

# ***Exploring the Rationality of Chinese Migrant Education from the Perspective of Educational Equity***

**Xingyao Guo<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*College of Foreign Languages, North China University of Science and Technology, Tangshan, Hebei, 063210, China*

*a. caojiaxue@nucst.edn.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The theory of educational equity has become a hot topic of discussion in the education industry since its inception. As a focus of current education theory research and practical discussions in China, this paper will discuss whether migrant students, as a special subject, have received their idealized urban education in the process of population migration from rural to urban areas. In summarizing the current research showing the difficulties faced by immigrant students, the literature review method will be the main research method of this paper. By reviewing relevant articles on Chinese migration education, it is found that there are still many problems in this field, including difficulties in dealing with entrance threshold, balancing household registration policies, neglecting the cultural confidence among migrant students, and conflicts with agricultural development. With the aim of integrating the issues of migration education mentioned in existing literature, this paper hoping to provide a better way to understand the improvement of migration education.

**Keywords:** educational equity, migrant education, urban and rural education

## **1. Introduction**

In the past few decades, with the continuous development of urban economy, more and more rural populations have begun to migrate to urban areas. The increase in the number of households working in cities has led to an increase in the number of urban education recipients. These increased numbers include students who are accompanying children and also contain students who grew up in families affected by migration trends. But whether they passively come to the city or actively enter the city to learn, their ultimate result is to receive a certain level of urban education, which people call migration education. However, on the basis of spatial transfer, migration education has not truly achieved a good connection between urban and rural areas. The current economic level and practical experience have proven that the quality of urban education is higher than that of rural education in most of areas. It seems that students can have better development prospects in cities. But in fact, problems arise endlessly in migration education. In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on exploring the negative impact of migrant education. This includes but is not limited to the psychological problems of students, the shortage of urban education resources, and limitations on the development of rural agriculture. These problems are precisely caused by the imbalance in educational equity.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the current situation of migrant education in China from rural to urban areas, and provides corresponding solutions based on educational equity.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Previous Research in Educational Equity

The issue of equity is a necessary foundation for the stable development of a country and society. Educational equity is closely related to a country's economy, politics, and culture, and is a microcosm of a country's social problems. Education equity generally refers to the rational norms formed by the state in fully considering various factors in the allocation of educational resources. It is a product of modern civilized society and a reasonable demand of the majority of educator. How to balance educational equity in educational development is a prerequisite that various countries should fully consider. For many years, domestic and foreign scholars have been continuously discussing the issues of educational equity. *The Main Connotation and Social Significance of Educational Equity* of Shi Zhongying believes that educational equity is the equal enjoyment of public educational resources by everyone [1]. In educational activities, everyone receives equal educational treatment and has equal opportunities to achieve academic achievements and employment prospects. Hu Xinxin expressed that education fairness is conducive to promoting China's socialist economic construction, democratic political construction, and cultural construction, and is a major livelihood plan related to China's social stability and long-term development through *Analysis of the Main Connotation and Social Significance of Education Equity* [2]. According to the *Current Situation and Issues of Education Equity in China* of Cai, J, education is also an important means by which dominant groups in society pass on this domain to their children [3]. In addition, domestic and foreign researchers also pay great attention to analyzing the issues from the perspective of educational equity, including the implementation of China's college entrance examination system and scholarship policies. This paper will also continue to focus on analyzing and providing solutions to the problems that arise in China's education sector from the perspective of educational equity.

### 2.2. Previous Research in China's Education Migration

As China moves towards modernization, the development of urbanization intensifies. Population movement and migrant have also occurred in various regions. Chinese migrant can be broadly divided into pro-poor migrants, ecological migrants, education migrants, labour migrants, etc., and the various ways of migration also influence each other. As a hotspot of migration research, Chinese education migration refers broadly to learning from areas with lower levels of development to areas with higher levels of development. In China's rural-urban migrant education, most of migrant students are composed of children whose parents come to work in cities or composed by the immigrant democracy. They are mostly enrolled in urban learning for reasons of job mobilization and planning. As a special group in the city, they lack a place to study, their learning status, mental health is always the focus of education researchers.

