

**The Implementation of China's New-Type Urbanisation Plan to Reduce Educational Inequality of Migrant Children in Changsha**

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**Abstract**

The difficulties of rural migrant children of gaining access to education in cities have attracted extensive attention in China. Educational laws and policies in China have tied children’s school enrolment with their residence, specifying that the possession of accommodation in certain areas is required when applying to schools in respective districts (The Standing Committee of the Sixth National People’s Congress 1986). Thus the housing situation of migrant families has been connected with the educational problems experienced by rural migrant children. Under such circumstances, the central government of China has taken actions accordingly, in order to address this education inequality in urban China. The central government believes that through an integration-oriented Urbanisation Plan, including related policies/reforms in the *hukou* system and educational policies, this problem will be relieved, if not resolved completely (Central Government Portal 2014). The whole programme and related policies have been proposed and come into effect in 2014, with a planned duration of six years (Central Government Portal 2014). Yet the existing literature provides little understanding on how this programme has been implemented in practice, and to what extent the education problems of rural migrant children have been relieved through this integration-oriented Urbanisation Plan. The absence of data relating to gaps between the policy goals and policy results of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms of reducing educational inequality perceived by migrant children in China may reflect a lag between the policy formation and policy implementation. This research attempts to provide an understanding of the policy process of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan from 2014-2020* (Central Government Portal 2014). on local level in urban China.

**A note on translation, names, and currency exchange rates**

All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted. Chinese names appear in Engligsh form, with surname after given name. At the time of this study, one Great Britain Pound was worth around 8.5 Chinese yuan (RMB).

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**List of abbreviations and acronyms**

**CCP** Chinese Communist Party

**CPPCC** Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

**GMLE** Guidelines of the National Program for Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development

**NDRC** National Development and Reform Commission

**NPC** National People’s Congress

**NTUP** New-Type Urbanisation Plan

**RGAMP** Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population

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# **CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

During the past three decades, more than 200 million *rural migrant workers (nonminggong)* have migrated to cities for a living (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2012). This large-scale, persistent, internal migration phenomenon is one of the drivers of China’s economic growth. It is also a representative manifestation of the urbanisation process in this country (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2012). However, rural migrant workers have found that settling down and assimilating in the cities can be very challenging for them (Zhu 2007). Among all the social problems that have been brought about by the internal migration in China, the difficulties such workers have encountered in their integration process, and the problems concerning the education of their children are becoming increasingly noticeable (Luo 2005). Problems of education, such as the difficulty of enrolling into public schools experienced by rural migrant children in urban China, have undermined migrant workers’ chances of integration, especially for those who expect to settle down in cities with their children and families. The education problems of migrant children have been perceived as a justice issue by researchers including Han (2004), Buchmann and Hannum (2001), Kwong (2004), Zhou (2006) and Goodburn (2009).

Facing widespread educational inequality among the children of migrant workers, China’s central government launched a national policy in 2014, *New-Type Urbanisation Plan from 2014 to 2020* (*NTUP* will be used as an abbreviation for this policy in later sections)*.* It aims to help rural migrants integrate into cities by implementing a series of policies and reforms in different areas in China (Central Government Portal 2014). This research is designed to study the implementation of *NTUP* in the domain of education. It adopts an interpretivist strategy, drawing on semi-structured interviews, direct observations and reviews of documentation and archival records. It aims to contribute to the literature on policy implementation studies by studying the implementation process in a Chinese urban context. This research examines the gaps between the policy goals and the policy results of *NTUP* in terms of reducing educational inequality perceived by migrant children in urban China.

## **1.2 Research Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions**

This research aims to examine the gaps between the policy goals and policy outcomes of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms of reducing the educational inequality perceived by migrant children in urban China.Adopting a grounded theory method by comparing the policy process at the national, level, and local levels in a Chinese city, the research aim is addressed through analysis of five key aspects of the policy process: policy environment, policy networks, policy instruments, policy discourse and policy implementation.

The rationale for the study can be represented by the four main objectives of my research:

1. To discuss the social discourse for the issue of education and educational inequality in China.
2. To describe and explain the implementation trajectory of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan.*
3. To identify and understand where the gaps between the policy intention and actual policy outcomes come from.
4. To contribute to the literature on policy implementation by studying the implementation process in an authoritarian setting.

The core research question is to what extent does the *NTUP* policy relieve the educational inequality experienced by migrant children in urban China? To achieve the above-mentioned objectives and answer the core research question, the sub-research questions are listed as follows:

1. What conflicting goals exist in the process of interpreting and implementing policy by different actors involved at multiple scales of government and in the private sector?
2. How do different organisations and actors in different sectors and different scales of government act in interdependence with each other in the policy networks?
3. What outcomes have resulted from the implementation of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms of improving access to compulsory education for migrant children?

These three sub-research questions are interrelated. The first question is raised to understand the problem of educational inequality faced by migrant children, the position of different sectors, and the logic behind their actions. It provides a foundation for the second research question by explaining the motivation of the different actors. The second research question examines the specific strategies and actions taken by various actors. Looking at them within a dynamic and interrelated relationship enables us to grasp a bigger picture of policy formulation on different levels. The third research question assesses the implementation practices on the ground in a case-study city to compare with the original intention of policies and the situation of educational inequality.

## **1.3 Background Concepts and Problem Statement**

### 1.3.1 Who are Migrant Workers and Migrant Children?

As stated in the *Annual Survey of Migrant Workers* (2015)conducted by the *National Bureau of Statistics,* the number of rural migrant workers in China has climbed to 274 million in 2014. But who are they? Rural migrant workers can be defined and summarized from different dimensions. In a formal way, rural migrant workers are simply defined as labourers who have a rural household registration (*hukou*) but are employed in an urban workforce. They work and/or reside in towns, yet because of the household registration system's inflexibility, they stay classified as rural migrants (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2015). The 2000 census offered an image of migrant workers representing some of their prevalent features: generally young people with a higher educational level compared with others from their location of origin; normally employed in factories or other service industries; they work longer hours but receive reduced wages compared to local urban employees, yet earn a higher income than their fellow labourers in their hometown (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2001).

The migrant population is described as a “marginalised group” in cities in China (Wong, Li & Song, 2005, p.33). This is because when they are extensively required for economic development in most major cities in China, but do not enjoy equal rights as urban residents. For example, they enjoy little protection in the labour market; they live in houses in poor condition; and their children cannot access public education systems easily in cities (Li 2002). As a disadvantaged group in China’s urban society, the way that the migrant population has been treated with regards to education and the residence issue has shown the existence of injustice in both policies and practices.

### 1.3.2 Social Debate about the Education Problem

The emergence of large numbers of migrant children has resulted in serious problems and challenges for various levels of the educational administration in China’s government (Liang and Chen 2007). According to a report made by the All-China Women’s Federation (2005), there were at least 35.81 million *rural migrant children (liudongertong)* accompanying their parents (migrant workers) coming to cities, but entering education within those cities remains an intractable problem for most of them. As a result, in 2010, nearly 61 million children have been left at home in rural areas, separated from their parents who work in cities, becoming *leftover children* (The All-China Women’s Federation 2013). ‘Leftover children’ are defined as children under 18 years old who cannot follow their parents working in cities and far from home, and are left at home, educated and taken care of by substitute guardians or themselves (Liu 2008). The education problem of rural migrant children has henceforth become a pressing issue attracting extensive attention from the public and the Chinese government.

### 1.3.3 Political Debate about the Problem

Since the education of migrant children became a social problem in the 1980s, it received a series of public responses. The central government has started working on the formation of laws to guarantee the educational rights of migrant children and improving educational equality in China. The state promulgated a series of policies, regulations and laws to address this education problem, including *Temporary Measures for Floating Children or Adolescents in Schooling* (General Office of the State Council 1998), *The Decision on the Foundation Education Reform and Development of State Council* (General Office of the State Council 2001), *The Suggestions on Further Work on Education of Migrant Children* (General Office of the State Council 2003b), *The Notification of the State Council on Deepening the Reform of Rural Compulsory Education Funds Safeguard Mechanism* (General Office of the State Council 2005). In 2006, the National People’s Congress even passed a new version of *The Compulsory-Education Law* in 2006 (Zhou & Ma 2015).

From the point of view of the state and politicians operating in government in China, the issue of migrant children’s education is not only a social issue that ties in with numerous families and people, but also a political issue that connected with national development and social harmony (Zhou & Ma 2015). After 2006, the state has made ‘educational equality’ a fundamental social value that made the national urban and rural compulsory education free, and included rural migrant children in China’s *Compulsory Education System* (Zhou & Ma 2015). Following 2010, the issue of migrant children’s education was linked to national urbanisation and urban-rural integration policies (Zhou & Ma 2015). In addition, *The National Medium and Long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development from 2010-2020* (Central Government Portal 2010) explicitly raised the issue of migrant children ‘s education to the point of national coordinative development. (Central Government Portal 2010)

### 1.3.4 Individual Elements of the Problem

However, as far as the individual level is concerned, the issue of migrant children’s education does not demonstrate optimism, as promised by the above-described policies. From the view of the public, particularly migrant workers, the education issue was regarded far from being solved. As mentioned in a national field survey undertaken by the Central Research Institution of Education Science (2008), nearly 70 per cent of migrant workers want to send their children to local public schools in the cities in which they reside and work. Because deep in their minds, most migrant workers hope that their children can grow up in cities, not only for better educational resources but also for prospective opportunity and that, in this manner, their children might shape their sphere of life in cities and become a ‘real urbanian’ (similar to the scenario in which some inhabitants of London who have resided in London for long period of time are now called ‘Londoner’, residents of New York who have lived in New York for a long time are now referred to as ‘New Yorkers’) (Transformation of Urban Village, One Billion Floating People 2014). Meanwhile, most rural migrant workers find it hard to enroll their children’s in local public schools for several reasons, such as too complex registration processes, requiring evidentiary materials for migrant children to enroll in public schools in cities, high sponsorship fee that some schools require from migrant students (The Central Research Institute of Education Science 2008). In addition, in schools with poor infrastructure, incompetent teachers, and poor traffic condition, many migrant students have been discovered to be educated. Some migrant students in local public schools were found to be discriminated against when their counterparts in cities compete for seats in elite schools with much more advanced infrastructure and teaching resources for learning (Zhou & Ma 2015).

### 1.3.5 Academic Perspective on the Problem

Accordingly, many researchers have voiced concerns about this issue of education and educational inequality that migrant children are experiencing in China. Buchmann and Hannum (2001) asserted that the inability to provide adequate education to migrant children influence both individual migrant children’s developments and social well-being, with the number of migrant children growing rapidly. Researchers including Han (2004), Buchmann and Hannum (2001), Kwong (2004), Zhou (2006) and Goodburn (2009), etc., are considering keeping equity of accessibility to education among all groups of children as an essential aspect of human rights and social justice. Zeng and Guo (2008) also indicated that it is vital to increase educational opportunities for migrant children not only to maintain sustainable and rapid economic development in China but also for social cohesion, social equality and stability. Meanwhile, it has been shown that enhancing equality in educational opportunities is useful in integrating migrant children into mainstream society (Butler & Hamnett). The failure to provide equal opportunity for education could create a second generation of migrants with a greater disparities between them and urban residents. This is probable to exacerbate the two groups’ disputes. Consequently, a just social environment was regarded very important in the prevention of political risk to CCP (Wang 2019).

Since Chinese migrant children’s education issue has both social and spatial characteristics in my research, I borrow the approaches used by scholars in the field of *social justice* including Fainstein (2014), Rawls (1971), Bleddyn (1968), Young (1990), Harvey (1973), and Soja (2010). In my research, *justice* represents an ideal situation consisting of two criteria. First, the objectives of both even distribution of urban resources (outcome) and just process (structural) are met. Second, few inequalities result from the geographical effects of individual action and social processes. Meanwhile, this research defines *educational inequality* as a phenomenon and a process that undermines both equal distribution of educational resources and an equal distribution of educational opportunities, as adopted by Westen (1990). The reason how I define *justice* and *educational inequality* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (*Anatomy of Education System and Hukou System*).

## **1.4 Research Significance**

Now I turn to explain the significance of this research. Through inspection of the social and political environment of China, investigation of the agenda-setting process, and an examination on interactions among various involved actors during the formulation and implementation process of *NTUP* on different levels, not only are values, interests, and interdependent relationships among various actors on different levels and diverse sectors portrayed, but also the underlying rationales and mechanisms behind those interactions are discovered. This study is significant in its endeavour to reveal a unique aspect of the Chinese policy and governance system, in which China no longer appears as a monolithic polity. In addition, the similarities and differences in the policy implementation process in China and Western countries are identified throughout the research in terms of factors and processes that influence the policy outcome. In providing an original empirical understanding in policy process to reduce educational inequality in urban China, this research contributes to fill the gap of revealing the implementation gap under the influences of interaction of various actors and sectors with regards to the interpretation and implementation of policies.

## **1.5 Thesis Structure**

I divide my thesis into three main sections, which provide clear analytical stages to answer the overall research question. To begin with, the first section (Chapter 2) introduces the concept of migrant workers and migrant children in China's context, along with the methodology of this research, presenting how I collected and analysed my data using grounded theory (exemplifying how I conducted coding, memo writing, theoretical samples, and the comparative constant analysis phase).

To answer why education becomes a serious social problem for migrants, the state, and governments in urban China from the public system and policy dimension, the second section (Chapters 3-6) presents the basic introduction to the problem of educational inequality and the public systems and policies involved in its amelioration. This is to provide a basic overview of the systems involved at multiple levels in China, as educational inequality cannot be understood without understanding the role of the hukou system. This section also depicts the policy context before the formulation and implementation of the NTUP in urban China, along with detailed information about changes brought into education, housing, and the hukou system by this national policy. In addition to the policy context, I also explore the subject position of migrants by explaining the obstacles occurring both in their daily life and institutional structures (local policymakers, education system, welfare system) in the city and the related mechanisms of exclusion. This section is a foundation to understand how policy contexts and the life situation of migrants undermine the policy implementation process and sustain the injustice-producing procedures, reinforcing prejudices already present within urban China.

