captures the acute diminution of migrant student enrolments.

(Insert Figure 1 here)

In contrast to the statistics rendered above, we have in Figure 2 cited the official data reporting new migrant student enrolments in four non-super large-sized cities (Nanjing city, Suzhou city, Hangzhou city and Wuxi city). This graph clearly exhibits the increase in the number of new migrant students from 2011-2016 in these cities. In Figure 2, the city of Suzhou which is adjacent to the super large-sized city of Shanghai, showed that since 2014 the number of new student enrolments have increased sharply (about 2000 thousand) within the following two years. The findings indicate that student enrolment numbers drawn from non-super large-sized cities have not been influenced by the population control policy. Moreover, the population control policy in the

super large-sized cities has caused the excluded migrant children moving into the non-super large-sized cities of their geographical neighbors.

(Insert Figure 2 here)

The sharply dropped number of migrant students also brings the effect on teachers' number at migrant schools. For these large numbers of migrant teachers in super large-sized cities, it was necessary to make a decision concerning their future careers. For a majority of migrant school teachers, going back to one's rural hometown or other smaller cities was a preferred alternative. Limited by the Hukou system, the social welfare program for migrant school teachers is much lower, compared to those in public schools. Besides, most of the teachers cannot find employment in rural public schools, because they need to pass the entrance exam from their local education office. As a consequence, a number of teachers chose to leave super large-sized cities, and to return to their rural hometowns.

Still, others chose to stay in super large-sized cities, no matter what price they needed to pay. There are some young teachers who were preparing for postgraduate study. In order to continue to work at an urban school, further education qualifications such as obtaining a master degree is required. Some teachers are very ambitious to seek a better teaching job in the future.

Impact on migrant families in super large-sized cities

For migrant families who were not able to apply for "resident permit" to continue their children's rights studying at urban schools, different ways to advance with their children's education has been taken. One way of dealing with the problem is to send their children back to rural schools. This has been the primary choice, though they do not want to return to their rural hometown. Many migrant parents pay a great price to return to their rural hometown, in order that their children can continue their education. For these families, education is the power-source capable of improving

the future SES status of migrant children.

Some migrant families solve their children's education problems by transferring to a migrant school in another smaller city. Affected by the population control policy, the cities and towns nearby have opened new migrant schools to accommodate these children. Many small towns and cities around super large-sized cities have attracted thousands of migrant students, without imposing strict residential requirements. In this case, migrant parents can still work in the super large-sized city, while the migrant schools provide an opportunity for their children to continue their education. Still, some migrant families have not yet made decision. These children either wait to drop out or go back to rural schools.

For those who were qualified to continue study at urban schools, migrant families still worry about post-compulsory education, because few options are provided for them. Their choices are largely limited to either returning back to their hometown or enrolling in vocational schools. For migrant students in junior schools, there is a constant anxiety for them and their families regarding the problem of 'how to continue further education'. Most of the migrant students in junior middle schools have no motivation to study. When classmates left school one by one, they do not want to continue. If these children want to study in high school, they still need to return to their hometown, not unlike their classmates. Many of these children are just wasting time and just wait to drop out of school when they finish compulsory education (Ling, 2015). Meanwhile, it is also difficult for migrant students to continue further education after re-enrolling into a rural high school. After these students return back to their rural hometown for further education, it is very hard for them to turn to the new version textbooks, new teaching style, and different exam preparation materials.

Discussion of the influence of policy in China super large-sized cities

Despite the era of golden days' education, this paper has established that the recent policy of

“migrant population control” in the super large-sized cities has had a permanent deleterious impact on migrant schools and families. Compared to other cities, these influences in the super large-sized cities have made migrant populations devastated of children’s education opportunities than before. Having given an account of the educational evolution in super large-sized cities, and the “era of golden days in education” which evolved from it, it has now been established that the introduction of the migrant population control policy has brought about the demise of the golden days of migrant education. It is also incontestable that the presence of migrant schools in super large-sized cities currently faced extinction, given the implementation of the migrant population policy.

