

# The fund input mechanism of compulsory education for migrant workers children in China: Guangzhou evidence

**Guoming Du**

*School of Humanities and Law, South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, 510642*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: 710177330@qq.com*

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## Abstract

The migrant workers have made great contributions to the developed cities, but their children have not fair compulsory education rights in China. Based on an analysis of compulsory education situation, problems and causes of the migrant workers children in Guangzhou the paper believes that it is the key to establish a fair fund allocation mechanism among the inflow governments. The outflow governments and the central government, and proposes three policy recommendations such as building education voucher system in the whole country, eliminating gradually the dual education system, establishing a diversified compulsory education system, and so on.

*Keywords:* migrant worker, school-age children, compulsory education, fund input mechanism

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## 1 Introduction

The migrant workers are adult staffs who leave their homeland in order to get more salary in cities, but cannot be permitted to do census register in their working cities. With the rapid economic and social development, the labor flow becomes more and more frequent in China. In 2009, the number of migrant workers has reached 230 million in different places. At the same time, it is difficult to go to school in the migrant cities for a large number of compulsory school-age children of migrant workers. As the fifth national census showed, their children under 18 years of migrant workers has accounted for 19.37% in all the migrants [1]. According to the Guangzhou Municipal management of floating population registration system statistics, the number of migrant children under 16 years is 1,071,000, in which that of migrant children of 0-7 years is 505,000, and that of migrant children of 7-16 years is about 566,000. By the end of 2011, the total number of migrant children to receive compulsory education is 53.58 million in Guangzhou, which accounts for 44.54% of all the migrant school-age children. Migrant workers have made great contributions to China's economic and social development, whose children should own fair education rights. "Whether education is fair" not only means Contemporary people's "Intra-generational equality", but also means "Intergenerational equity" [2]. To our knowledge, many scholars have launched a large number of theoretical studies on compulsory education of migrant children in China, but the data researches are poor. Based on data analysis of migrant children compulsory education in Guangzhou, the paper analyses the current fund input mechanism among all kind of governments, and proposes three policy recommendations.

## 2 Current fund input mechanism in Guangzhou

According to China Compulsory Education Law (1986), the local governments should build reasonably all kinds of

primary schools and junior high schools in order to make children or teenagers to go to the nearest schools. Since the beginning of the 1990s, a large number of school-age children with their parents have entered the economically developed coastal zone. China Floating Children Admission Interim Measures (1998) has changed the "nearest school" principle of Compulsory Education Law, and stipulates that the inflowing governments should be charged with compulsory education fund of the migrant workers children.

Guangzhou Municipal Government issued an "Opinions on Further Compulsory Education of Migrant Workers Children" (referred to as "Opinions") in 2010. The Opinions(2010) clearly stipulates that Guangzhou Municipal Government and subnational governments jointly take up the compulsory education responsibility of migrant workers children, and according to different developing situation, except for the financial responsibility of Guangzhou Municipal Government, the commitment proportion of every subnational governments were shown as: 80% ( Nansha District and Luogang District), 60% (Huadu District, Yuexiu District, Panyu District, Huangpu District and Liwan District), 40% (Baiyun District, Tianhe District, Haizhu District) and 20% (Conghua District).

## 3 Problems

### 3.1 HIGH FEES OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION OF THE MIGRANT WORKERS CHILDREN

Among 53.58 million migrant workers school-age children, only 21.90 million people, which is accounting for 40.87% of the total number, have chance to study in the public schools, while the other people have to select the private schools. The biggest difference between the public schools and the private schools is fee difference. The fees of the private school are far higher than that of the public schools. Take the private primary schools for example, in the center area, the lowest fee is 1180 RMB/semester, the highest is 2730 RMB/semester, an average is about 1,900

RMB/semester, and in the surrounding area, the lowest 700 RMB/semester, the highest is 3000 RMB/semester, an average is about 1,500 RMB/semester. However, the fees of the public primary schools is almost zero RMB generally. Therefore, many migrant workers children try to enter

public school through paying sponsorship fees. In Guangzhou, the sponsorship fees in more than 80% primary schools is about 50-60 thousand RMB, the highest has reached 160 thousand RMB (as shown in Table 1).

TABLE 1 The sponsorship fees of some Guangzhou public schools

Elementary School name	Sponsorship fees (1,000RMB)	Elementary School name	Sponsorship fees (1,000RMB)
ianheHS school	16	PanyuSQ Central Primary School	12
CTRoad Primary School	16	HaizhuX Elementary School	10
SM Primary	12	TF a small	8
DCRoad Primary School	8	SecondSY Primary	8
Fangcun KYW Primary	6-7	LXF Primary	8

### 3.2 DISABILITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO RECRUIT ALL MIGRANT WORKERS CHILDREN

In Guangzhou, there are 1,191 public Primary schools or public junior high schools at present. According to the standard of 500 students / school, these public schools can accommodate about 600,000 students at most. But actually, these public schools have received about 850,000 students including 634,800 native children and 219,000 migrant children. It is almost impossible for the public schools to accommodate more migrant children unless about 300 new Public schools are built. However, it means that Guangzhou Municipal Government must cost 3 billion to purchase 570 thousand square meters land for building 300 new Public schools, since it is considerably difficult to fulfill the object in future ten years on the basis of the current Guangzhou municipal finance status.