The third section (Chapters 7-9) answers my third research question, focusing on the examination of the policy gap between policy intention and policy implementation. I split up the problem of educational inequality experienced by migrant children into three chapters, which provides me with a richer understanding of the composition and dimension of the educational problem in urban China. The educational inequality problem is not only embedded within a political and social structure but also within a policy framework. These chapters draw attention to specific policy fields and explain how the state intends to deal with the problem through NTUP policy. This section also provides evidence of how the targeted group (migrants) has been living with the educational problem of migrant children in the case city. In this section, theories of social justice and educational inequality, including Feinstein's (2014) three elements of justice, distributive justice from John Rawls (1971), spatial justice from Soja (2010) and Harvey (1973), and territorial justice from Bleddyn (1968) are used as tools to evaluate what kind of inequalities migrant children have experienced in the case city, and to what extent the integrated efforts of different actors on various levels relieved the educational inequality experienced by the migrant children. Arrival city (Saunders 2010) and chain migration (Tilly 1978) are adopted to present two typical types of migrants and their migration history in the case city. The adoption of these two theories in my case contributed to revealing migrants' life situation under the current institutional arrangements.

The two main pillars for analysing the policy process in my research are to study how the education problem has entered the policy agenda of Chinese governments, and how it has been dealt with by the central government and local governments through formulating and implementing specific policies according to their own needs and pressures. To construct the first pillar, the debate about the problem in China (the issue-framing and policy discourse for the education problem) under the influence of media is illustrated. Discourse from critical discourse analysis theory and framing analysis (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1998) comprise the analytical framework which helps me review how different social groups and actors compete with each other within China's institutional and cultural boundaries, defining the way education issue of migrant children and reported (Chapter 7.4). At the same time, I draw on Cairney (2012) 's policy communities and policy monopoly theory, which provides me with important material about the behaviour of local officials in the case city to close down opportunities for complaint, excluding migrant parents and children out of the 'policy community' which influences the education issue during the policy-making process (Chapter 7.4.5). In addition, I adopt the integration theory from Phillips (2010) to compare the interpretation and manifestation of 'integration' in my case (Chapter 8.2). It shows that without interpretation of how to achieve two-way 'integration', the goal of an integration-oriented policy like NTUP can be easily compromised.

To construct the second pillar, theories around policy design and policy instruments (Howlett 2011; Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017) are adopted to examine the policy formulation process of NTUP at the local level (Chapter 8.3 and Chapter 8.4), presenting China's idealistic policy-making style. Their adoption in analysis reveals the goal-shifting and responsibility-shifting during the policy formulation process in the case city. In addition to above-mentioned theories, theories around policy implementation and its approaches, including top-down and bottom-up implementation (Hill & Hupe 2002), are also borrowed to discuss and analyse how China, as a country with a hierarchical political environment, adopts top-down implementation approach (Chapter 9.2 and Chapter 9.3). They show the possibility that different actors might exercise their discretion within legal boundaries to negotiate with other actors involved in the implementation process. Last but not least, theories around discretion, including administrative discretion, leadership, and four models embedded in this theory (Vinzant & Crothers 1998; Lipsky 2010) are used to understand the role of street-level public workers as leaders (Chapter 9.5). They provide me with a framework to analyse and evaluate the legitimacy of discretionary decision-making by different actors in this study. I introduce administrative discretion in this part to clarify how different actors at street level use their discretion to bend the rules, pulling things out of shape sometimes but also pushing the process forward circuitously, even causing policy goal displacement. Through administrative discretion analysis, different actors' value positions and the legitimacy of their discretion can be analysed, contributing to the understanding of the influences of different coping mechanisms on the overall policy implementation process.

In general, the social justice literature I draw on and theories of social justice help define and evaluate the extent of a social problem, and then policy theories let me evaluate the response to the social problem. On the one hand, they provide me with initial ideas about concepts to analyse the data deductively, but also provide me with theoretically informed analytical choices, directing my attention to their manifestation in the qualitative data I collected through interviews. On the other hand, integrating these different fields offers a productive approach to my overall research questions. The adoption of these theories provides me with a framework to compare the practical outcomes of the implemented policy within my case study with the values of the original national policy.

# **CHAPTER TWO – METHODOLOGY**

## **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief summary of the themes which are explored in this thesis, outlining the research methodology in this research. The chapter contains nine sections. Firstly, the research questions are presented followed by the aims of the research and its objectives. Next, the research strategy is presented, which assumes the form of a case study, along with the adoption of grounded theory. More specifically, in section 2.6, an introduction is given to how the cases are selected with an overview of the case study city. The following three sections are used to review the data collection methods I used, my fieldwork schedules, and a design of the analytical approach used to analyse my data and establish the focus of my research. Lastly, a discussion around ethical issues related to the research is presented.

## **2.2 Research Strategy Selection**

According to Bhattacherjee (2012), where a phenomenon during a period of time in one or a number of sites is to be intensively researched, involving critical experiences of participants and the context of actions, the case study is a suitable choice of research. It helps the researcher understand “complex, temporal processes rather than factors or causes” (Bhattacherjee 2012, p. 94). Therefore, the case study is believed to be the best choice for studying the complex processes in which various organisations participate, involving various stakeholders and interacting sequences of events (Bhattacherjee 2012). Also, as stated by Yin (2003), the case study is a suitable and ideal strategy when there are ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions being asked, and if the subject of the research is a contemporary event, where the researcher has little control over relevant behaviours involved in the event. The research I set out in the thesis is embedded in an implementation process with multiple actors in China, and the research analyses how the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* has been implemented and interpreted in a specific context, the city of Changsha, to reduce the educational inequality of migrant children, and tries to answer if and why there are gaps between policy goals and outcomes if their existence has been proved. The case study research method could provide a richer, more contextualized, and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon, with a detailed and contextualized deduction for my research.

## **2.3 Adoption of Interpretivist strategy**

As Wagenaar (2011, p.11) pointed out, “meaning emerges in the interactions between actors and between actors and the world of”. Choosing an interpretivist strategy has often benefited researchers in social studies who are trying to comprehend the reasoning behind certain motives within the study. There has been considerable debate about whether interpretive research can be generalised. Admittedly, the importance of generalising research has been acknowledged. With much research there is an inevitability with regard to generalising, and this is the case even in qualitative, interpretive research (Williams 2000; Robson 2002). Fossey et al. (2002) have emphasised that the effective application of findings to different contexts is relying on the contextual knowledge of the researcher. As such, it can be stated that the application of empirical findings in my research into other Chinese cities and overseas would depend on the contextual knowledge of the researcher in that city or country. This research aims to provide an understanding revealing the implementation gap under the influences of the interaction of various actors and sectors with regard to the interpretation and implementation of policies by using the collected data.

## **2.4 Grounded Theory as an Analytical Approach**

This section justifies the choice of using grounded theory as the methodological and analytical approach in this research. The choice is based on two considered factors. Firstly, by adopting grounded theory, the study aims to fill the gap between the literature and real-life activities with the use of an inductive research approach. Secondly, the study aims to establish a relationship between the empirical findings of the research and theories generated from the research, through the development of explanatory concepts instead of descriptions.

As previous studies have mainly focused on the migration process, conceptualization and characteristics of *urbanization* in China’s context (Ni 2013), discussion of possible development trajectory to advance urbanization rate (He 2014), evaluation of the implementation outcomes of urbanisation-oriented policies in urban China from a macro-perspective (Meng 2016, pp.103-138); migrants’ employment-related problems; migrants’ social security-related problems (Jiang 2008), not enough consideration has been given to how it actually helped with addressing pressing problem for migrants (education), and how the actors involved and their interactions in the implementation process, their interests and reactions facing substantial changes and pressures, especially from an individual dimension. In order to further develop the educational policy implementation theory, it is vital to improve the methods by which the implementation process is observed and conceptualized. More so when facing conflicting goals and pressures in implementation process which involves a number of actors, there is little research on the coping strategies and responses from the lower-level governments and individual actors. Moreover, the role of government actors at different levels and social actors in different sectors is significant for understanding how the policy process involves extensive reforms in several public systems in China. The characteristics of the implementation process change with each city; these changing characteristics would be: the actors involved, the relationships among them, existing implementation conditions, and other external factors such as politics, social issues, and fiscal attributes. Consequently, an inductive research approach is best suited for this research.

As pointed out by Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.23), “a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents”. A grounded theory needs a continuous comparison between data sets, continuous analysis, and continuously deriving new theory throughout the process of “arriving at theory” (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.3). The process of generating a grounded theory by adopting an inductive approach mainly relies on the support of collected evidence (this could be documents, personal interviews, and observations) and insights or conceptual ideas derived from it. As a result, it is appropriate to use the grounded theory method in this study as an inductive research method. This study associates various actors and their interactions in the case city; as such, adopting grounded theory is useful for capturing the perspectives of the actors involved, and fully considering their actions and interactions in order to better comprehend how they are experiencing the implementation process of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in the case city. To be more precise, the focus of this research is on the implementation process at local level and integrated interaction from various actors through the filter of the educational inequality issue in urban China. Moreover, the research attempts to understand the stakes that actors have in the policy network. It seeks to identify in what manner they express their interests, the measures they take to cope with pressures and evolve according to the changes and challenges presented, establishing relations among them or alienating them from each other, and their interpretation of current policies. Due to the limited amount of literature on the research subject, in attempting to relate the findings to the literature, the study aims to identify implementation practices with explanatory ideas that have wider implications for other policy implementation research rather than being restricted to descriptions of the case in a specific context.

## **2.5 Case Study Selection**

Before the *implementation analysis* of the caseto find out what happens between policy expectations and perceived policy results (Ferman 1990, cited in Hill & Hupe 2002, p.2), I would like to introduce the case city first. The research is conducted in a second-tier Chinese city, Changsha, the provincial capital of Hunan province. Hunan province is located in centre of southern China, where its economic development is lagging behind compared with mega-cities like Beijing, Shanghai and coastal cities in the southeast coastal areas of China. According to Hunan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, the total area of Hunan province is 211,800 square kilometres, including 13 prefecture-level cities, one autonomous prefecture and 122 counties. As stated in *Hunan Province 2018 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin,* until the end of 2018, the total population in Hunan province was around 68,988,000, with 38,647,000 people being urban residents, 30,341,000 as rural population, and around 17,581,000 migrant workers (Hunan Provincial Bureau of Statistics 2019). Hunan province has achieved significant progress in pushing forward the work of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in recent years*;* at the same time,it has always ranked in the forefront of the nation in improving the government’s policy-making, local housing security system, project construction, and allocating occupancy of housing (Hunan Provincial Bureau of Statistics 2018). Changsha, its provincial capital, has a total area of around 11,800 square kilometres, with around 7.43 million permanent residents, and a permanent resident urbanization rate of 74.38% (Changsha Bureau of Statistic 2015). According to *Changsha 2018 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin*, by the end of 2018, there was a permanent population of around 8,154,700 in Changsha (Changsha Bureau of Statistics 2019). Moreover, Changsha was chosen as one of the cities to pilot the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in 2015 (Hunan Department of Housing and Urban-Rural 2015). However, little research has been conducted into the implementation of Changsha’s *New-Type Urbanization Plan* and its influence on addressing the education problem of migrant children in practice for now.

On the one hand, research on experimental programmes or policies in China normally concentrates on widely-known cities like Beijing, or mega cities (first-tier) like Shenzhen or Shanghai, while second-tier inland city like Changsha is rarely chosen as the object of study. On the other hand, the integration process of rural migrant workers in first-tier cities like Beijing and Shanghai has been heavily studied in previous research from the angles of education and housing (Li, Duda & An 2009). To fill in the gaps in implementation studies about this important national policy in a second-tier city which attracts less attention, the research revealing the real situation in less noticeable second-tier cities, like Changsha, becomes valuable. In addition, as a Chinese student whose hometown is this second-tier city, Changsha, the researcher has extensive knowledge of the city, its spatial patterns, and contacts to help gain access to groups which are difficult to acess such as government officials and school presidents.

## **2.6 Research Methods and Data Collection**

This research adopts an interpretivist strategy, drawing on semi-structured interviews, direct observations, review of documentation, reports and archival records. It is designed as a case study in the context of Changsha city. Qualitative interviews, direct observations, review of documentation, and archival records are the main sources of evidence in my study to support the research conclusion. Documents on national/regional planning outline, financial education investment, migrant workers service work, state/regional balanced development of compulsory education, *Outline of 11th Five-Year Plan on National Educatio*n Development (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2007), integration of urban and rural compulsory education, state/regional residential housing policy etc., are collected through downloading from government’s official portal. Archival records including state/regional increasing migrant population, enrolment rates of migrant children within compulsory stage on state/regional level, housing distribution of migrant workers, demographic information of migrant workers and migrant children, management of migrant schools etc. are accessed via public records, county commissions, local agencies, local research organizations, and the news media. Also, to answer the research question 3 (what outcomes have been resulted from the implementation of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms improving access of migrant children to compulsory education?), and to describe and explain educational inequality in China, I used quantitative data such as government annual reports, unpublished internal documents and study results as well, which I brought together from reliable sources.

### 2.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Weiss (1994), we can access to observations of others through interviewing, while we can get a chance to learn about people’s experiences; what they perceived; how do they interpret the perceptions; and how they have been influenced by various events. The policy implementation in authoritarian setting is the qualitative ‘sample’ to which I wish to generalize, and the implementation analysis require that I interview groups including the governmental officials in local governments, street-level public workers, employers of migrants, school teachers/presidents in public schools and migrant students-concentrated schools, rural migrant parents and local urban parents to generate comparative information. Not only because they have participated in the implementation process of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*, but also because these groups provide a conceptual context for the policy implementation process I want to generalize. I approached and interviewed those groups mentioned above in different ways until saturation.

There are five main groups (overall 41 people) with whom I conducted interviews as following:

**Governmental Officials (8 officials)**

1. work in city-level government, such as the Director of Education Department of Changsha, and Director of Changsha Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau (Furong District, Tianxin District, Yuelu District, Kaifu District, Yuhua District, Wangcheng District constitute Changsha city, therefore representatives from these districts are essential when talking about the situation in urban areas in Changsha), and
2. work in district-level government, such as Yuhua District and Kaifu District in Changsha. As a lower layer in the government section, voices from them were used to compare with and complete the story told by officials in city-level government;

**Street-level civil servants (4 civil servants)**

1. In communities such as Yangfan Community and Yuhua District

**School teachers/ presidents (11 teachers/3 school presidents)**

1. in public schools such as Changsha shiyan primary school, Yanshan primary school (including public elite schools and normal schools),
2. in private schools such as Huaxia shiyan primary school, Luguzhongxin primary school (including private elite schools and normal private schools), and
3. in migrant student-concentrated schools such as Minzhuxijie primary school, Chaoyang primary school;

**Parents (12 parents)**

1. migrant parents (7) and
2. local urban parents (5);

**Employers of migrant workers (3 employers)**

1. provide accommodation and other social benefits for migrant workers, and
2. do not provide accommodation and other social benefits for migrant workers

I designed several broad topics for each group before I conducted interviews with them, see appendix 3.