We have observed that super large-sized cities such as Shanghai has played a leading role in educational reform and has advanced a quality of pedagogic excellence in its innovative curriculum design and development in China. The introduction of the policy promotes, on the one hand, a legitimate and legal policy to monitor and regulate the level of migrant populations in urban schools of super large-sized cities. The “Resident Permit” system has done much to help provide better opportunities for migrant populations to reside in urban areas. Compared to the previously obscure conditions surrounding residency for migrant people, the restriction of migrants indicates a significant improvement by providing a clear path forward for a group of them in super large-sized cities. Migrant workers with stable jobs have been offered social welfare and insurance based on their points, and the population policy offers migrant people the same access to equal rights as enjoyed by urban people.

On the other hand, migrants who do not have a stable job have found themselves in the underclass without a fixed abode. Migrant families from this sector of the community do not possess sufficient interest points to secure a residence permit, making it extremely difficult or impossible for their children to have an equal opportunity to access urban education. The

requirements for migrant school admission are higher for most of the migrant groups, and therefore, a large number of migrant children are deprived of any access at all. To some degree, this homeless group has become recognized as a hidden danger to social stability in super large-sized cities. Meanwhile, they remain a vulnerable group, so what they need most is that the government and society show concerns for them, as the population control policy strictly excludes these migrant children from the urban education system (Yiu, 2016).

It is concluded that the evolution of migrant school development has been through the circle of what is known as the ‘develop-boom-decrease-extinct’ process in super large-sized cities. Migrant schools, which once used to play an integral role in the development of the urban educational system, have gradually lost their opportunity of continuing to provide an urban education for a vast number of migrant children in super large-sized cities. As the number of migrant students has thus decreased sharply, and the government has less educational resource input, this type of school will increasingly become an extinct institution. Meanwhile, the changing development process of migrant schools which used to happen in super large-sized cities now begins to play a role in China’s large-sized, medium-sized and small-sized cities. As these cities continue to expand urbanization and attract thousands of new rural-urban migrants, it is not surprising to see the construction projects of migrant schools which were supposed to meet the increasing admission needs for them.

With the exception of the group of migrant children whose parents meet the requirements in the super large-sized cities, the remainder of migrant children is excluded from accepting education in migrant schools. The impact on these migrant families, including migrant children, has often been that they choose to return to their rural schools. Other students endeavor to find a migrant school in a smaller city, or if they stay in the city, they often drop out of school. The conclusion of

our exploration indicates that in current super large-sized cities, for the low SES migrant population, it is the policy structures which function as the major impediments to mobility for upper SES. As witnessed in previous studies, migrant children's groups have found a different path for social assimilation across cities in China (Chen & Feng, 2013; Xiong, 2015). The central argument of this paper highlights the differences of the pathways available for social assimilation between super large-sized cities and the non-large-sized cities of China. The former group in super large-sized cities exhibits a disposition of absolute exclusion of rural-urban migrants in the future no matter what SES they possess; the later in relatively non-large-sized cities continue to dispose high SES migrants towards upward assimilation, and low SES towards downward assimilation.

Given the definition of social exclusion in this paper, our paper illustrated that population control policy in super large-sized cities of China have made migrant groups wholly excluded from full participation in the urban society within which they were used to live. Coleman (1975) suggests that what public education can do is to reduce the equalizing impact on the lives of disadvantaged children. In China, a central aspect of upward social mobility is transforming one's Hukou status from rural to urban and from smaller-size to larger-size cities. The transfer to urban Hukou status for migrant groups is difficult, and probably the most equitable channel is to get formal employment after receiving university-level or higher education (Xiong, 2015). However, the populations control policy in super large-sized cities have "closed the door" for those potentials. More deeply, the absolute exclusion of migrants might accelerate the inequity between geographic distribution with regard to economy, employment, education, welfare and other social benefits (Guo & Wang, 2015). It is apparently common to see the local urban people in super large-sized cities display their superiority over people in other areas across the nations; inevitably resulting in conflicts between different regions.