### 3.3 LOW QUALITY OF THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

There is a huge gap between the private schools and the public schools in Guangzhou due to different impacts of investors, policy, social conditions and other factors. More seriously, some private schools intentionally lower educational standards to get more revenue. In Guangzhou, the educational status of the private primary schools are far lower than that of the public primary schools in many aspects such as the school building area, the number of books, the proportion of senior teachers and so on. For example, the proportion of senior teachers of the public primary schools is 62.7%, while that of the private primary schools is only 15.2%. (as shown in Table 2). Otherwise, there is still a prominent problem of Guangzhou private schools: teacher’s instability. A lot of teachers of Guangzhou private schools are not willing to work in a private school for a long time because of low wage and social security level.

TABLE 2 Comparison between Guangzhou public primary schools and private primary schools in 2013

The total number (1035)	Classes	Studentnumber	Full-time teachers		School covers (square meters)	Building area (square meters )	Book number
			Total	Senior teachers			
Public school (874)	14772	617448	31497	19747	11685394	4941673	17648472
Private school(161)	5507	245411	10703	1629	2993013	1410940	3228237

### 3.4 HIGH DROPOUT RATE OF MIGRANT SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

A survey shows that the education proportion of the migrant children is lower than that of other children, the dropout rate of the migrant children is as high as 9.3% in 2009[3]. According to Guangzhou floating population registration system statistics, there are 566 thousand school-age children of migrant workers in different places, but only 536 thousand school-age children have registered, which means about 30 thousand school-age children have dropped out. In Haizhu District, the transferring and dropout rate of migrant school-age children is more than 10% in the recent years.

compulsory education right like other children just because they cannot do census register, even though they born in the cities [4]. The Article 12 of newly revised China Compulsory Education Law stipulates that the migrant workers children may receive compulsory education where their parents or other legal guardians work, and the local governments should be responsible for their compulsory education. However, the law article cannot really achieve since it is quite difficult for the local governments to provide entire compulsory education without adequate finance force. In addition, the migrant workers children must do college entrance examination where they own census registration, so they have to break off their study where their parents work and come back their census registration province before they will take college entrance examination.

## 4 Cause analysis

### 4.1 SEPARATION OF RESIDENCE RIGHT AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION RIGHT

Lots of migrant workers children cannot have the equal

### 4.2 LACK OF FINANCIAL INPUT

On the basis of the classification financial management system in China, the compulsory education budget of local

government is formulated in accordance with the number of census registration population, which means that the compulsory education budget of the local governments does not include migrant population. Moreover, one part of taxes of the local governments should be handed in the central government according to their developing status, namely the more developed local government should contribute more taxes generally. Therefore, it is not surprising for the developed local governments not to afford entire compulsory education fees though they must be in charge of the responsibility according to the law. In contrast, the outflow governments and the central government do not undertake any responsibility for it. All in all, the unreasonable classification financial management system and the unfair law lead to lack of financial input of migrant compulsory education.

#### 4.3 NOT ENOUGH SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The emergence of the private schools is an inevitable result of China's social development. With the development of economy and society and the increasing of migrant workers, the original compulsory education system cannot adapt to this social change, and the private schools came into being. The private schools have been a main force to solve the problem of compulsory education of the migrant workers children, have played an important "complement" function, and have undertaken the responsibility that the local governments should bear the compulsory education responsibility to a certain extent. Although the private schools have played an important role on migrant children compulsory education, they are confronted with lots of difficulties such as faculty, facilities, education quality, school management and so on because of lack fund input of the local governments.

### 5 Discussion

#### 5.1 MAIN RESPONSIBILITY

Fairness is one of the basic requirements of compulsory education. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) made the definition of fair education: "The fair Education has two meanings. The first meaning of fairness is to ensure that everyone should acquire education level according to his ability regardless of his gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity and other personal and social factors. The second meaning is inclusion, which means that everyone can get the basic and minimum standard education. For example, everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic" [5]. This means that the educational equity is necessary to achieve the "individualized", and is to ensure that everyone can acquire a minimum standard education. The migrant workers is an important population part, and has made great contributions to China's economic and social development, so their children should have equal education rights. The article 2 of Compulsory Education Law clearly stipulates: "The country implements nine-year compulsory education system. The compulsory education is uniform implementation for all national school-age children, which must take part in compulsory education. The country

must guarantee the public welfare. The compulsory education means not charge tuition and fees. The country shall establish compulsory education funds safeguard mechanism to ensure the implementation of compulsory education system." Therefore, the main responsibility for compulsory education funding should belong to the governments.