Prior to the fieldwork, it was assumed that conducting interviews and attempting to access the opinions of high level Chinese government officials (on provincial and national levels) was going to be a challenging task, due to my limited personal network. The prediction became true during the fieldwork. After being turned down by my personal network in trying to reach these two groups, I used policy documents, media reports andspeeches to complete this missing link of higher level government officials’ interests, attitudes, and reactions to other actors on the issues I study in this research. Before I went back to China to conduct the fieldwork, I made an initial mapping of the relationship between the potentially involved actors and policy process that I generated after searching for materials online.

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Figure 2-1. Mapping of relationships between potentially involved actors and policy process (Author, 2017)

Then I listed several sets of informants who could potentially represent actors I drew in the mapping, or bring me into wider social networks to find the participants required for my research. At the beginning of my fieldwork in Changsha, I contacted my friends and relatives who have contacts in the local Education Bureau at city level and local public schools in Changsha. It was through networking with them that I gained access to more participants representing different actors in my analysis. With my participants’ help, I obtained access to more government officials in other departments and key informants in local public schools and migrant-concentrated schools. The initial sample was the result of mapping the actors and relationships and recognising the informants and participants using a personal network and through other channels. In this research, the participants include government officials in different departments (39 departments, to be specific, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*) and on different levels: street-level public workers, employers of migrants, school teachers/presidents in public schools and schools with a high concentration of migrant students, rural migrant parents, and local urban parents.

I approached government officials at city level, district level and street level by visiting relevant governmental departments directly, introducing myself and my research, and conducting interviews with them with their permission. The interviews with them took place at restaurants, cafes, or in their workplace. When I interviewed several government officials in their workplace, I suspect that working environment make them feel nervous and afraid to tell the truth. I interviewed teachers and school presidents group through introduction by my friends and relatives (some of whom are also teachers). This has provided me with excellent opportunities to directly observe the operation of a local school, migrant students, and access to migrant parents. However, my research did not involve any direct interviews with children and pupils in schools I went to. I emphasized to parents and teachers in the school that I am an independent researcher who is enrolled in a major UK university. I do not work for the Party, the regional government or for any school. The Party has not influenced my research. This has been shown to be an important message to deliver at the beginning, because when this message is missed from the conversation, some of them become suspicious about my identity (they are afraid that I might be a journalist or work for government, which means they are not safe if they tell me the truth). Explanations and guarantees that their words will not go to any leaders or anywhere else but me were given to participating teachers, school presidents and parents to enable them to talk openly. I conducted interviews with migrant parents, school presidents and teachers in several schools in the city. Interviews with teachers and school presidents of public schools took place in schools they work in or in restaurants (when we ate lunch or dinner together). I approached them and they were selected by myself. Interviews with local urban parents mainly took place at their home or in restaurants, approached and selected by myself. When interviewees did not feel comfortable with being interviewed in public space, the interview took place in their home with a male friend to accompany me. Interviews with employers of migrant workers took place in the place they work, introduced by governmental officials I contact and friends/families. All the participants involved remain anonymous.

The interviews were recorded as audio files when the permission was given. When data collected were kept as confidential files, they were saved on my personal computer as well as in an online drive protected by passwords. During the direct observations, observational protocols were developed as a part of the case study protocol. Case study notes and documents were recorded and collected to develop a formal database for the case study. Meanwhile, triangulation of data sources was carried out, by collecting data and evidence from multiple sources (including documents, archival records, direct observation and interviews) to develop convergent evidence. This is not only to improve *construct validity* (to construct correct operational measures for the concepts that are being used and researched) of my case study (Yin 2003, p.121); but also to avoid using biased responses and data from a single source, which may lead to biased interpretation for the research (Weiss 1994). Conducting semi-structured interviews have provided me with opportunities to get first-hand materials and obtain in-depth understandings about different involved actors’ experiences, values, positions, expectations, and difficulties they encountered in their daily life around the issue of education problem and implementation of *NTUP*. It is an effective way to get as close as I can to their real life practices as a researcher. Admittedly, this method has limitations as well. First, participants tend to give fragmentated information about their experiences and understandings to a particular issue. It is this fragmentation of voices that provides me with abundant ‘pieces’ of understandings. However, without seeking additional explanation and verification from other data sources, there is a danger that their fragmented personal perspectives may lead to a biased direction. For instance, interviews with teachers have provided me with not only information about their experiences in work, but also basic introduction to migrant families’ situation, which help me to grasp a bigger picture of the story I want to tell. Yet teacher’s voices in interviews have strong emotional indication that they are not in favour of accepting more migrant children in schools because of ‘low overall quality’ of migrant parents and students (which will be explained in detail in Chapter 6 *Subject Position of Migrants*). Therefore I was led to conduct triangulation of data sources, to prevented me from relying on information from one particular method or specific group. It is this element of my data collection gives me new insights about the potential conflicts wrapped in the education problem issue. I started to look for reasons behind such attitudes, which formed a theme in my analysis, ‘increased educational inequality problem does not only come from institutional arrangements in national and local policies, but also can be generated from interactions between migrants and a social group who plays vital role in the education system in city, and who has frequent contact with migrant parents and migrant children.

### 2.6.2 Examination of Policy Documents

Analysis of the content in official files and text descriptions accompanies direct interviews and observations. Admittedly, there is a wealth of valuable content in the text descriptions; however, all of them are limited in a number of ways. A majority of the descriptions are placed according to their respective category, as a result, they can be categorised by perspective in order to gather additional data from various sources through exploring their purposes and objectives (Silverman 2006). There are four areas that need considerable attention when choosing documents (Scott 1990, p.6) - ‘Authenticity’: the importance of ensuring that the evidence or its origin is absolute and trustworthy; ‘Credibility’: to create awareness regarding the quality of the work contained in the documents; ‘Representativeness’, a measure of ascertaining the typicality and untypicalily of the evidence; and the last category is ‘meaningfulness’, documents should be transparent and should not be ambiguous (Cheng 2015).

All of the documents that were a part of this research were obtained through two primary ways. Firstly, documents were retrieved through the online platform of official government websites; all these documents are also accessible to the public. Second, through the participants who were involved in the implementation process on different levels, ones that are unpublished and remain restricted to internal use within the government system. Using both channels proved to be effective, as combining the two ways allowed the researcher access to essential documents which would be useful to complement the interviews and observations. Furthermore, these two approaches were vital for approaching to an in-depth examination of the interactions among the different actors.

I have collected a series of published documents along with unpublished ones, as shown in appendix 2. It is from news searching online, I noticed that accessing to education (for migrant children) and finding stable accommodation are two frequently mentioned problems of migrant workers, being the main obstacles encountered by them in way of integrating into cities in urban China (which is also what *NTUP* aims to address). Therefore, in the initial documents-collecting stage, I selected documents in three main fields: education, housing, and *New-Type Urbanisation Plan (from 2014-2020).* Specifially, I selected documents that are related to the educational laws, enrolment policies and regulations, and increased school construction projects regarding migrant children; housing policies concerning addressing housing problem of migrants in cities; and policies that are related to the implementation of *NTUP* on national, provincial and city level*.* Some of them meet the requirements of providing me convergent evidence to verify qualitative data I collected through interviews, while part of them provide me initial ideas about relationship between different actors before and during implementation process of *NTUP,* forming the first relationship map(see Figure 2-1). However, I found that most published documents about detailed promulgated policies often emphasizes policy expectations and quantitative goals (for example, it is stated in leading indicators in the national *NTUP* that in 2020, at least 99% of migrant children should be able to go to local schools in the city). Yet they are vague in how different government departments, and government on different levels (provincial, city, and district level) should cooperate with each other to achieve the stated goals. In internal documents (unpublished) I collected, the same problem remains, but the specific plans and adopted strategies of local government to achieve the aim set by the central government (such as *Cost-Share Mechanism,* which will be explained in detail in Chapter 8 *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: National Level* and Chapter 9 *Policy Implementation*). It is the vagueness in terms of responsibility in collected documents informed my initial hypothesis around potential influences of lack of clarity in responsibility on local level implementation, and stressed the necessity to collect qualitative data about *cooperation* and *responsibility* during interviews with government officials.

## **2.7 Fieldwork Schedule**

The research fieldwork was completed in two phases. The initial phase commenced in Changsha in February 2017, and the duration of this phase was one month. The second phase commenced in October 2017, and it lasted for two months. A considerable amount of preparation was needed prior to venturing out into the field, including networking with potential informants in both school and government systems, and extensive searching of materials online to get a hint of the story. As a result, the maximum amount of time was used effectively whilst out in the field. Moreover, the city was familiar to the researcher as a citizen who lived in Changsha for more than 17 years. A considerable amount of tacit knowledge paved the way for practical competence in the fieldwork. As a result of good preparation and knowledge about the area, sufficient primary data was collected in two relatively short field visits.

A majority of the fieldwork was completed in these two field visits; this also included the in-depth qualitative interviews and transcription. The considerable gap in time from the first field visit to the second one provided the opportunity to analyse and translate the data collected from the first field visit; as a result, the gaps in the collected data were identified before the next visit. The first fieldwork visit was more of a descriptive stage, in which I tried to find out “what is going on” and gradually acquire knowledge and contexts while I interviewed. More importantly, as advised by my supervisor, conducting good interviews is also about building good relationships with interviewees, therefore I spent a lot of time to gain their trust and form a bond with them. This tactic worked particularly well when I interviewed the teachers group, but worked less effectively with government officials in my case. In the first fieldwork visit, I took an interest in the starting point, which came from citizens, rather than the state. I therefore went to interview school teachers, migrant parents and local parents first, followed by government officials and other actors. After obtaining an overall understanding of what they experienced, and especially the influences of implemented policies on their daily life, in the first fieldwork visit, I tried to map out different sets of relationships and how the actors involved in the implementation process pulled things in different directions. Thus the relationship between individual and society, the relationship between government and state, the relationship between individual and government, and how these things work themselves out over time in the Chinese context became increasingly clear. While visiting the field for the second time, in-depth follow-up interviews were conducted with government officials at district level, street level public workers and school presidents who were referred to by the participants I interviewed in the first field visit. It turned out that they are not as ruthless as I had imagined (during the first fieldwork visit, in which I came to know all sorts of difficulties experienced by migrants). On the contrary, officials’ decisions in implementing local government policies are also choices of trade-off resulting from great pressures laid on their shoulders.

## **2.8 Qualitative Data Analysis**

I used a combination of deductive and inductive analysis in the data analysis periods (Boyatzis 1998; Charmaz 2006). With deductive analysis, I derived categories from the conceptual framework to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data I collected (such as the number of migrant schools that have been closed down during the last decades, the number of migrant children that have been accepted in public schools, the number of migrant children that went to migrant schools, the number of migrant children that could not get any education opportunity in the city etc.). From the conceptual framework, I obtained the initial idea about which concepts were to be used in my deductive analysis of data (such as *policy instruments*, *policy networks, horizontal and vertical relationships* etc.),and paid extra attention when I encountered their manifestation in data. With inductive analysis, I derived categories from the qualitative data I collected from semi-structured interviews, as in grounded theory (Charmaz 2006).

### 2.8.1 Coding

*Coding* is the process of developing concepts using collected data. This is the first step involved in grounded theory research, which provides the necessary process by which the data can be sorted and integrated (Charmaz 2006). The process may be repeated requiring further coding; as such, it forms the framework for analysis. I started coding once the initial data is collected. Grounded theory coding mainly comprises two phases: initial coding and focused coding. During the initial phase, researchers name words, lines, or different segments of data, following a focused coding phase, which uses the most important or the most frequent initial codes for sorting and integrating a substantial amount of data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This is a vital preparation step before the analysis, as coding helps to form the key conceptual categories in a large amount of data (Cheng 2015).

During the initial coding phase, the data was fully explored to identify meaningful actions in the data, which might help sorting. Being open minded paved the way for creativity; this was important, rather than it originating from a previously used framework. Line-by-line coding was carried out on all the interview transcripts, when observations and documents collection were conducted along the way. This helped me to explore the data collected in the early stage as much as I can, and keep them in mind when I conducted later interviews in fieldwork. During this stage, initial ideas were developed which later led to the development of initial categories, while new ideas and insights came into play.

For example, in investigating the past experiences and opinions of local governments in implementing national policies, key codes were extracted by coding the interviews line-by-line, and relating them to official policy documents. For instance, in an interview with a government official in a city-level government department, he commented that,

*The Communist Party is serious about ‘going through the motions’ (meaning doing something as a mere formality). The things to be done in the future [expressed in policies] have already been set by the municipal government level [or higher level of government]. Even if [in the standard procedure they would take the policy] to the People's Congress for discussion and revision [before its promulgation], [normally,] there is no [substantial] change [to be made] in that step. To improve the policy, the key lies in the previous [steps and links].[Government Official B, interview, 09/10/2017]*

The code “*formalistic policy-formulating*” for this statement was developed. Another code “*impractical policy-devolving”* was distilled through a later explanation by this official, in which he supplemented,

*Zhongnanhai (a term used to symbolise “the CCP” and “the central government” in China)’s reform [policies] can’t get out of the door. [They] die once [they] go out of the door (this metaphor of ‘go out of the door’ means national policies being handed to local governments to implement).[Government Official B, interview, 09/10/2017]*

Later on, the code “*providing insufficient support”* and “*ignoring local situation*” were grouped into the initial category of “*impractical policy-devolving”,* through coding an interview with another government official, who suggested that,

*They (policies from the central level) are not “grounded” [on practical situation on local levels]. Cities and regions vary widely. The degrees of implementation and effectiveness are different [in different cities] as well [...] The thing that makes policies hard to implement most is [...] all the projects [and policies are] connected to the state at one end, and connected with the common people at the other end. What’s in the middle is all about money. [Government Official A, interview, 11/10/2017]*

With the help of initial coding, mountainous transcripts were transformed into initial codes and were sorted into categories, prepared for later cross-checking between data and codes, codes and codes, data and data. In the following phase of coding, focused coding, I identified codes which frequently jump out of data (Charmaz 2006). In the investigation into local governments’ experiences in implementing national policies, the code “*pressure-dealing*” is the most frequent one, which teased out a more detailed code “*influence of pressure-reducing strategies*”. These helped with developing a new category, “*inequality-reproducing*”, which was used to compare with codes and categories developed from investigation into teachers’ experiences around and opinions about migrant parents and migrant children. The categories developed at this stage were adopted as theoretical concepts, and cross-checked with transcript data and other sources of data. Through the process of coding, rough ideas were captured in memos, and directed my focus in later interviews and analysis.