The incident of the 2007 Paris riots has reminded Chinese policy makers that youths who felt marginalized will endeavor to retaliate violently in an attempt to gain visibility in the public spheres (Yiu, 2016). With respect to migrant children, Chinese governmental policies should reproduce tangible strategies adopted by other countries, thus augmenting the Chinese sense of belonging and social inclusion within super large-sized cities where it is necessary and currently absent (Ye, 2016). Without knowing the people's preferences, policy-planner cannot determine whether the current spatial configuration of the cities is optimal (Fujishima, 2013). At this current phase of rapid urbanization¹, China government policies should lead market and industries to provide public services and protect the legal rights of migrant families. Even for those migrant families who were obliged to reside in super large-sized cities temporarily, opportunities for post-compulsory education were not available to migrant children because of their Hukou (rural type). Although the population control policy has been implemented, thereby making migrant populations seem to have more legitimate rights residing in super large-sized cities, it is incontestable that the channel providing these students to access equal rights of higher education as local urban children has not been opened. After nine years of compulsory education, the temporarily legitimate migrant students in in super large-sized cities are still required to return back to their rural schools where their Household residence was registered.

This being so, the further measures reforming policy for remaining migrants in super large-sized cities should be to accommodate these children by providing them with a continuing college education. Although the initial measure of higher education has been adopted by allowing migrant children to apply for vocational education after their (year 9) compulsory education, the belief that only bad students go to vocational schools shows that prejudice is still prevalent among migrant

¹ It is shown from scholars that Chinese population has to been through the phases of urbanization, rapid urbanization and de-urbanization, in accordance with the trend of population development (Meng & Ma, 2015).

groups (Ling, 2015). Therefore, current problems of education policies in super large-sized cities still deny migrants from the institutional closure of higher education opportunities, and indicate a reproduction of a social hierarchy in which migrant youth are expected to provide cheap labor for the manufacturing and low-skilled service industries.

Implications and limitations

This paper contributes to the extant knowledge and literatures by illustrating that the new policy has an adverse influence on migrant children's education in the super large-sized cities of China. The results of our paper critically explore the changes and emergent problems associated with the latest population control policy promulgated only in super large-sized cities, which exemplify a different context from other cities in China. Based on the findings of this paper, several recommendations are made for policy-makers, educators, and migrant families.

Firstly, since the superior resources were dominantly distributed in China super large-sized cities, the central government macro-control policy should balance the overall resources between different levels of regions and cities, promoting social inclusion. Secondly, many countries have super large populations cities (e.g. Tokyo have more than 36 million), and the number of migrants is increasing. These cities set a good example for the China government to learn how to establish a better fundamental public service (e.g. education) for all migrants in the super large-sized cities. For example, the transformation of governmental functions may be a necessary strategy to draw attention to a better reform of life-long public education to protect equitable education rights to migrants who have been included in the urban system. Thirdly, the teaching experiences of educators in migrant schools of super large-sized cities are very valuable to migrant schools in other cities. The experience includes communication with rural-urban migrant parents, and

understanding of migrant students' learning background and management of the classroom. This paper suggests that for those educators who have migrated to another smaller city, the local educational institutions may take advantage of these experiences by imparting knowledge for new teachers.

Last but not the least, we cannot deny the limitation of the paper. This paper provides a contextualized interpretation by merely reviewing literature sources and official reported data. Future research of evaluating the policy influence regarding the status of migrant children's education may require empirical study such as surveys or interviews of policymakers and other stakeholders (e.g., local urban students, parents and teachers). In addition, this paper focused on the differences between super large-sized cities and non-super large-sized cities. However, the policies guiding educational inclusion or values placed on migrants from non- super large-sized cities may differ across contexts. Future studies may extend the topic by comparing different levels of cities or regions across China.

