

# *Do money and household registration determine a child's future?*

**Wanyu Chen**

*School of Soil and Water Conservation, Beijing Forestry University, Beijing, 100089, China*

*\*Corresponding author. Email: chenwanyu410@outlook.com*

**Abstract:** As a country with the largest population in the world, China has a large number of school-age children every year. The enrolment of these children deserves attention. Taking two typical areas of Beijing and Shenzhen as examples, this paper explores the internal causes and solutions of educational inequality by analyzing typical policies such as "high-priced school district housing" and "point admissions".

**Keywords:** urban policy, education, school direct, point admissions.

## **1. Introduction**

As primates, humans have an innate instinct to nurture their offspring. To enable future generations to continue or even surpass the current standard of living, people attach great importance to the development of education, regardless of rich or poor, race or nationality. Where there are people there is competition, and competition in education is no exception. With the development of education competition, the content of competition has shifted from the pure competition of academic performance to all aspects. Part of the competition is spontaneous, and the other part is invisible competition caused by unreasonable urban policies. This paper intends to explore the reasons for these competitions and their solutions by studying some urban policies in Beijing and Shenzhen.

## **2. Background**

The world is like a theater, when the front row stands up, the back row has to do the same. On Chinese social media recently, a new term "neijuan", which means "involution", has been hotly discussed. The Chinese are unwilling to admit defeat. As the nation that is best at examinations in the world, the Chinese have not only invented the examination system but also developed it continuously. The Chinese imperial examination system can be traced back to the Sui Dynasty, about 1,600 years ago. The Chinese have long believed that education is the most convenient way to change destiny. At present, China has popularized the nine-year compulsory education system and is trying to implement the 12-year compulsory education system. After every child can receive education, the equity of education is discussed again.

According to data from China's seventh census conducted in 2020, 63.89% of people in China live in cities. Such a large population data also represents a large number of school-aged children or teens living in cities. Beijing and Shenzhen, representing China's capital and fastest growing cities respectively, face serious educational problems. Beijing faces real estate flipping problems in

school districts, while Shenzhen faces a large number of school-age children who are not entitled to enrolment. Beijing brings together the top educational resources in China, as well as a large number of highly educated people. Shenzhen is the fastest growing city since China's reform and opening up, the influx of a large number of migrants has brought new problems to Shenzhen's education.

### 3. Beijing: Does the Title Deed Mean Everything?

On Chinese social media, Haidian mothers are a special group of beings. They refer to the group of women who live in the Haidian District, Beijing, whose physical and mental energy is devoted to the education of their children, and who pay all for their children. Most of these women have higher education, sufficient funds, and most importantly, own real estate in Haidian District. According to the 2014 New Oriental "China Basic Education White Paper" survey, the current pressure of middle school students in my country is widespread, and most of the middle school students can feel the pressure of learning, of which more than 50% of the students said that the pressure of learning is relatively high [1]. Combined with the status quo in recent years, the price of high-quality school district housing far exceeds the average price of the real estate market [2].

As the highest place of Chinese education, Haidian District brings together China's top universities such as Tsinghua University and Peking University. At the same time, Zhongguancun in Haidian District is also a gathering place for education and training institutions. Every day, a large number of students from different districts come to Zhongguancun for tutoring. The reason why parents are so fond of schools in the Haidian District is the high admission rate and top-notch teachers. The science class in the primary school attached to Renmin University is taught by academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, so many people can't get the chance to get in touch with the masters in their lifetime, but as long as you enter this primary school, you will succeed. In China's current educational reality, the hardware and technology of schools are not too far behind, mainly in the difference in software [3].

There are more than 250 primary and secondary schools in Haidian District, with 17 districts, and the intricate enrollment mechanism is dazzling. The admission method of primary schools in the Haidian District is a multi-school zoning-based proximity admission mechanism, that is to say, it is mainly divided according to geographical location. Even if the geographic location is basically the same, if your house is not on the list, your child cannot enroll. Therefore, the location of the house is very important, which also gave birth to the school district housing market. In 2021, the average price of houses near Zhongguancun No.3 primary school will reach 92,558 yuan per square meter or about \$13,703 per square meter. Undoubtedly, the inability of most parents to pay such high prices means that their children have no hope of attending these schools. The inequality in education is becoming more and more obvious.

The problem of housing in the school district is mainly due to the following reasons: 1) The mentality of parents hoping their children to be successful. Most of the parents living in the Haidian District have higher education and higher income. The superior conditions make them pay more attention to the cultivation of the next generation. Entering a top school seems to be the most efficient and convenient way. If just buying a house can give children a better future, many parents will choose to buy it even if they take a loan. 2) Real estate developers are fueling the flames. To benefit, some developers will choose to sign an agreement with the surrounding famous schools before the construction of the real estate and include their real estate in the school district by donating money and materials for the school, to increase the real estate price. 3) Unequal distribution of educational resources. A large number of high-quality educational resources are concentrated in one place, causing a large influx of people, and real estate is in short supply. To compete for educational resources, the problem is intensified [2].

#### 4. Shenzhen: Does the Point Mean Everything?

As the fastest developing city since China's reform and opening up, Shenzhen also has a huge floating population. According to the Shenzhen Bureau of Statistics, the permanent population of Shenzhen will reach 17.5601 million in 2020, of which the non-Shenzhen household-registered floating population will reach 12.4387 million, accounting for 70.8% of the floating population. Most of them are young and middle-aged people who have come to Shenzhen to work, along with a large number of school-age children and teenagers.