### 2.8.2 Memo Writing

As stated by Charmaz (2006), memos are developed to help researchers put codes into temporary categories, while illustrating the relationship among generated concepts. During my fieldwork, memo-writing was conducted at the same time as the coding of raw materials from interviews. I made two types of memos: written memos and memo clustering. In written memos, I did not pay much attention to making logical sense, and simply wrote down every thought and note crossed my mind when I was coding the transcripts. For instance, when I was coding an interview with a government official in Changsha, I wrote the following initial memo:

***Denying the existence of migrant student schools***

*Education Bureau on municipal level shows optimistic opinion/attitude towards the effectiveness of their policy targeting at differences in education quality accepted by local students and migrant students. They are also confident about that they have created an education environment that achieve basically no discrimination or disparate treatment towards migrant children. Yet they deny that there are migrant schools in Changsha, which is different from what migrant parents understand the situation. Migrant parents think there are still a lot of migrant schools in the city, and listed several ones, in which many migrant children concentrated, and which teaching quality is at the bottom of the school system in the city. The reason behind this conflict in understanding requires more interviews to figure out and verify.*

After I conducted more interviews with teachers and school presidents, especially ones in schools with a high concentration of migrant students, the initial memo “*denying existence of migrant schools*” was verified and developed into a more explanatory memo “*adopting symbolic policy-making as a strategy*”, as I wrote,

***Adopting symbolic policy-making as a strategy***

It turns out that symbolic policy-making is a strategy adopted by Changsha local government here in claiming the non-existence of migrant schools in Changsha. Local government changed the name of previously designated migrant student school, and deleted ‘migrant student’ from the name of the school. It might have achieved its goal in leading the public, especially local parents, to believe what it intends to convey, yet the opposite understanding by migrant parents may reflect an interesting contradiction here. The migrant parents are not convinced by this claim as the composition of those schools still remains ‘migrant student-concentrated’. The influence and implications of such a strategy requires further analysis.

In this process, I gained more familiarity with key concepts around key actors, and prepared for the second type of memo I made. Through memo clustering, I had developed my understanding of interactions and relationships among the actors and key concepts I developed at an earlier stage (even distracting ones which are not very relevant to the case in Changsha) , see appendix 4.

### 2.8.3 Theoretical Sampling and Constant Comparative Analysis

Due to the limitations on time and financial support for the two periods of fieldwork periods, in this qualitative research I attached more importance to the *quality* of every ‘sample’ I selected, instead of the size of it. According to Baxter & Eyles (2004), as long as selected ‘samples’ can represent and involve as many experiences as necessary, small sizes of ‘samples’ will not obliterate the credibility of research findings. As suggested by Charmaz (2006), in the theoretical sampling stage, I went for digging deep into data to thicken and refine relevant categories in order to reveal their potential to generate conceptual ideas. In the process of comparing categories and the two types of memos, I identified four themes in respect of interaction between: 1) the state and governments[[1]](#footnote-1); 2) governments and society; 3) governments and individuals; 4) society and individuals.

After this step, I started generating my initial hypotheses around each theme, and verifying their substantiveness by applying more data to them. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.16), “the purpose of the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically than allowed by the second approach, by using explicit coding and analytic procedures”. I went back to data, codes, categories, and memos developed in the earlier stage to examine whether there is any gap in categories and their properties, and verify my conceptual ideas. Through constant comparative analysis between ongoing data collection and data analysis, I was directed to focus on the dynamics in the governance and policy system in China, along with opportunities and challenges brought by those dynamics and complexities to the issue of reducing educational inequality in China.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Implementation Patterns**  (focused on interaction between the central state and lower levels of government) | *Centralised structure*  Top-down policy devolvement from the central government to regional and local governments | *Decentralised structure*  Bottom-up policy reshaping through autonomy of local governments in interpreting national policies; administrative discretion adopted by street-level public workers in putting policies into practice |
| **Blurry Boundaries**  (focused on interaction between local government and society) | *Tight control*  The Government's control over society are manifested in its tight grip over collective action and censorship programme | *Maneuver Space*  Media plays a strong role in issue-framing and discourse-shaping in education problem of migrant children |
| **Institutional Dilemmas**  (focused on interaction between local government and individuals) | *Anti-privatisation*  Educational policies (such as “*Entering nearby school”*) have shown government’s intention to restrict self-choosing in school enrolment | *Into-privatisation*  Government’s “pressure-dealing strategies” such as enrolment ranking (on the basis of residency and *hukou* status); bound of school system and real estate developers (such as school district housing, Education Group) exist in local policies |
| **Conflict reaction**  (focused on interaction between society and individuals) | *Inequality-reducing*  Discretion utilised by part of street-level public workers to help migrant children access to education opportunities; media’s help in raising education problem into policy agenda; protests of migrants for safeguarding children’s rights in accepting education in cities. | *Inequality-reproducing*  Prejudice from teachers; discrimination and resistance from local groups; self-produced segregation of migrants |

Table 2-1. Comparing difference emerged in interaction process (Author, 2019)

## **2.9 Ethical Issues and Limitations**

Interviews are highly efficient in providing direct access to obtain data. However, the method of using interviews gives rise to a number of practical concerns. For example, when conducting interviews with government officials in powerful positions, a major concern was the extent to which they were neutral in their responses during the interview and the possibility that they might lead the interview in other directions when they face questions they did not want to answer with sincerity. During the interviews in the fieldwork, I found that some of them tended to talk in propaganda style, rather than sharing personal experiences of their work, or attacking my position as a researcher who ‘became a traitor’ to my hometown, as, from the perspectives of some of them, what I was doing in the research was to show a negative side of the country to western readers. Moreover, accessing government officials, especially in higher levels of governments, was the biggest challenge for the researcher. I had to search for different channels to collect data which would represent their point of view and actions. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, another challenge was accessing government officials at higher levels of government authority. To fill the missing data from these interviews, different channels were used and other types of data which could represent their points of view and actions were collected. Finally, since this research was conducted in China, and there is a chance for it to be accessed by a western audience, cross-cultural mistranslation was the last major concern during the research. Initially, all interviews and transcriptions were undertaken in Chinese, then their outcomes were translated into English to be included in the study. As a result, the cross-cultural communication conflict was taken into consideration: as a bilingual researcher, the best possible translations have been made in this study in all instances.

## **2.10 Summary**

The aim of this chapter has been to present the research design, including the research questions, the methodological approach, an introduction to the case selection, data collection methods, and the analytical approach used on the data. Significantly, a case study in Changsha was introduced which aimed to generate conceptual and applicable ideas on Chinese policy implementation. Detailed examination of the relevant public systems in China is presented in the following sections, which are followed by an examination of the political and social change in a larger context compared to the case city.

# **CHAPTER THREE – ANATOMY OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE *HUKOU* SYSTEM**

## **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter answers two questions: What is *education inequality* in my case? And why is there educational inequality in China? To answer the former question, I present a theoretical discussion around mainstreams of conceptualization of *social justice* and *inequality,* in order to manifest *educational inequality* in my case, and to examine the extent of that has been *experienced* by migrant children. To answer the latter question, an anatomy of the education system in China is required. I examine the roots of educational inequality from several correlated aspects of the education system: I start with the basic components of education system in Changsha, followed by an introduction to how students get enrolled into schools in Changsha, and who/what influences that enrolment process. Briefly, the education system in Changsha city has partly been taken over by financialisation and private actors such as real estate developers. Because of the dual system (public and privatised) in Changsha’s education ‘market’, educational resources have changed from being a basic social service that could be delivered/distributed equally by local government. Instead, education has become a financialised “product” that parents acquire through competition and access to other related resources, like *hukou* status and accommodation status. By ‘financialsation’ here, I mean two things: first, real estate developers in Changsha help elite public schools to expand through building branch schools, in which access to enrolment depends on parents’ ability to pay fees. Secondly, local educational policies in affect *financialise* school positions in public schools in Changsha by creating enrolment priorities according to students’ *hukou* and accommodation status. As a result, the effects of such financialisation on the functioning of the education system have made it difficult to attain the national goal of free education for all. But how difficult, exactly? Let us start from the basic facts of the current education system in China.

## **3.2 Conceptualisation of Justice**

In view of the social and spatial dimensions of the issue of educational inequality in China, I would like to throw discussion on the theories of *justice* from both of these domains. As a topic which has been highlighted in all countries, the conceptualisation and ideal manifestation of *justice* differ in different settings, thus emerging as a contentious issue in academic field. I am going to briefly review the six key streams of conceptualisation of *justice* emerged in the justice-related research, and apply them to the education problem of migrant children in China, to give *educational inequality* a definition in my case.

The first conceptualisation stems from Susan Fainstein (2010), who put forward that *just* policies are the ones that are responsible for equitable outcomes, rather than favouring the groups already well off. In China’s case, a consolidation between school enrolment, hukou, and housing has been generated by the current hukou system and education policies in China (which will be explained in detail in Section 3.4). Besides that, this consolidation is beneficial to the local students, possessing an urban *hukou* and residency within cities. Conversely, the rural migrant children have been shut out when their *hukou* status and residence are not registered at the local city. In this case, if the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* and related *hukou* system reform are anticipated to enhance justice in the arrangement for rural migrant children’s education, it requires being capable of benefiting the rural migrant children, entitled to less privileges and services that the governments provide (Lu 2014).

The second mainstream in conceptualisation of *social justice* comes from John Rawls in his theory of *distributive justice* (Rawls 1971). It is a theory that was deemed widely applicable, referring to a rational cognition which indicates apparent avoidance to any biases on the basis of race, gender, social class, residence, and other social positions with the relative power and impact within a social order. That is why *distributive justice* theory places emphasis on the immediate moment and condition for individuals, instead of spatiality and historicity in a collective sense. Speaking otherwise, one’s geographical place should not impact on the sense of *justice* one perceives (Soja 2010).

Considering John Rawls’ viewpoint, the idea of *justice* presents the egalitarian ideals of fair distribution of valued goods, which include not just freedom, but also wealth, opportunity, and self-esteem. As his theory of *distributive justice* indicates*,* the ideal level of *justice is* merely attainable when the chances of the least affluent are at their best subjected to the provided scenario, whereas the most fortunate assist in bringing about the anticipations of the least affluent under a democratic social order (Soja 2010). In the meantime, *distribute justice* is assessed in accordance with the existing outcomes, whereas the comprehensive structural mechanism, generating inequality and injustice are being disregarded (Soja 2010). Empirically, China’s *hukou* system and local educational policies as structural mechanism fail to provide *distributive justice* to migrant children in education system (I will explain this short conclusion in detail in later sections of this chapter, and in Chapter 6 *Subject Position of Migrants* and Chapter 8 *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*).

Subjected to Soja’s *distributive justice,* Young (1990) put forward a fresh version of the conceptualisation of *justice*. She argued that contextualisation in *justice* is needed,in ‘more concrete geographical, historical, and institutional terms’ (Soja 2010, p.78). With regard to her conceptualisation of *justice,* the emphasis has been shifted from the outcomes that *distributive justice* theory emphasizes, to the structural processes, which produce inequalities as well as injustice. Also, difference and pluralistic solidarity have been given with respect to her conception of *justice*, while assuring equality and fairness constitutes the primary goal in Rawls’ *distributive justice* (Soja 2010, cited in Lu 2014).

A further stream of the conceptualisation of *justice* is termed as *territorial justice,* which was firstly put forward by Bleddyn Davies (1968), as a normative objective established for the planners on both the domestic and regional levels. In his *territorial justice, the* outcome of government actions is emphasized. He suggested that the decision on allocating the public services and investment is required to take the actual social requirements of individuals into account, rather than merely reflecting on population size (Soja 2010). Subsequent to that, David Harvey (1973) formed his conceptualisation of *justice* to a more dynamic and political direction, describing it as ‘the search for a just distribution of social resources justly arrived at’ (Soja 2010, p.81).An intersection of *justice* and geography in Harvey’s conceptualisation emphasizes not only the outcomes but also the mechanisms that generate uneven geographies. It has associated the search for *justice* with its origins in different types of biased practices, despite the fact that a number of them have been considered to be inbuilt to the common operations of not only the labour markets, but also the housing markets, and government as well as planning in cities (Soja 2010, cited in Lu 2014).

The ideas regarding *justice* circled around the *civil rights* and actions that deciding the approaches of maintaining the fair access to, and share of, urban resources for the individuals qualified to be among the citizens (Soja 2010). It has been taken into account in early notion of *spatial justice,* which is ‘a conception of social justice in which geography matters in significant ways’ (Soja 2010, p.75). As Soja argued, ‘everything that is social (justice included) is simultaneously and inherently spatial, just as everything spatial, at least with regard to the human world, is simultaneously and inherently socialized’ (Soja 2010, p.6). In addition to that, *justice,* being a concept that has rich social meaning, there is an extension of its understanding as well as the political practice, which is *spatial justice.* Furthermore, the place of residence defining the personal privileges and obligations has emerged as a major political framework for the achievement of the social justice currently (Soja 2010; cited in Lu 2014).

Being among the most influential scholars in the earlier *spatial justice*-searching academic field, Lefebvre (2010) has made great contribution to the conceptualisation of *spatial justice* by introducing *rights to the city.* Moreover, he is of the view that the ordinary functioning of urban everyday life as the origin, which produces unjust power relations, accordingly manifesting as unequal and unjust distribution of social resources within the space of the city.Considering Lefebvre’s viewpoint, the individuals residing the cities possess spatial rights, allowing them to justly take part in all of the mechanisms producing the urban space; for accessing and using the benefits that urban life provides, which include the highly-valued city centres; for rejecting all kinds of spatial segregation; for enjoying public services with regard to not only health, but also education, and welfare (Soja 2010). It is exactly what *hukou* system in China do, produce *spatial injustice* by entitling citizens with urban *hukou* status with access to education resources and opportunities in cities, while migrant children with rural *hukou* are at the bottom of ladder towards high quality education resources in city (which will be discussed in Section 3.4.2 and 3.4.3).