There are still certain problems with educational migration. These issues, including the impact, are bidirectional. For most of migration destinations, people usually consider whether educational resources themselves have certain deficiencies. *The Debate between "Leaving Agriculture" and "Towards Agriculture" in Rural Education - Also on the Value Orientation of Rural Education* discuss about the current rural education itself [4]. *A Study on the Impact of Rural Students Studying in Cities on Urban and Rural Education* also expressed concerns about the negative impact of the current difficulties in rural education [5]. This paper has also conducted relevant discussions on whether educational resources and quality can be maintained during large-scale migration for

people who have moved in. In *Talking about the Phenomenon of Rural Students Entering Cities for Study*, Wang Xinyi focused on discussing the difficulties of rural students studying in cities and the obstacles of urban educational resources to migrant students [6].

In addition to paying attention to the place of migration and the place of departure, people have also conducted relevant research on the main body of migrants - families and students. J Wang and J Zhao summarized the relationship between migration education and left behind issues by investigating some immigrant families [7]. Li Chao, Wan Haiyuan, and Tian Zhilei jointly discussed that the process of immigration education actually includes the influence of children on parents [8].

However, there is currently a lack of research on the educational equity in the field of migrant education. Therefore, this paper will explore the education of Chinese migrants under the perspective of educational equity.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Reflection of Equity Issues in Migration Education

Rural students studying in cities is a result of the large gap in the development of compulsory education between urban and rural areas. As the gap further widens, the existing educational resources gradually cannot meet the growing demand for rural children to study in cities, which brings a series of problems that make rural children face many difficulties in studying in cities [6].

Therefore, the inevitable imbalance and incompatibility in the process of immigrant education also make us pay more attention to the current situation of rural immigrant students studying in cities. That is, whether they have access to the same educational resources as urban indigenous people after entering the city, whether they can quickly integrate into the new education system for learning, and even whether they can continue to learn in the city after a certain stage, especially in the compulsory education stage.

##### 3.1.1. Entrance Threshold Is a Hard Injury

Migrant workers in cities can be prevailing enter certain units for internships and work through interviews. But the arrangements for their children and these migrant students are very complex. Although the free compulsory education policy has already covered all the population in China's compulsory education stage, due to the characteristics of migrant workers themselves and the imperfect local compulsory education policies, there are many obstacles for their accompanying children (hereinafter referred to as accompanying children) to receive free compulsory education in public schools, which affects the realization of their right to education [9]. The schools for migrant students are roughly divided into two types: public schools and private schools. The proportion of private schools in the educational arrangements for accompanying children is higher. Most parents report that the conditions for public enrollment are complex and the standards are high.

Taking Beijing, which has the strictest admission standards in China, as an example, for school-age children and adolescents whose parents or other legal guardians need to receive compulsory education in registered residence because their parents or other legal guardians work or live in the city, their parents or other legal guardians shall hold their employment certificate for migrant workers in Beijing, residence certificate for actual residence in Beijing, household register of the whole family, Beijing residence certificate (or residence registration card within the validity period) and other relevant materials

In 2023, the Measures for the Implementation of School Enrollment in Wuyi, Jinhua, for Compulsory Education, announced that school-age children and adolescents with Wuyi registered residence, parents (or legal guardians) with real estate certificates in the county, who have

participated in Wuyi social insurance for 6 months, and who hold one of the four conditions of Wuyi County's public security organs and are in the valid period of residence permit, can apply for enrollment in minban schools [10]. From this, it can be seen that the application standards for minban enterprises are lower. Furthermore, as a common way for Chinese schools to exist, state schools have maintained a certain degree of stability in their admission requirements over the years and will not easily modify admission conditions.

On the contrary, minban schools and other forms of schools have relatively lower requirements for admission. Minban schools are not the mainstream form of education in China, and their high prices and low quality of teaching have caused widespread concern among most of migrant parents.

### **3.1.2. The Household Residence Policy Deviates from the Education Policy**

The household residence system is the basic public security system that can not completely eradicate the urban-rural dual structure in China [11]. After the abolition of the binary system in 2014, it was replaced by a resident household registration. But whether it is a local household registration still affects the admission criteria. One of the important sources of inequality in shared services. The biggest problem in terms of admission application, school study and graduation work are the Household residence system for migrant students. In addition to the just mentioned whether there is household residence or not will affect the type of school applied for, it will also affect the chain reaction. Regardless of a wide range of different factors, migrant youths ultimately find themselves in low-end, low-status, and typically badly paid jobs [12]. Today, with the proposal of compulsory education for all, people are receiving more opportunities for education, but they have not received fair educational resources.