#### 5.2 ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Undoubtedly, the government is the main for compulsory education funding, but how to divide the responsibility of the central government, the inflowing government and the outflowing government? For this aspect, there are different academic views: Wang Di considered the inflowing government should be responsible for funds of compulsory education of the migrant workers children. The inflowing government should formulate the compulsory education budget in accordance with the number of all the local school-age children, not only census registration school-age children [6]. Xiang Jiquan considered that since the migrant workers children with their parents may change their living residence nationally, not necessarily live in one city, the central government should bear the responsibility [7]. Li Ying advocated that the inflowing government and the outflowing government should set up a joint working mechanism to help the migrant workers children [8]. That is, the inflowing government and the outflowing government together provide fund to build migrant workers children schools, and the outflow government accounting for the most proportion of the investment. Lin Qun and Xia Yan proposed that the education voucher system should be implemented, the migrant workers families, the inflowing government and the outflowing government jointly bear the compulsory education cost of migrant workers children [9].

### 6 Conclusion

#### 6.1 FAIR BURDEN MECHANISM FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

Firstly, according to the legal nature of China Compulsory Education Law, the central government, the inflow governments and the outflow governments should burden the responsibility of compulsory education of migrant workers children instead of the migrant workers families. Secondly, compared to the outflow governments, the inflowing governments should bear the primary responsibility since the migrant workers work and pay taxes in the inflow cities, while the outflow governments should burden the minor responsibility for saving education budget of migrant workers children, and they should also subsidize the migrant workers school-age children. Thirdly, the central government should bear the dual responsibility of fund input and co-ordination. On the one hand, China implements a tax-sharing financial system which means that the central government gets most of the tax revenue, so the central government should burden part of compulsory education funding. On the other hand, the central government should coordinate the fund allocation of compulsory education of the migrant workers children among the central government, the inflow governments and

the outflow governments fairly and reasonably. In short, it is the key to build a fair burden mechanism among the central government, the inflow governments and the outflow governments for resolving the current problems.

## 6.2 NATIONAL CO-ORDINATION EDUCATIONAL VOUCHER SYSTEM

The education voucher system means that the local governments funding for compulsory education is allotted to every family in accordance with the number of school-age children who have done census registration, and each fund is proved in the form of education voucher. Based on the education vouchers, the school-age children may select studying schools (public schools or private schools) and studying places (their homeland or any other place). At the same time, either the public schools or the private schools can apply fund for the local governments on the basis of their getting education vouchers. As a complement to the existing education system, the education voucher system corrects discrete problem between education fund budget and school-age children who have done census registration but left, make the inflow governments and the outflow governments to jointly burden the responsibility of compulsory education of migrant workers children. However, the education voucher system should be based on the fair and reasonable compulsory education fund allocation mechanism under the national co-ordination of the central government. Only when a fair burden mechanism of compulsory education of the migrant workers children among the central government, the inflow governments and the outflow governments is built can the education voucher system be really implemented. If there is an unfair and unreasonable interest's allocation among the central government, the inflow governments and the outflow governments, the education voucher system should not achieve the desired goal.

## 6.3 GRADUAL ELIMINATION OF URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

To completely solve the problem of compulsory education of migrant workers children and realize the national equal education right, the governments should reform the household registration system, eliminate identity

differences in school enrollment and break barriers between urban and rural education [10]. To reform of the household registration system is not to immediately and completely eliminate the system, but to gradually weaken or even eliminate the welfare function of the system such as education, employment, health care, social security and so on. It is the fundamental way to completely elimination of urban and rural education system for solving the problem of compulsory education of migrant workers children [11]. It is impossible to thoroughly reform the household registration system depend on one city change, but on the co-ordination arrangements under the central government. The central governments should reform the main function of the household registration system as registration and statistics for safeguard the citizen rights and improve government management efficiency. Namely, the main function of household registration is mainly to help the governments to gain the census statistics information and to provide better public services, not to distinguish rights of different categories of citizens.

## 6.4 BUILDING A DIVERSIFIED COMPULSORY EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is the best way to establish a diversified compulsory education system—"the public schools are major and the private schools are minor" for solving compulsory education problems of migrant workers Children [12]. China's compulsory education must keep up with the economic and social development. Firstly, the education fund budget including urban and rural areas should be formulated for making rational allocation of urban and rural schools; secondly, the developed cities' compulsory education system should be reconfigured where more migrant workers work and live, and reasonably increase the fund of compulsory education of the migrant workers Children. Thirdly, the governments should vigorously support the development of the private schools, and improve the management of the private schools [13].

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**Author**



**Guoming Du, 1972.02, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, P.R. China.**

**Current position, grades:** University teacher, doctor, the professor of School of Humanities and Law, South China Agricultural University, China.

**University studies:** PhD in Economics and Management from South China Agricultural University in China.

**Scientific interest:** economics and management.

**Publications:** more than 40 papers.

**Experience:** teaching experience of 10 years, 20 scientific research projects.