Migrant children’s difficulty in accessing education resources in cities in China, are considered as a type of educational inequality which has both social and spatial causes and influences on the social justice issue in China. Consolidating the *hukou* system and education policy put forward by the central and local governments in China has undermined the social justice in policy level, based on Fainstein’s standards of justice policies (Lu 2014). The wide disparity between the allocation of educational possibilities and resources migrant children and local children does not cater to the *distributive justice* promoted by John Rawls (1971). Furthermore, the decisions taken by the China’s governments by means of the policies (for instance, ‘entering nearby school’ policy) have harmed the *territorial justice* in both the domestic and regional levels. Together with that, the place of residence has been connected to *hukou* status and school enrolment, accordingly impacting the social justice in spatial dimension based on Soja’s (2010) theory of *spatial justice.* Ultimately, the educational inequality experienced by migrant children could be considered to be an evidence that sheds light on the shortage of, or uneven *rights to the city* for migrant population in comparison with the urban population in China (Lu 2014). Combining these conceptualisations of *justice,* I define *educational inequality* in my case as a phenomenon and a process that undermines both equal distribution of educational resources and an equal distribution of educational opportunities, emphasizing its reflection on both social and spatial dimensions, in process as well as in outcomes. The structural reasons leading to the inequality in education in China refer to the impact of the *hukou* system on dividing population (with unequal rights), together with the discriminatory policies formulated and implemented by local governments, will be comprehensively discussed in the following sections.

## **3.3 Components of the Education System**

Before analysing the ongoing processes of change in and around the education system, an introduction to what is included in this system is needed. I introduce the education system by categorising it in two different ways: first by the timeline of different education stages; and second, by its nature in terms of financial provider (public or private).

### 3.3.1 The Different Stages of Chinese Education

Legally, according to *The Educational Law of the People’s Republic of China*, the Chinese education system is divided into five parts: *Pre-school Education, Basic Education (Elementary Education), Secondary Education, Higher Education* or *Vocational and Technical Education*, and *Adult Education* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 1995). Students normally receive their first stage of pre-school education in kindergartens or at home before they enter the Basic Education stage in primary schools. Basic Education normally takes five to six years to complete in China. Secondary Education takes six years to complete (three years in middle school and three years in high school). After that, students can go on to Higher Education in colleges or universities after College Entrance Examination (like Scholastic Assessment Test in America).

Categorised by its nature in terms of whether it is guaranteed by the state in the public interest, education system can be divided into compulsory education stage and non-compulsory education stage. In China, the compulsory education stage consists of primary education and secondary education. They are both free in the public education system (Xinyu 2009). This research is mainly focused on the situation at the compulsory education stage. This is because, first, school attendance in this stage is tied up with the *hukou* system (household registration system) and residence status of students; and secondly, because providing basic education to all children within a jurisdiction is one of the most important responsibilities to local governments on all levels (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 1995). It is these three conditions - admission age, residence address, and *hukou* status – that determine which primary/middle school a student attends at the basic education stage. Enrolment in high schools and universities/colleges, on the other hand, is decided through examinations testing students’ ability and intelligence (Xinyu 2009). Whether it is possible for a government to distribute educational opportunities and allocate educational resources equally to all groups of children in society is a key issue discussed in the framework of social justice (Goodburn 2009).

### 3.3.2 Comparison between Public and Private Schools

Categorised by its nature in terms of financial provider, the education system in China can be divided into public schools and private schools. Most schools in China are public schools and the number of private schools is significantly lower. According to statistics reported in *National Education Development in China in 2016,* at the compulsory education stage, private schools represent only 4.8% of all schools, while the remaining 95.2% are public schools (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2016).

Public schools in China are financially supported by the government. It is stated in the *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* (The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress 2006) that compulsory education funding is fully covered within the scope of the national budget, and local governments at various levels contribute to the national budget by passing on revenue to the central government every year. Specifically, the State Counciland local governments in China are required to budget for compulsory education funds in advance and distribute the funds to public schools in full and on time. The amount of funds is decided on the basis of standards for the numbers of teaching and administrative staff, wages, school construction, and average amount of funds per student, etc. Funds from the State Council and local governments are used to ensure the normal operation of schools, the safety of school buildings, and the payment of teaching and administrative staff wages as required by the *Compulsory Education Law*. In many case, migrant parents who want to send their children to study in a public school (which is not in the same area as the migrant children’s *hukou*) would need to pay *the sponsorship fee*.[[2]](#footnote-2)Private schools, in contrast, are supported by non-governmental organisations or individuals. As stated in the *Private Education Promotion Law* (The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress 2005), it is suggested that local governments at various levels should take the development of private school education into account when makingthe *National Economic and Social Development Plan,* while the administrative department of education under the State Council takes the responsibility of overall planning and macro-management of private school education. On the one hand, in law there is no compulsory requirement for the government to provide funds to support private schools; on the other hand, according to the *Private Education Promotion Law* (2004), private schools are entitled to enjoy preferential tax treatment and preference in policies on land use/construction for public utilities.

Before constructing a private school, approval from local governments and the Education Department need to be obtained (The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress 2004). The differences between public schools and private schools cannot be ignored here. Although it is not free to study in private schools during the compulsory education period private schools free from the limitations of the *Entering Nearby School* policy that applies to public schools in China. This means parents can choose private schools without locational limitation. This distinction between the regulations governing public schools and private schools has attracted many parents finding access to good public schools difficult or who have doubts about the quality of public schools.

### 3.3.3 The Emergence of Migrant Schools

Beside public schools and private schools, there is third type of school which provides another choice for migrants groups: these are migrant schools. Migrant schools emerged along with the large-scale migration of rural migrants in urban China in the late 1980s. The education problem of migrant children first emerged when the migration pattern for non-urban workers changed from single workers migrating to cities to whole families migrating to cities (Zhou & Ma, 2015). Initially, the number of migrant workers and migrant children in cities was not high as it is currently, and there were still enough places for migrant children in public schools and private schools in urban areas. In the 1990s, with an increasing number of migrant children, public and private schools in cities no longer had enough capacity for all migrant children. Therefore, migrants began to build their own schools that were then, necessarily, a form of the private regime. These migrant schools, as one type of private school, came to be given limited acceptance by the state in China (Zhou & Ma, 2015).

Migrant schools are constructed by migrant workers themselves when public schools in cities refuse to take migrant children or when migrant parents cannot afford the sponsorship fee required by public schools. Migrant schools are often called ‘simple and easy schools’ since most of them cannot meet the accreditation criteria set for private schools. Many migrant schools are actually illegal with substandard safety, sanitation, diet and other basic school conditions, these unapproved migrant schools have created management difficulties for the local education department (Kwong, 2004). Specifically, as migrant children are not as stable as local students in terms of residence, for instance, they might need to move to another place with their migrant worker parents when their parents change job or residence and therefore, they are more likely to transfer to another school. In many cases, this possibility of temporary status and enrolment is seen to be disruptive of the regular order of school management (Ministry of Financial Science Institute 2012).

On the other hand, if it weren’t for the migrant schools, there would be overwhelming pressure of demand on the public schools. For example, in 2006, nearly one third of the approximately 400,000 migrant students in Beijing were enrolled in migrant schools. At the same time, the proportion of migrant students in migrant schools in other first and second-tier cities was more than 50% (China Youth Daily 2007b). However, it was found that, until 2016 migrant schools and private schools were not the common choice for most migrant families, at least in most cities. According to the *National Education Development in China in 2016* report nearly 80% of migrant students were enrolled in public schools at the compulsory education stage (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China 2017). This means that, if they want to send their children to local public schools, most migrant parents need to meet every standard set by local school enrolment policies. What do they need, and how do students get enrolled at local public schools in Changsha?

## **3.4 The Enrolment Process and Its Deciding Elements**

As mentioned earlier, there are three conditions (admission age, residence address, and *hukou* status) which determine the primary/middle school a student can attend at the basic education stage. The *hukou* system is a central element in examining the education system in Changsha. Educational inequality cannot be understood without understanding the role of the *hukou* system in this research. In this Section, I give an overview of *hukou* system and its effects on overall social justice and the problem of educational inequality in China. Then I discuss two typical phenomena, - *School District Housing* and *Education Group[[3]](#footnote-3) -* in Changsha city, as a way of showing the role of private actors in the financialisation of educational resources in this city. After that, I analyse how the injustice that exists in the very education system itself has resulted in educational inequality through valuing wealth over all other considerations when distributing educational resources in local public schools in Changsha. Put it simply, the combination of the power of private actors, the *hukou* system and local educational policies in the city has meant that the implementation of local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in Changsha has deviated from the national goal of delivering free education for allchildren at the compulsory education stage.

### 3.4.1 *Hukou* System

Today’s *hukou* system means is different from the original *hukou* systemfirst introduced in China in 1951. The main functions of the system were: to collect demographic information about citizens in order to maintain social order; to guarantee the security of citizens; and to ensure citizens’ freedom to choose their residence and to move (Bie 2013). After the *First Five-Year Plan on Developing National Economy of the People’s Republic of China* implemented in 1953, large-scale construction projects in China’s urban areas increased the need for labour in the cities. A large number of rural surplus labourers came to cities during that time and the migration of the rural population resulted in a series of problems relating to housing, traffic, healthcare and education (Bie 2013). To restrict the numbers of rural labourers pouring into cities, the *hukou* system was established in 1958 as a household management system, through the promulgation of *The People’s Republic of China Household Registration Ordinance* (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 1958). As the first national *hukou* management regulation system, it stipulated that Chinese citizens need the government's approval to migrate from rural areas to cities. Various documents are required to obtain government approval, including an employment certificate from the Urban Labour Department, a school certificate or an approval certificate from the Urban Household Registration Office (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Literature Research 1995, cited in Bie 2013, p. 80). The main purpose of the *hukou* system at that stage was to strictly limit the migration of rural (agricultural) people to the cities.

However, as a system initially designed for controlling the flow of population in China, *hukou* has resulted in many unintended negative consequences in terms of inequality. For instance, the 1958 *hukou* system divided citizens into urban population or rural population, according to people’s birthplace (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Literature Research 1995, cited in Bie 2013, p. 80). It has an important influence in increasing disparity of income between migrants and non-migrants (Ravallion & Chen, 2007); it has created inequality and segregation in the labour market; and it has resulted in poor coverage of migrants’ social insurance and social welfare benefits into the national welfare system (Afridi, Li & Ren 2014). Social welfare, especially social security and children’s education, have become increasingly dependent on having non-rural *hukou* status in cities (Bie 2013). For example, in Changsha, *hukou* status has been taken into account in deciding which students have priority when enrolling in local public schools in situations when the number of students who apply for school places is greater than the actual number of places available (The way *hukou* status plays its role in the enrolment process will be explained in more detail in Section 3.4.3). All in all, such *hukou*-dependent welfare mechanisms have worsened educational inequality for migrant children. It has also undermined social justice in other crucial welfare-related rights and schemes between people possessing an urban *hukou* and those who possess a rural *hukou*.  With the imbalanced development between cities and rural areas, the *hukou* system has caused large disparities in the social welfare and rights between urban and rural populations (Cheng & Selden, 1994).

### 3.4.2 School District Housing and Education Group

Besides hukou status, the home address of students is also taken into consideration in local educational policies and enrolment processes. The legally guaranteed connection between school position, *hukou* status, and home address created commercial opportunities for private actors in the housing market and real estate developers to boost sales of their properties and their income through constructing school district housing. Meanwhile, elite schools and real estate developers build a win-win relationship through their cooperation in creating an Education Group in Changsha. In this section, I elaborate on how real estate developers use local policies to financialise educational resources in Changsha city, and how this financialization process makes attaining *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* (I use *NTUP* as its abbreviation in the following analysis) goals of reducing educational inequality more difficult.

Real estate developers have taken advantage of a series of local policies and laws, which I explain below. It starts with laws at the national level. In accordance with the state legislature, under *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 2006)*,* school-age children have the right to attend a school and not face any assessments or examinations, according to the law, each of the local governments are responsible for guaranteeing the prerogative of children which enables them to enrol in schools close to their registered residence as school students. The legality requirements only apply to children suitable for two stages, compulsory primary and secondary education. However, the law was not enforced properly, it was strictly enforced only five years ago in 2014. During this period, the Ministry of Education in China publicised that 19 cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, would enforce the practice of ‘*Entering Nearby Schools*’, due to commence in 2015. However, by 18th April 2014, the stern law which forbids choosing schools for students was already adopted in large urban cities like Beijing. The strategy of executing the principle of ‘*Entering Nearby Schools*’ was aimed at improving the existing education framework and the quality of the education sector by eliminating discriminations in the education sector. From a theoretical perspective, in accordance with this law, the option for parents to choose a school of their liking in the stage of compulsory education is no longer available to them. This results in the decision of whether the parents can send their children to their preferred school depends with the conditions relating to *hukou* and the locality of the children with respect to the school attendance zones (catchment area) of those respective schools (Lu 2014).

As a result of the strict application of the ‘*Entering Nearby Schools*’ principle, a sudden interest sparked throughout the public related to the school district *hukou* and ‘school district housing’. As the name implies, school district housing are references to houses located within the catchment area of the primary or secondary schools. These houses gained a lot of attention since children living in these houses could easily gain entrance to the schools of their parents’ choice. It is also important to mention that parents in China have attached extreme importance to children’s education. For example, in 2016, HSBC released a report showing that parents in mainland China are rated highest among parents over 15 countries the world on the degree of emphasis on education funds for children. Nearly 60% (59%) of China’s parents think education funds for children is the most important expenditure in family compared to other financial needs such as mortgage repayment, insurance expenditure, financial investment, and retirement reserve, which is much higher than the global average of 32% (Sohu 2016; Caixin 2016a). This extreme importance attached to schooling comes from cultural and historical tradition in China. Education is not only a considerably essential if not the most important means to advance oneself in modern China, it is also the only pathway to pass the examinations and become a civil officials in ancient China from the 7th century to 1905. Education is still the main channel of mobility, which provides an opportunity to climb up the social ladder in contemporary China (Wang 2009), especially for those young generation of rural people, if they want to move to cities and compete with their urban counterparts in job market under the restriction of hukou system (Chen 1988).