In fact, China's nonlocal college entrance examination is also produced by the current registered residence system, which is not comprehensive enough. In the face of strict college entrance examination standards, students need to have residence permits, student registration and other conditions. However, most immigrant families do not meet all the requirements and therefore have to return to rural areas for exams. But once the overall educational resources of the receiving location are higher than those of the outflow location, the long-distance college entrance examination breaks the original educational fairness. What they have received in the city, for those who do not meet the conditions for entering a higher school after graduating from junior high school and eventually return to rural schools to study, and for college entrance examination, is also a manifestation of the imbalance between education policy and registered residence policy. Because of the registered residence system, most migrant families have to send their children to vocational schools and minban schools to study. But in fact, these schools do have certain limitations in helping students.

In other word, the household residence policy is not only influencing the study of migrant students, but also made Living like renting become difficult.

### **3.1.3. The Issue of Undermining Cultural Confidence**

During the process of migrant education, student will not only just accept the knowledge by education. Rural students are more sensitive to the great contrasts of the environment as they move to cities. Their psychology has a negative effect. There are many differences between rural children and urban students in terms of economic conditions, lifestyle and behavioral habits and some migrant children have a "sense of exclusion," "feeling of discrimination" and other psychological differences and pressures are also objective facts [13].

Educational essence in the migration process is for fairness, but there are still students who cannot reach the destination city due to objective conditions and receive education in the city. In

rural education aimed at narrowing the urban-rural gap, this not only creates inequality among some students, but also leads to the gradual loss of students' exclusion and dissatisfaction with the local living environment as rural education approaches urban education.

In fact, the loss of rural students through migration education has gradually exacerbated the shrinkage of rural education. The first problem caused by the "shrinkage" of schools is the lack of spiritual and cultural support for farmers, and the lack of proper cultural guidance in rural areas [5]. The loss of cultural confidence among ethnic students is due to the lack of genuine recognition of rural culture. Students from rural areas have insufficient understanding of their own cultural background and are gradually losing their direction under the huge impact of urban culture. Therefore, the development of rural and urban areas should also balance fairness and pay more attention to disadvantaged rural areas. Rural culture and education are not simply based on rural areas, but should be developed with style, characteristics, and genuine consideration for rural areas. The loss of cultural confidence is not only about unfair treatment or lack of reasonable protection for immigrant students. It is also a manifestation of left behind rural children gradually receiving urban rural education and becoming "urban citizens".

#### **3.1.4. Agricultural "Decline" Caused by Policy Imbalance**

With the development of modern civilized society, rural education, under the influence of urban education, also deviates from rural society and rural culture. Education, culture, and society are inherently integrated, and these three works together to promote rural construction [14]. In considering development of rural areas, China should also pay attention to the rural areas that were originally dominated by agricultural culture. Undoubtedly, the country has invested a large number of resources in promoting urbanization and agricultural modernization.

But in fact, in the continuous replacement of modern machines, it is also revolving another situation of rural labor loss. Whether from a macro or micro perspective, the theory of educational equity, is aimed at promoting education to more students and making it truly effective for them. However, from the perspective of educational equity, the feasibility of China's migration process remains to be discussed. The imbalanced policies in the process of migration education also harm the development of agriculture. Based on adhering to educational equity, the government even encourages rural children to go out of the mountains and fields to pursue more urbanized educational platforms and experience more urbanized educational resources. However, behind the continuous encouragement and support for studying in the city, a wave of "escaping the countryside" has begun to sweep through. The children of migrant workers who leave the countryside are the youngest and most flexible labor force lost in the village. Their loss leads to the awkward position of modern agricultural civilization in the village, as few people can truly grasp it. And even if the family did not go to the city for reception learning, it will end up working in the city instead of staying in the countryside.