According to the "elite theory" of Italian sociologist Vifredo Pareto, there are elites in any group, and the group of migrant children is no exception [4]. Faced with this situation, the Shenzhen government adopted the policy of admission by points. Point-based admission is to arrange for migrants to enter their households and their children to enter public schools through points ranking. The points are composed of three parts: basic points, additional points, and deduction points. The basic sub-indicators include personal qualities, work experience, and living conditions. Additional sub-indicators include basic personal information, urgently needed talents, patent innovation, awards and honors, charity and public welfare, investment and taxation, family planning, health and epidemic prevention, registration management, and personal credit. The deduction indicators include "violation and crime" and "other violations of law", requiring mobile personnel to abide by the law and be honest and trustworthy. This policy also provides obstacles for Hong Kong and Macao students to study in Guangdong. From a macro perspective, the admission policy for Hong Kong and Macao students at various stages of education in Guangdong is gradually tightening [5].

In 2013, the admissions policy of Shenzhen public schools began to implement the point admission policy, and in 2018, private schools were also included in the unified management of the policy. Families applying for admission with points must have at least one year of social security, including endowment insurance. In the subsequent scoring, household registration and the presence or absence of real estate in Shenzhen are the main factors for improving the score. Household registration, ownership of school district housing, and years of renting in the school district are all important indicators. Therefore, to improve their points, some parents even choose to take the university entrance examination or postgraduate entrance examination to make themselves in line with the Shenzhen talent introduction policy, to improve their points and enable their children to enter the school smoothly.

Some commentators believe that this policy finally changes household registration determinism. Some netizens believe that citizens who own a house should be given priority admission qualifications more than those who have household registration because if you have a house, you will have a home, not if you have a household registration. In 2015, the income gap between urban and rural areas in China was 3.5 times [6]. Large income disparities also mean that urban students are more likely than rural students to enter high-quality school districts by relying on their parents to buy school district housing. However, this policy is not good for local citizens who do not have real estate. The proportion of houses in the points is too large, and the citizens without houses are simply inferior to those who have houses. Some parents think that the new policy is suspected of "disgusting the poor and loving the rich", which aggravates the high-quality Unequal distribution of educational resources.

Shenzhen is the city with the largest number of migrant children in China. According to the "Blue Book of Migrant Children in China (2019-2020)", in 2017, the number of migrant children in Shenzhen reached 872,900, and the proportion of students in the school was 69.55% continue to study. In Shenzhen's urban villages, many migrant children are limited by their family points in the early stages of their promotion and have to return to the place where their household registration is located to study in junior high school [7]. The parents of these children went to a foreign land in

Shenzhen when they were young, and gave birth and raised their children in Shenzhen. Being sent back to their hometown to study is also an unfamiliar place for the children. The education of children of migrant workers is characterized by older age at school, high proportion of private schools, high transfer rate, high dropout rate, high crime rate, poor academic performance, and low urban identity [8].

All of these reasons ultimately lead to unequal access to education for school-age children. The existence of school district housing is essentially a competition for the financial resources and educational level of the parents. The different qualities of parents determine that children are on different tracks from their peers from birth. The excessive concentration of educational resources also contributes to this trend in disguise.

There is an old saying in China called "Hanmen Guizi", which means that children from poorer families work harder and can single-handedly change the fate of their families. However, in recent years, comments on social media that "it is difficult for a poor family to produce a noble child" have become rampant, again due to the inequality of education. In the north of the first-tier cities such as Guangzhou, beyond the city, most of the time students in academic, compared with their peers for better conditions, they can only accept basic academic education, and comprehensive development such as sports, music is very weak, so much so that go to college or to work, after they came out of the elite education and peers have no comparability. Barriers between wealth thicker and thicker, as more wealth, the rich make their children can receive a better education to keep the wealth, the poor cannot send their children to school because of poverty and even, also can't effectively improve the next generation of quality culture level, the ultimate situation is the rich are getting richer, the poor getting poorer and poorer, class more and more obvious.

Eliminating educational inequality and giving every school-age child an equal education sounds like a fantasy. First of all, high-quality educational resources are very limited. China trains a large number of excellent teachers every year. However, many Chinese parents are "only based on achievement". Teachers can only be trusted by parents with excellent teaching results. Therefore, schools, where a few famous teachers belonged, became popular. The second is the limitation of Chinese education. For a long time, the Chinese believe in "knowledge changes destiny". Children from ordinary families can only change their destiny by studying hard, and parents can help them if they can provide them with better educational resources. Therefore, students focus on academic studies and ignore other employment methods such as vocational schools, resulting in increasingly fierce competition. The irrationality of policy making is also one of the reasons. The sky-high price of school district housing and points admissions are all attempts by the Chinese government in the process of exploration, but they all show obvious problems. The government should, according to the actual social situation, follow the principle that interests belong to students, strengthen market control, and create a fair and just learning atmosphere for students. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen infrastructure construction and personnel training to narrow the gap between schools.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper takes Beijing and Shenzhen as examples to study some problems in education policy. The main concern of this paper is the fairness of education. The educational problems in the two cities of Beijing and Shenzhen are also universal and typical. By studying these issues, we hope to have a deeper understanding of the issue of educational equity. At present, in order to solve these problems, Beijing is making active attempts. This year, Beijing announced the policy of "school quotas to schools", which refers to the practice of allocating high-quality high school enrollment indicators to junior high schools, and is also a measure to promote education fairness [9].

Education should be pure and altruistic, and money should not be used to buy tickets for quality education. Educational equity is the ballast stone of social equity and plays a fundamental and

overall role in advancing the process of social equity [10]. The problem of education fairness cannot be solved in a short time, it requires the joint efforts of the government and individuals. The development of China's education has a long way to go and there are still many problems, but the problems caused by human factors should not become an obstacle to the future development of students.

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