As a direct result of the ‘*Entering Nearby Schools*’ policy implemented by the government, a sudden demand was seen in housing located within school district of elite schools by Chinese families with school age children, *school district housing* became tremendously popular within the real estate industry. Property developers seized the opportunity and used the policy to hike prices and create competition for houses within the *school district*, real estate agents also exploited the lack of even resource allocation within the Chinese educational system, this fact is effective in promoting school district housing, with no other alternative, most parents use such loopholes in the system to take advantage and fulfil the prerequisites in order to get their children enrolled into schools of their choice. Moreover, conforming to the *Household Registration Ordinance (*The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 1958*)*, there a number of ways to achieve a change of *hukou*, one such method is to own property within the specifically designated area. This is due to the fact that upon owning a property such as a house or an apartment, a procedure can be followed by an individual gets the right to move his/her *hukou* address to the desired new location. Most parents tend to use this method to change their *hukou* to be within the borders of the specific catchments of their preferred school, consequently, owning a house within the school district is regarded by many as one of the most efficient ways to get children enrolled in preferred schools or in elite schools. In addition to owning a property providing an easy way, changing *hukou* alone is a complex process that requires government intervention which is time consuming and the outcome may not always be a good one. Lastly, a residential address has higher value than *hukou* address when local schools consider a child’s enrolment (Lu 2014). Conceptually, this means owning a house inside the correct catchment area is a more important condition alongside having the right urban hukou. Even though hukou status is not an essential requirement when applying to local public schools in Changsha now, it is still one of the criteria which decide enrolment ranking in this city. It goes without saying that the emergence of school district housing in the education system made enrolment dependent on ability to pay.

It is important to note that having a home address within the catchment area of a specific school district is not the only reason why school district housing is attractive to so many parents. Beside constructing *school district housing,* real estate developers cooperate with elite schools by constructing branch schools close to the residential developments. On completion, the municipal Education Bureau takes over the management of the new branch schools, while the original elite schools send administrative staff to the new branch schools.

*Teacher E: Shazitang Primary School has more than 10 branch schools (11), [they are] in cooperation with a lot of communities. There are a lot of [Shazitang] branch schools constructed in Changsha.*

*Interviewer: What kind of cooperation do they have?*

*Teacher E: It’s like a contract signed by the real estate developer and the original Shazitang Primary School. [If you] buy a house from that real estate developer, then your children can enroll in that branch school. That’s the way they cooperate with each other.*

*Interviewer: Do you mean the real estate developer signs a contract with the original Shazitang Primary School?*

*Teacher E: Yes. Now they belong to an Education Group. Nowadays, large-scale schools all belong to an Education Group, and all cooperate with real estate developers to construct a lot of branch schools. So does our school, and Fengshushan Primary School.*

*Interviewer: I see. What relationship does the original elite school have with its branch schools?*

*Teacher E: They [the original elite school] send administrative staff to branch schools. Maybe a director in the original elite school becomes the school president in a respective branch school. That’s it. Management is from the original elite school, but teachers are recruited by branch schools themselves independently. They [teachers in branch schools] are not pedagogical teachers, they are enrolled through open recruitment. [Teacher E, interview, 13/10/2017]*

Even though teachers in branch schools are not as experienced and qualified as those at the original elite schools (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*), many parents still trust the teaching quality in them and are prepared to buy *school district housing* in order to send their children there. Therefore, the property prices of *school district housing* are increased with its incidental educational value, and elite schools are able to expand through this cooperation with real estate developers. As shown in interviews for this research, this win-win relationship not only makes properties around elite schools increasingly expensive so that only rich families can afford them, but also increases the benefit to elite schools as Education Groups.

### 3.4.3 Obstacles arising from Institutions and Policies

At the same time as private actors in *school district housing* and *education groups* played a role in worsening the problem of educational inequality in Changsha, the education system itself was undermining the implementation of local *NTUP* to achieve its goal*.* In this section, I introduce the reason why *enrolment ranking* was created in local educational policies dealing with student applications, and how this ranking added fuel to the fire of educational inequality in Changsha.

*Enrolment ranking* is a reaction to the pressure on local governments to provide enough school positions for children who have moved to Changsha. The existence of an imbalance between the limited increase in the number of school places provided and the climbing numbers of children of migrant workers have been admitted by teachers, government officials, and migrant parents themselves (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level* and Chapter 9 *Policy Implementation*).

To deal with the pressure, the local Changsha Education Bureau produced an educational policy allowing local public schools to introduce enrolment ranking. In *enrolment ranking*, students applying to public schools at the compulsory education stage are categorized into five types, according to different *hukou* and property status. The first type of students has local residence and local *hukou.* The second type is those students with local *hukou* but no local properties, namely, original Changsha local residents (who have been living in Changsha for a long time). The third type are those students with local properties but no local *hukou;* the fourth type is those with local *hukou* but no local properties, i.e. new Changsha local residents (who just come to this city relatively more recent compared to the second type). The fifth type is those students with neither local *hukou* nor local properties.

Meanwhile, since 2015, the Changsha Education Bureau started to limit class size by reducing classes to a maximum of 50 students. With the *enrolment ranking* required by educational policy, it is even more difficult for migrant children without local properties and *hukou* to gain entry to local public schools where they can receive good teaching. Under these circumstances where there are restricted school places and migrant parents lack special social relations or local properties, they have no choice but to send their children to more distant schools or migrant schools, both of which choices can be less than ideal. It shows that to a certain extent, educational inequality in this city is the result of the education system itself valuing wealth over other considerations. When it comes to distributing educational opportunity, the *enrolment ranking* policy has acted as an institutional obstacle, reinforcing the educational inequality that migrant students already face. As a result, it has undermined the implementation of the local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* (its content will be introduced in detail in Chapter 5. *Policy Context on National Level*)*,* departing from the original goal of reducing educational inequality for migrants as stated in national *NTUP.*

## **3.5 Summary**

In this chapter, the question of “what is educational inequality in China?” was answered through comparing literature review and practical education situation of migrant children in Changsha. The question of “why is there educational inequality?” was answered by introducing the basic components of the education system and the enrolment requirement in China. To put it simply, educational inequality is the outcome of interplay between *hukou* system and the financialisation of the school system in China. Because financialisation and private actors (such as real estate developers) have partially taken charge of the education system in Changsha city through the dual system (public and private) of the education ‘market’, educational resources have gone beyond a basic social service that could be delivered/distributed by local government equally. The privatisation of education system has hereafter become the fatal factor that worsens educational inequality in urban China, with which the wealthy group can always buy their way into the centre of the system, while people without such wealth and resources on the sidelines. In the next chapter, how China’s state intends to address this problem on national level will be introduced through examination in policy contexts in three related public systems.

**CHAPTER FOUR – SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN CHINA**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter centres on social and political change in China during the last three decades, which provides a useful backdrop to the question about the role of media (which will be discussed in Chapter 7 *Agenda-Setting Process*). To portray this background, I depict how rising inequalities and changes in socio-political architecture have brought growing space for collective action in urban China. This chapter is organised around four main questions: How has the Chinese state been characterised as *authoritarian*? How has space emerged for civil society and collective action in the multi-scalar and complex Chinese policy system? How does the state respond to public pressure? What is the biggest challenge in the social and political environment for governments and state in China? To answer these questions, I start by presenting a discussion around the political nature of China by other academics. Then I explore the development trajectories of *civil society* in China, along with its political and social influences on social and political systems in China. After that, I analyse the responses of the state and governments towards the growing civil society, especially the surveillance and repression of collective action in China. Finally, I demonstrate the growing concern for rising inequalities as a dilemma faced by the state and governments in China. Through analysis in this chapter, we can see that rising inequalities, along with growing space for various forms of organising in civil society, have become the dominating themes in social and political change in urban China during the last three decades.

## **4.2 Nature of Political Structure in China**

This section starts with a debate in the academic field about the nature of the political structure of China, through analyzing the party’s control in different areas, decentralization of the government system in China, and the relationship between governmental and non-governmental actors. There are many scholars who have debated the political nature of China, and its political change during the past few decades. Even though the CCP’s position as the central governing role is untouched, it is not accurate to claim that Chinese government is a monolithic entity. There are circumstances when different agencies, leaders, or leaders of government run in opposite directions during work, and the concept of a common intention remains undefinable or unmeasurable (King, Pan & Roberts 2013). According to Tang (2005), the CCP has control over the state machinery organizationally and personally. Even though the party has withdrawn its controlling force from several public sector organisations, it is still a fact that the party remains its dominance over key areas including nominating the head of state, the legislature (for example, President Xi, as the current leader of the party, has changed the constitution in China about chairman term limit), the military, the judiciary, and the media. Through the party’s undisputable position, it has given some solid basis for researchers such as He & Su (2017), Ortmann & Thompson (2018), Liu (2018) , Wong & Peng (2016), and He (2011) to consider the government led by the CCP as an authoritarian system.

However, different perspectives from Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson (2013) have questioned this image of a monolithic authoritarian regime. They have pointed out that Chinese government is highly decentralized. Even though the political structure in China is a single-party state, it does not coalesce as a singular authority, consistently implementing a single series of policies on the broad masses of the people. State actors have various relationships with non-state actors as well as different policy behaviours, depending on their locations in different administrations, associations and affiliations (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson 2013). Other scholars such as Peter Ho (2007) have characterized China as a country with a semi-authoritarian political setup in association with growing social spaces for collective action. He believes the semi-authoritarian environment in China has proved restrictive, and yet has become increasingly conducive to collective action in China’s society during the past few decades (Ho 2007).

At the “authoritarian” end of the scale, the political environment in China is confining, so that social movements are forced to exist without physical form, leading an almost underground existence (Pei 1995; Nathan 2003; Weatherley 2006; Lee & Zhang 2013). In order to survive, independent non-governmental associations strongly rely on the state for legitimacy. This has to a certain extent prevented them from establishing close connections with citizens, or with international donors, and also provides an evidence supporting suggestions about authoritarianism in China’s political system. At the “semi-” end of scale, it has been found that China is in a political environment where the boundaries among civil society and state are very blurred (Howell 2011). Meanwhile, scholars such as He (2010), Thøgersen (2010) and Warren (2011) have effectively demonstrated the existence of space at the intersection of authoritarianism and deliberative influence in the government system in China. It is believed that through a network of informal linkages, social structures that are capable of assembling resources efficiently, clamouring for citizen’s valued or craved identities, can be developed, and construct a moderate level of “counter-expertise against state-dominated information on social cleavages and problems” (Ho 2007, p. 189).

## **4.3 Development Trajectory of Civil Society in China**

This section provides a discussion around the theoretical definition, emerging background, and the responses of the state and governments towards *civil society* in urban China. The overall introduction of the concept ‘*civil society’,* and its developing trends over the last three decades, lays a foundation for the discussion of *collective action* in urban China (it also relates to the analysis of local government’s responses towards *collective action* in practice in Changsha in my case, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*). Building on the introduction of *civil society*, I also analyse the contribution of *collective action* in terms of political and social change in urban China. To depict the controversial space left for *collective action*, I illustrate both the progress and setbacks of the development of *collective action*. Therefore, in the last part of this section, the censorship programme in China is presented, reflecting the general strategy of the state and government use of this practice to maintain stability and their authority.

### 4.3.1 Definition and Background of Civil Society in China

The definition of *civil society* has changed over time. In classical thinking, it was seen as a type of political alliance which, together with the state, governed social conflict, by enforcing rules to prevent citizens from harming each other. It was also considered as a type of contingent associations that needed to be guarded by the state, due to its essential role in defying autarchy (Edwards 2009). At the centre of the concept of *civil society* is the value of the voluntary associations in developing pluralism and putative social norms, attaching great importance to universal trust and collaboration, while constraining the power of centralising institutions. The existence of a *civil society* with extending social groups involved is considered to be a type of armour to protect the democratic polity from domination by one particular group (Edwards 2009). To put it simply, this term is used to represent the universe of independent citizens who organise around common concerns and interests (Howell 2011). Even though the ruling party in China is opposed to democratic regime change, the suggestion that there is an absence of *civil society* in China due to the lack of autonomy from the government system fails to comprehend the dynamics and initiative that independent actors utilise to organise around particular needs, interests, or issues (Howell 2011). The emergence of *civil society* in Chinais attributed to the market reforms and consequent changes in socio-political and economic architecture (Howell 2011).

### 4.3.2 Changing Responses towards Civil Society from the State

Before the *Opening Up* reform in 1978, there was little space for citizens to organise activities independently, due to the state’s thorough intrusion into the daily life of Chinese society in both rural and urban areas. After the market-oriented reform, economic and social infrastructure has experienced a profound transformation in China. In particular, ownership systems were diversified, the state relaxed control over rural-urban migration, foreign trade has expanded, and foreign investment was allowed into China’s market, which resulted in pluralization of interests, rising social differentiation and stratification, thereby creating reasons for the Party to give more space to civil society and practices around it in order to maintain the CCP’s rule. First of all, governance in China has become increasingly complex. Traditional command authoritarianism can no longer succeed in the complicated and pluralistic political and social environment which has been brought about by market development. There is a clear realisation among the party’s leaders that there is a need for new systems to connect with society, new forms of association to reach out to a more complex society (Howell 2011). Since the mid-1980s, new social organisations have rocketed in China, and the concept of “civil society” was introduced into analysis about China by scholars including White Howell & Shang (1996), Gold (1990), and Sullivan (1990). In China’s context, this term was used not only to portray a phenomenon of mushrooming civic organisations, but also to represent a longing that its development can presage the democratisation of China (Howell 2011).

As economic reform deepened over time, in the early 1990s, China’s ruling party began to relax its tight control over society. With the easing of political control, civil society embraced its further development in China in two ways. First, an increasing number of independent associations formed a new stratum of organisations, concerning the needs and interests of marginalised groups (such as the rights of migrant workers). Meanwhile, the state has recognized the necessity of providing better services for migrant workers’ needs and improving their citizenship rights as temporary residents instead of outsiders in the city (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson 2013). Secondly, Chinese citizens have found more ways to bypass the registration process that was imposed by the state to gain tighter control over civil associations. Through maneuvering around the regulatory regime, the space for civil associations was enlarged (Howell 2003). Since the 2000s, responses from the state and government towards civil society are conflicting, including both restriction and promotion under the influences of three key incidents[[4]](#footnote-4) (Howell 2011).

In practice, civil society consists of various types of actions and organising in China, with different degrees of formality and legality. Even though the party wields tight control over collective action and expression of opinion that can potentially threaten social stability and its regime, the trend of civil associations is becoming more widespread and treated less as rival political entities to the CCP is unstoppable in China. To sum up briefly, from the 1980s to the 2010s the development of civil society in China has experienced incremental cycle, in which periods of expansion following periods of restriction, and the spaces for independent organising such as collective action and expression of ideas has enlarged significantly, compared to the time before the economic reform in the late 1970s (Howell 2011). It is important to notice that the boundaries between the state and civil society are constantly under negotiation, in which the ruling party holds conflicting responses towards civil society organising, and the civil society actors have fought hard against restrictions on their associations imposed by the state (Howell 2011), which prepared for the development of collective action in urban China.