#### **3.2. Improvement Aspects of Migration Education**

In the long process of education, China still has insufficient application in the theory of educational equity. In the discussion of migration education, in fact, what China lacks in migration education is a focus on fairness in migration education. This includes the imbalance between migration policies and other policies, as well as the imbalance of various elements within migration education. While attempting to solve problems in China, education equity should be given top priority to improve the flexible operation of various aspects in migration education.

### 3.2.1. Adhere to Fair Distribution of Education

Reasonable allocation of educational resources is a necessary link in coordinating urban and rural education and improving the unfairness of migrant education. Educational immigration arises from the huge gap between rural and urban education, so the first thing to be addressed is to narrow the educational gap between rural and urban areas. In this regard, the government does not simply enrich the teaching equipment in rural areas, but needs to truly care about the gap in teaching progress and teaching methods between local rural schools and cities. At the same time, adapting to local conditions without abandoning any opportunity to regain cultural confidence, so that rural students can truly receive the shining point of rural education.

### 3.2.2. Drawing on the Experience of Other Countries

Educational equilibrium can be found in James Coleman's concept of educational equilibrium. This theory is based on the integration of multiple racial groups in the United States, exploring the impact of factors such as family and social background on students. With the continued interconnection of the world economy and culture, how China absorbs and relies on coordinated urban and rural education policies from other countries can also provide more powerful help to change the current state of education of Chinese migrants.

Improving teacher treatment in educational Equity: Teachers, as the main body of educational dissemination, have important significance and play an important role in promoting the adjustment of educational fairness. The emergence of migrant education is also closely related to the availability of teachers, who have lower professionalism and are more difficult to receive training in rural areas. With the deepening development of educational equity, the government and the state have encouraged students and parents to enhance their confidence in rural education, which is not blindly transferable. Due to resource allocation issues, it is difficult to recruit teacher resources under the new policy. Therefore, addressing the livelihood and well-being of teachers is an important component of transforming rural education and mobile education.

In terms of improving teacher welfare, China can learn from Germany, which has done a relatively comprehensive job in teacher allocation. While improving the well-being of teachers, they are also given greater responsibility. They not only need to pay more attention to students' academic performance, but also to care about their mental health. As an important communication tool for migrant children in schools, teachers require continuous improvement in themselves to enjoy the continuously improving benefits in a reasonable manner.

Establishing free education system in educational equity: It cannot be denied that some families in immigrant education face certain economic hardships. To implement the concept of universal education and provide students studying in cities with educational resources that match their urban peers, the government and the state should provide financial support and assistance. Most countries adopt various forms of assistance measures for vulnerable groups to ensure the basic right of every school-age child to compulsory education. For example, France has solved the practical problems of children from impoverished families receiving compulsory education by establishing scholarships, start of school subsidies, transportation subsidies, free textbooks, lunch subsidies, etc. [15]. China is gradually approaching in the continuous education reform, such as the proposal and application of compulsory education, but its pertinence still needs to be continuously improved. Adhering to educational equity will not only providing more consideration and care for migrant families, but also further balancing the differences between rural education and urban education.

## 4. Conclusions

Behind the issue of migration education is the derailment between rural education and urban education. Whether migrant children or families can achieve social class advancement through spatial transfer is still a matter of concern and discussion. Consisting of safeguarding the education rights of migrant students is the blame of whole schools and society. The urban teachers need to devote themselves more wholeheartedly to teaching and pay attention to the physical and mental health development of immigrant students. Students, teachers, and schools are not independent individuals but interact with each other. Adhering to the principle of educational fairness can further narrow the gap between urban and rural campuses and educational levels; Adhering to educational fairness can enable teachers to play a greater role in education; Adhering to educational equity can make students have stronger guarantees for their future development. How to balance educational equity is also reflected in the analysis of migration issues in the review of this paper. Rural reform and progress are necessary, but preserving rural cultural characteristics is also kept perforce. Migration education is not a criticism or denial of rural education, but rather a reflection on rural education. The discussion on the development of educational equity focusing more on education of accompanying children, most of whom are restricted by urban rules. However, both student who born in the migrant families and students who actively seek urban education should not abandon rural culture and forget rural culture in the process of receiving urban education. China's migration education still needs a lot of improvement, and adhering to educational fairness is only the foundation. This paper also hoping that China's future education policies, including migration policies, will be in line with its national conditions and promote educational well-being while ensuring educational equity.

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