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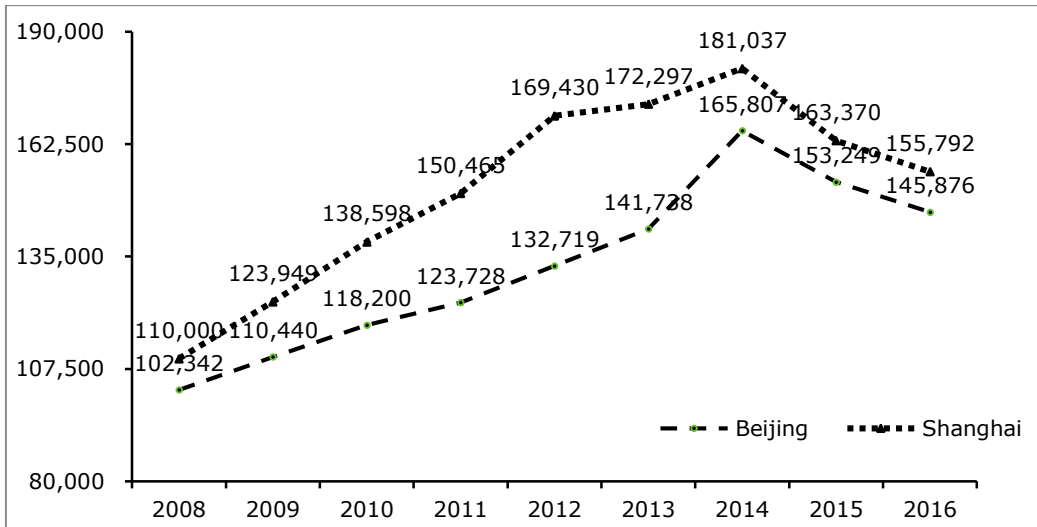


Fig.1 The statistics of new migrant students in super large-sized cities

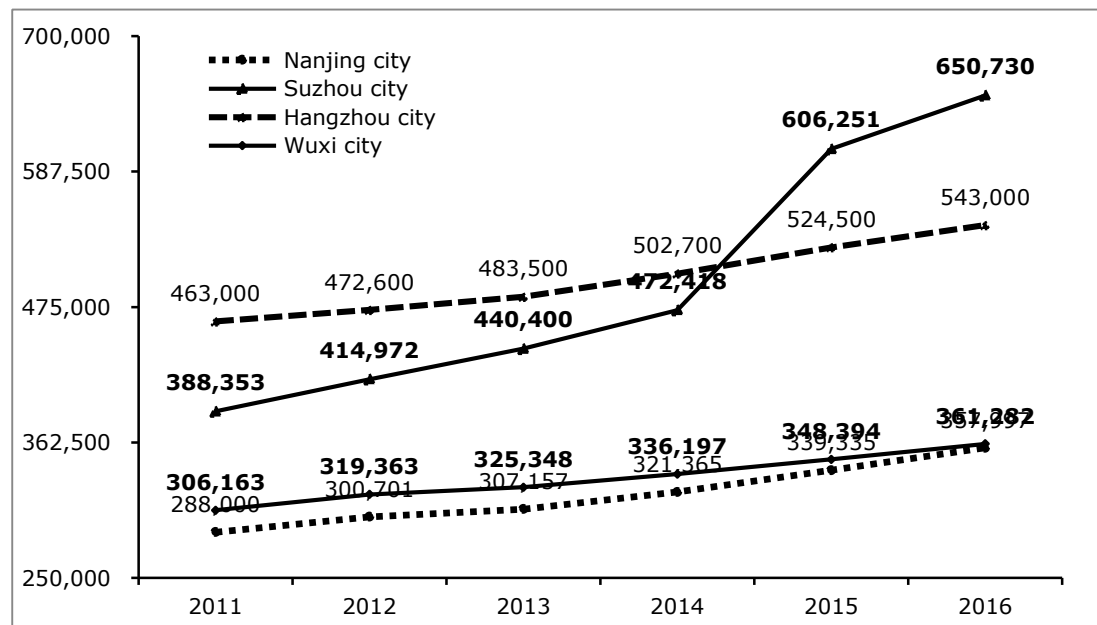


Fig.2 The statistics of new migrant students in non-super large-sized cities