## **4.4 Collective Action in China**

This section is committed to finding out why there is space for *collective action* in China and how the state and government have responded to it. It also looks at the contribution of *collective action* to reducing inequalities in China, which I consider to be a significant improvement that collective action brought to social change. To begin with, I examine how space is left for emergence of *collective action* in China, by current the economic, social, political environment, high level of inequality, differentiation in interests and needs, improvements in communication technology, and division in government system in China. Then I demonstrate how and why the state and government suppressed the space for, and even prevent *collective action* through large-scale censorship programme, especially those in forms of protests or public petition, in order to maintain social stability. It shows *collective action* in China has been confronted with considerable resistance from the state and government. Finally, I examine the influences of collective action on the public’s awareness and attention towards particular social issues in China, and on shifts in governance strategy, which lays a foundation for understanding the pressure on the state and local governments to address rising inequalities in later section.

### 4.4.1 Emerging Background of Collective Action in China

“Collective action” has greatly contributed to China’s political development. There are various forms of *collective action* in different countries and situations. I would like to narrow the discussion of collective action in my research to those aimed mainly at challenging and changing some aspect of the socio-political order that shows inequality in practice in China (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson 2013). In general, societies can organize collective action in three ways: “through rules or laws enforced by the coercive power of the state, through the unintended consequences of individual decisions in the marketplace, and through social mechanisms embedded in voluntary action, discussion and agreement” (Edwards 2009, p. 11).

Several economic, social and political factors have provoked the collective action of citizens, and the government’s tolerance towards its emergence. First, the intensification of the reform of state enterprises in the mid-1990s resulted in millions of workers who had worked in state enterprises becoming unemployed, while the large state enterprises could no longer exist as a social welfare-providing system for their employees (Lee 2007). Within this context, the ruling party and local governments in China have recognised the need for a more diverse structure of service-providers and labour-absorbers in society, while admitting the contribution of non-governmental organisations and collective activities around welfare issues (Howell 2011).

Secondly, increasingly diverse and differentiated interests resulting from market reform in China have created opportunities for non-governmental initiatives to expand and exist as organisational expressions of new interests (Howell 2011). When the Chinese government is dealing with the rising level of inequalities resulting from market reform, citizens have highly different prospects and interests. Like government leaders, ordinary people have also been faced with a great deal of varying behaviours, critera, and from state and non-state actors. Under the influence of the trends and characteristics mentioned above, there are more opportunities and space, as well as tensions stimulated for people to launch, mobilise resources and make progress for social change (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson 2013).

Meanwhile, the development of communication technology has created more chances for citizens to organise and act collectively (Howell 2011). In addition, since the 1980s, laws enacted by the state, such as the Labour Law (enacted in 1995) and the Property Law (enacted in 2007), have brought significant shifts in the perceptions of rights-protection in China’s society. While these laws have not contributed much in protecting citizens and their legal rights, they have nurtured a new understanding in Chinese citizens’ minds: citizens in China have legal rights, including the right to protest against behaviour that violates those rights. These enacted laws have also provided both legitimacy and channels for certain types of collective action in China. Finally, there are different policy behaviours and relationships among governmental as well as non-governmental actors. These divisions between different bureaucracies and levels of government have provided spaces and opportunities for collective action (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson 2013). To summarise it simply, it is the efforts of providing legitimacy, enhancing perceptions of citizens’ rights in the public’s minds, creating channels or platforms, along with improvements in communication technology, diversifying interests in society, and divisions in the government system that have cleared space for collective action in China.

### 4.4.2 The Responses towards Collective Action

However, when leaders of CCP realised that economic reform’s potential in impairing social stability under the joint influences of increasing inequalities, citizens who are likely to organize collective action are being watched, especially when there is key political events. The state and government have suppressed collective action for various reasons (Howell 2011). As reported by many China observers, nowadays the Chinese government attaches great importance to maintaining stability (King, Pan & Roberts 2013). When *collective action potential* almost equated with factionalism, disarray, and turmoil from the perspective of the Chinese government, collective action, especially in the form of protests, is prevented at all costs by governments at different levels in China. As a result, China has conducted probably the most extensive censorship programme (which will be introduced in a later section) in human history to forestall collective actions (King, Pan & Roberts 2013). The CCP has no tolerance in collective action concerning sensitive issues, such as setting up alternative leading parties which dismisses CCP rule, or activities calling for democracy. But certain types of collective action are accepted and even encouraged by the CCP (Howell, 2011). For example, collective actions/activities that provide welfare services to meet the needs of society, address sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS, with which local governments find difficult to deal. Collective actions that contribute to building a harmonious society (apolitical) are accepted and welcomed by the party and governments in China (Howell 2004; Howell 2011).

In the following analysis, I would like to illustrate how the censorship programme functions as another main response of state and government towards *collective action* as an alternative to direct suppression, by depicting the targeted behaviours of the censorship programme, the logic behind the government’s censorship target, and two theories that underpin China’s censorship programme on social media.

Scholars like King, Pan & Roberts (2013) have conducted research into China’s censorship programme in terms of governments’ responses, attitudes towards government criticism and collective expression and the reasons behind it. It has been reported in their research that negative, even acerbic posts with criticism of the state, or its leaders, and its policies are not the main target of the censorship programme in China. Instead, the censorship programme is aimed at restraining collective action, by means of cutting off comments that represent, reinforce, or stimulate social mobilization, no matter what content is included. It is oriented towards preventing collective activities that are happening now or may occur in the future. It tries to cut social networks with potential to organize collective movements (King, Pan & Roberts 2013).

Two theories underpin the censorship programme in China, categorized by different assumptions about the main goals of the Chinese leadership. The first theory is *state critique* theory, which assumes the Chinese leadership aims to restrain exceptional opinions and to cut down public expression that brings criticism of elements, policies, or leaders of the Chinese state. This theory would suggest that the censorship programme in China would redirect public expression to make it more favourable to those in power, in other words, those who work for the government and the Communist party. The second theory is *collective action potential,* which assumes that the censorship programme in China is targeted at people who join together to express themselves, motivated by someone other than the government, with the potential to bring collective expression into collective action. This second theory would suggest that a great number of people communicating on social media about the same subject, and one that seems likely to generate collective action (such as protests and other events) stands a good chance of being censored (King, Pan & Roberts 2013). The results of the study conducted by King, Pan & Roberts (2013) implied that China’s government attaches greater importance to restraining information with the potential to stir up collective action rather than criticism towards government. Howell (2011) declared that, overall, the CCP party has a low tolerance for criticism about the state and local government, especially around sensitive issues[[5]](#footnote-5) that can potentially provoke the rage of the public. Meanwhile, the censorship programme targeting potential collective action also shows that China’s regime is adopting a paternalistic strategy to prevent chaos and disorder, because the Chinese government considers restraining citizens’ horizontal communications as a legal, justifiable and efficient way to govern and protect its people from unrest and instability (Perry 2010).

### 4.4.3 Consequential Influences of Collective Action in China

It is difficult to draw a conclusion about the full impact of collective action on social change in China, as both expected and unexpected consequences are involved, as well as continuing and temporary influences on social change. Even though there has not been regime change resulting from collective action, it has contributed to some broad changes in society and socio-political relations in China. Specifically, it has shifted the values, comprehension, and prospects of the public (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson, 2013). Various types of protests and other forms of collective action have enhanced public awareness, attention and fury in the face of social inequality and injustices. This without doubt has increased the great pressure on state/government authorities. State and governments on different levels have responded to these pressures with suppression, or policy measures that are targeted at addressing social concerns. This has emphasized a shift in governance resulting from increasing collective action in China: a mushrooming number and range of people have participated in influencing issue-framing discourse and even public decision-making processes, which eventually influenced policy outcomes either through shaping the narrative about social issues, or affecting policy implementation in subtle or direct ways (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson, 2013).

## **4.5 Rising Inequalities as a Great Challenge in Current China**

Following the analysis of the growing space for intervention from civil society and different levels of government towards the state’s domination in previous sections, in this section, I present an overall examination of rising inequality as the biggest challenge confronted by the state in urban China. This section also looks at how the Chinese state has been trying to reduce this trend. To begin with, I examine the background of social inequality, through analysing the influences of the market economy and the *hukou* system on rising inequalityin urban China. In addition, several groundbreaking reforms and their influence on reducing inequalities (that resulted from a market economy) are presented. These reforms and programmes are designed and carried out to create a social safety net to stop growing inequality in urban China. Alongside the monumental reforms, I demonstrate reasons why these reforms and programmes have inserted limited influence on reducing inequality, preparing for discussion of the policy context of China in the next chapter.

In China,the *hukou* system has resulted in two key divisions, ‘between urban and rural populations, and between locals and outsiders’ (Jacka, Kipnis & Sargeson, 2013: p. 78). Initially, in the conventional rural-urban indication in the *hukou* system, it was a way of limiting rural population flows into cities, emphasizing a type of regional spatial segregation (Liu, Huang & Zhang 2017). Before the start of economic reform in 1978, Chinese urban policy had attached great importance to the development of heavy industries (Ma 2002). In order to increase investment in industrial development, maintaining low urban consumption became necessary. Therefore, China had implemented anti-migration policy from the 1950s until economic reform started (from 1978). During that period, it was common for China’s leaders to control the growth of the large cities and limit population migration from rural to urban areas on a large scale. However, China’s *Opening up policy* and economic reform (in 1978) changed the development strategy of this country, and promoted China’s urbanization process at the same time. The increasing number of China’s floating population after the 1980s could be understood as a signal implying that the government had lost authority in controlling rural-urban migration when China was in the process of economic transformation. In was also during that time that China embraced its economic boom and climbing inequality (Xiao 2013), which reshaped the theme of modern China, from poverty to rapid economic growth, from equal to inequality. High levels of variation and inequality have therefore become a typical characteristic of China’s society during the past few decades; this has been subject to scholarly attention among western and Chinese researchers such as Wang (2018), Zhang (2019), Solinger (2019), Wu and Huang (2007) and Davis and Wang (2008).

Although China’s economy has been booming at a rapid pace, it has also become a country with extreme economic inequality, with the top rate of escalation in income inequality in the world within the last three decades (Carl, Zhao & Li 2001; Wang 2008; Li, Sato & Sicular, 2013; Whyte 2014; Yu & Xiang, 2014). While inequalities in China’s society worsen over time, it is still governed by the CCP, whose legitimacy is based on Marxist ideology, which attaches great importance to the element of equality. This social issue has generated more and more social and political concern, not only from the public, but also from the government itself (Wang 2018). Even though the CCP's regime in China has not been overthrown due to rising inequality, it has become a serious concern for leaders in the leading political party in China. Because the Chinese government relies on its paternalistic role to maintain its political legitimacy, failure in addressing or controlling rising inequality can bring about compelling political risk for the CCP’s governance (Whyte 2015). In October 2006, the party’s Central Committee committed itself particularly to the consideration of social issues for the first time. Unlimited growth is no longer encouraged by policymakers in China. Instead, a more sustainable model that gives underprivileged groups more access to job opportunities, basic education, health care, and social security is pursued, and the government has started promoting workers’ rights more actively (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 2006).

As a result, the Chinese government carried out a series of programmes to create a social safety net for its citizens. For example, nine-year compulsory education has become free since 2001; rural population has been integrated into the New Cooperative Medical System (NCMS) since 2003; urban residents in the informal sector or those unemployed are entitled to enjoy the Urban Resident Basic Medical Insurance since 2007; workers in the informal sector and unemployed workers in cities are integrated into the pilot New Rural Pension Scheme since 2009, and the Urban Resident Pension Scheme since 2011 (Wang 2019). However, even though the Chinese government has increased social spending at a rate that is higher than the rate of government revenue growth (Wang, 2018), such efforts to build a social safety net in reducing inequalities have not met government’s original goals (Naughton 2017). On the contrary, the role Chinese government plays in reducing inequalities is quite limited, not only because its efforts in redistribution cannot offset its role in initial distribution of income, which is favours the government and more advantaged groups, but also because migrant workers and rural population are still poorly covered by these programmes. In addition, policies in the Chinese government’s redistributive programmes are still on the side of more privileged groups, closing off the channels for social groups at the bottom to climb up (Naughton 2017).

**4.6 Summary**

At this stage, we can see that in an authoritarian system like China, there is still space for civil society and collective action, generated from significant social and political changes including market-oriented reform, pluralization of interests, rising social differentiation, division of governments and policy behaviours on different levels, increasing complexity in governance, and development of communication technology. If the relationship between the state and civil society remains contentious in incremental cycle, the government’s tolerance towards collective action is dependent on its potential to disrupt social stability and its regime. While the scenarios I portray are by no means exhaustive changes in the social and political dimension in urban China, it is my hope that previous discussions provide pertinent snapshots of the progress and setbacks faced by the civil society, along with its potential to recapture the space for non-government actors to influence policy implementation across China. This chapter also implies that the rising inequality is not only the result of the market reform and urbanisation process in China, it is also the biggest challenge needing to be dealt with in order to boost the integration of migrants, while maintaining the stability of the CCP’s regime in China. How to reduce the inequality of migrants, especially educational inequality confronted by migrant children in cities, is also a main purpose of the national policy, the *NTUP,* which will be discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 5. *Policy Context On National Level*).

**CHAPTER FIVE – POLICY CONTEXT ON NATIONAL LEVEL**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the characteristics of the migration process in China, and how national state policies and programmes try to deal with the challenges posed by this process. This chapter is divided into two stages: before the promulgation of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan;* and after the promulgation of the policy The policy contexts in place before the new policy was issued are categorised into three sections - education, *hukou,* and housing - because they are the three decisive factors determining school enrolment, and therefore, influencing educational inequality confronted by migrants in urban China. After examining the policy contexts of these three elements, I give an overview of the new national policy, which constitutes the most substantial reform of several public systems since the *Open-Up Reform* (in 1978) in China.

The chapter pays special attention to the cooperative actors, stages and aspects of urbanisation in China, and demonstrates the theoretical approach the state takes to helping migrants integrate into cities through this national policy. It provides an understanding of the role of education provision for migrant children in the ambition of achieving *urbanisation of people* in China on a national level.

**5.2 The Urbanisation of Agricultural Migrants**

In this section, I describe the foundation of the policy context of this research, - *the migration of the migrating population to the cities,* including the changing conceptions, composition, and urbanisation of this group. I start by exploring how the conception of migrants group changed in official statements and administrative documents. Then I analyse the composition of migrants in urban China: because different types of migrants experience different sets of living conditions, this leads to varying needs and challenges in their lives and this influenced the focus of the research in terms of what challenges the migrants (that I focused in my thesis) encountered. I therefore narrow down my focus to a particular range of migrants: migrants who have worked and live in cities for a long time but whose *hukou* remains in their rural hometown. Therefore, my research chose to study this group migrants group so I can learn how they deal with the challenges of their particular conditions. After that, there is a discussion of the concept of the ‘urbanisation *of agricultural migrating populations’* is presented to provide a basis for the following analysis in policy contexts in the education, *hukou* and housing sectors. This group had been called *rural migrants* in official documents until the central government replaced it with the concept of the *agricultural migrant population* in 2009during the Central Economic Working Conference. After that, the concept of "urbanisation of *agricultural migrating population*" was put forward at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population 2016) (I use RGAMP as its abbreviation hereafter). When the *NTUP* was promulgated in 2014, the conception of the *agricultural migration population* became more explicit in terms of its nature and constituents. The RGAMP defines the nature of this group according to four characteristics: 1) rural labourers whose primary activities were agricultural; 2) those in a process of transferring to secondary and tertiary industry[[6]](#footnote-6) due to specific needs (e.g. improving living condition, raising family income, seeking refuge with friends or relatives and so on); 3) those who are giving up agricultural activities or doing multiple jobs; 4) those who, under certain conditions[[7]](#footnote-7), are in need of support (for instance, the children of migrant workers or elderly relatives of migrant workers). Therefore, the concept of *agricultural migrating population* is richer than the concept of *migrant workers.* However, this definition has marked the *agricultural migrating population* as a group in need of a better life, but their needs are overshadowed by the needs of the state for a low-wage workforce to support national economic development. This is because migrants’ economic contribution had not been officially recognised before China joined the WTO in 2001 and became the ‘world factory[[8]](#footnote-8)’. After 2001, large numbers of migrants went to eastern and coastal cities work in foreign-funded enterprises such as Foxconn. As a company with the largest number of workers in the world, Foxconn has hired around 1000,000 workers in mainland China, and 80% of are migrant workers (Meng 2019). Migrant workers’ salaries only a half of a counterpart urban worker in 2012; and this low salary level is an important precondition for China to become the world factory and maintain its rapid-growing economy (Meng 2019).

As to its constituent components, the *agricultural migrating population* was divided into two categories: the first category includes people whose *hukou* is still in rural areas but who have been living in cities for some time; the second category includes people living in rural-urban fringe areas who have become urban residents due to the expansion of the city, but local governments have requisitioned their lands. The first category makes up the largest proportion of the transferring population (Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population 2016). Even though migrants in both categories are termed *agricultural migration population,* they face completely different challenges in the process of acquiring their new identities due to differences in their *hukou* status and work conditions. In this research I am focusing on the first category- migrants whose *hukou* remain in rural areas, but who have lived in cities for a long period of time because they acquired work opportunities there.

As stated by Houkai Wei (Caixin, 2016b), the deputy director of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Urban Development and Environment, ‘urbanisation of *agricultural migrating population’* is not only about changing a rural *hukou* to an urban *hukou,* but also about completing a process by which the *agricultural migrating population* can acquire identities as permanent residents in cities, enjoying social welfare, public services, and political rights that are equal with urban residents; achieving significant improvement in their social status, lifestyle, and democratic rights; and finally help them achieve integration into cities and becoming urban citizens.[[9]](#footnote-9) I argue in this thesis, that the way governments at different levels help migrants to integrate into cities is particularly reflected in the trajectory of policy change in several areas: education, *hukou,* housing and income (policy measures targeting at improving income of migrant workers are integrated in the policy enhancing employment situation of this group, which will be introduced in the section 5.8 *Changes in Employment Patterns* of this chapter). These are also the key points determining the efficiency and success level of migrants' integration process. I discuss how these policy contexts evolved before and in preparation for the promulgation of the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in the following four sections.

**5.3 Education Policy**

This section outlines the education policy context at the national level and the problems it has produced. It is essential to investigate the core principle of current educational policies because this provides a better understanding of how educational policies and problems are connected to the other two policy contexts (*hukou* and housing system) in China. I also inspect how the state tries to make (partial) remediation in related education policies at the national level. I describe how the state deals with these inequality-causing effects through related education policies at the national level, comparing differences between two versions of the *Compulsory Education Law,* especially in respect to the clarifications of education responsibilities for migrant children.

As discussed in an earlier chapter (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2), *Entering Nearby School* that was introduced in *The Law of Compulsory Education in the People’s Republic of China* was enacted in 1986 has bound *hukou* status, residency location and school enrolment together. The rigid binding of these three aspects has been loosened (since local *hukou* is no longer a compulsory requirement for enrolment) but not eliminated in the second (and current) version of *Compulsory Education Law* in China, which was issued in 2006. The improvement of the regulations and the intention to reduce educational inequality in terms of educational opportunity and allocation of educational resources, can be found in differences between these two versions of the compulsory education law.

According to Xiaobing Sun (Yuan & Liu 2006), the Director of both Policy Research in Ministry of Education and the Department of Legal Construction, five significant changes were made in terms of reducing educational inequality in China in the second version of *Compulsory Education Law* compared to the first version. First, the mandatory responsibility of providing education for all children at the basic education stage was established. The provision of compulsory education must now be guaranteed by the governments according to the law. Second, all school-age children with Chinese nationality are entitled to educational rights equally, regardless of their sexuality, ethnicity, religion, or their family financial condition. Third, it has been specified that the State Council and local governments at or above the county level should allocate educational resources reasonably and improve the conditions of poor and weak schools. This is to improve the balanced development of compulsory education. In addition to these aims, the necessity for reducing educational inequality was added to the official agenda of the compulsory education law in 2006. Fourth, national supervisory institutions, including Office of National Education Inspection (within the Education Bureau) and Discipline Inspection and Supervision Team (sent from the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection at central level) were introduced into the education system. They aim to exercise close supervision of equality in compulsory education; assess teaching quality; and to monitor the implementation of educational law and regulations at the local level. Meanwhile, compulsory education funds have been established to back up implementation of the compulsory law financially. Last, but also most importantly (for the purpose of this study), regulation of the arrangement of compulsory education provision for children who do not study in schools within their place of domicile (usually migrant children), and whose parents/ legal guardians do not live/work at a registered residence, was added into the law for the first time (Yuan & Liu 2006). The local governments of areas where children have migrated to are responsible for providing their education, instead of local governments of areas where the children were registered as having their *hukou* (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 2006). The evolution in education policy in favour of migrant children mainly comes through clarification of the responsibility for their education provision.

**5.4 Reform of the *Hukou* Policy**

As a national system tightly bound with the education problem of migrants, *hukou* reforming policies are an essential part of the policy context. This section illustrates the loosening of the limitations imposed by the *hukou* system on citizens, especially on migrants. It starts with the reasons for reforming the *hukou* system, followed by an analysis of improvements stated in several related policies on the migration options for rural migrants. I then demonstrate the main direction of reform of the *hukou* system at the national level, discussing a specific policy that explains the responsibility of governments on the issue of migrant population*.*

Witnessing the increasing disparity in economic development, social welfare, and other fundamental rights between rural and urban population over nearly 40 years, the central government in China has realised the necessity of reforming the *hukou* system in the early 2010s. Improving equality of rights and obligations between rural and urban populations is the primary purpose of the *hukou* system reform. China’s government started relaxing the restriction the *hukou* system imposes on the migration of rural populations to the cities when the State Council promulgated *Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System* (Central Government Portal 2014a). For example, the *Suggestions for the Ministry of Public Security on Solving Several Prominent Problems during the Current Hukou Management* (General Office of the State Council 1998) provided several channels for people with a rural *hukou* to change their *hukou* status to urban *hukou* under certain conditions. They can either invest, develop enterprises, or purchase commercial or residential buildings in cities to get a chance of changing *hukou*; if they possess legal and fixed housing in cities; are employed legally with stable income; and have lived in the city for a certain number of years, they are entitled to settle their *hukou* in the cities. Meanwhile, *hukou* status of newly-born children is the same as their fathers’, while other immediate families’ (elderly parents or spouse) *hukou* status are also allowed to be changed and settled to the same registered place with their children and spouse (Central Government Portal 2014a).

In 2012, *Notification of the General Office of the State Council about Carrying Forward Reform of Household Registration System* was issued, pointing out that non-agricultural industries[[10]](#footnote-10)and non-agricultural populations[[11]](#footnote-11) should be guided by governments to transfer to small/medium cities and designated towns in an orderly manner. It stressed that governments should gradually address the rural population’s needs for registering their *hukou* in the cities. Moreover, the rural-urban equalisation of fundamental rural-urban public services has been expected to be achieved step by step, with the specific steps taken depending on local governments (Central Government Portal 2014). Theoretically, *hukou* reform can gradually relieve, if not eliminate, the disparity in education between rural and urban populations, since there would be no division in *hukou* status and related differential treatment. Therefore, the effect of *hukou* reform is expected to pull down a pillar that supports educational inequality in China.

**5.5 Housing Policy**

Housing is vital in China because of the way it determines admission to public schools. As a result, the extent to which governments address housing problems confronted by migrants determines how well the education problems they confront can be relieved. Therefore, an investigation into the context of housing policy at the national level is imperative. By reviewing the progress and limitations of the social housing system in China., this section demonstrates how the state deals with the housing problems resulting from large-scale migration. I analyse discrimination against and exclusion of migrant populations in related policies at the national level, followed by an introduction of to the current commercial housing market in urban China. Then I scrutinise two national level housing policies and how, under the influences of real estate developers and local urban residents., they have resulted in decreases in the affordable housing stock for rural migrants This resulted in a new mode of accommodation for migrants in cities by obtaining informal housing in urban villages.

Since the Chinese Economic Reform and Opening-up policy in 1978 triggered large-scale migration in China, providing accommodation for migrant workers has become a huge challenge for Chinese government (Li & Zhang 2011). And since 2008, a social housing system has been established by the Chinese government for low-income households in cities. Two main elements of progress have been proposed in the initiative: construction of low-cost houses available for rent targeting low-income households; provide housing funds through various schemes for owner-occupied houses aimed at the lower-to-middle class social groups earning an average income (Jia, 2008 cited in Li & Zhang 2011). However, the availability of subsidised rental houses was limited to migrant workers throughout China in a number of cities (Li & Zhang 2011). Besides, it has been reported in *The National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China in the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan Outline* (2016), there is an excessive inventory of commercial housing in China aimed at producing greater revenue for governments.

At the same time, two types policies resulted in the declining supply of affordable housing for rural migrants: ones that encourage predatory urban real estate development (Shin 2009), and ones that impose restrictions on rental behaviour (such as shared-flats) in urban residential districts (Wang 2006). I will explain respectively in terms of their impacts on housing prices, affordable housing, stock, life radius of people (it is a locational consideration, e.g. distance from home to workplace or schools), and rental behaviour. The former type of policies is heavily involved with the role of the government. The Chinese government earns most of its income through taxation and through the sale of land usage rights to real estate developers (Wang & Murie 2000). As a result, there is always an incentive for local governments to increase the price of lands to increase government revenue, particularly in central areas in cities. Local governments can also charge high fees through numerous procedures during the housing construction process which has pushed up the overall cost of housing construction (Luo 2009, cited in Li & Zhang 2011). Consequently, developers in the real estate market aim at maximizing their profits by constructing flats that are bigger in size, this is also considered as a faster way to recover their initial investment. In contrast to smaller and less costlier ones, these are much more affordable for private rental/ownership for families earning an average income (Wang 2010, cited in Li & Zhang 2011). Apart from wiping out the availability of reasonably priced housing within the central districts of urban areas (Shin 2009), the process has also expanded the boundaries of the city away from the city centre (because land prices in more remote areas are cheaper than that of in central areas in a city) which has meant that rural migrant workers have to travel further away from the centre where there are places of work to find affordable houses in cities (Zhang 2003; Li 2005; cited in Li & Zhang 2011).

The latter policy, *Regulation for Commercial House Leasing* (Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development 2010)*,* initially resulted from pressure posed by local urban residents to restrict the number of rental properties, with the result that the central government’s policy in response has cut off rural migrant workers’ main route to finding accommodation in cities. On the one hand, a large proportion of rural migrant workers are at the bottom of the housing market. Urban housing benefits policies, including *subsidised house purchase[[12]](#footnote-12)*, *housing funds[[13]](#footnote-13)*, and *favourable mortgage rates[[14]](#footnote-14)*, are aimed at homebuyers. Most migrants are left to the rental housing market, but at the same time, shared renting has been publicly denounced, with complaints mainly coming from local urban residents. Not only are shared flats criticised in the media (usually linked to ideas of unsafe, dirty, substandard even inhuman places), but also higher standards have been established for private rental accommodation. This means that property owners are required to pay heavy fines if they fail to meet the established criteria under the policy, and the supply of private rental housing declined as a result (Wang 2006).

Meanwhile, aggressive urban regeneration has caused declining provision of affordable housing in relatively central locations in cities. Under such conditions, national land policy supports employer-provided dormitories. Specifically, the differential pricing of land in China has lowered the cost of building dormitories provided by employers because land for industrial use costs less than land for residential use. When industrial employers have spare space to build dormitories for workers, dormitories can be built with considerably lower land costs than regular residential housing (Li & Zhang 2011).

**5.6 Summary of Policy Context**

This section gave a brief introduction to the policy context and its implications for the educational inequality of migrant children. Whether, or to what extent, these transformations and changes (that are suggested by the policies discussed above) can be carried out in practical cases is addressed in the detailed case analysis section in later chapters of this research. They The summary of the changes in related public systems are stepping stones to understanding the emergence of and rationale behind the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan.*

From the policy context discussed above, several assumptions can be made about the roots of social injustice and inequality in education and housing problems of the migrant population in urban China. First, significant inequality in terms of educational opportunities and the allocation of educational resources between migrant children and local urban children results partially, yet crucially, from the *hukou* system. The principle of *Entering Nearby School* has made the situation worse*.* Therefore, breaking down the *hukou* system would be a key to reducing inequality in education for migrant children. Second, despite the relaxation of limitations on migration status posed by the *hukou* system, the enrolment requirement is still bound to the place of residence. It has tied the housing problem of migrants and the education problems of migrant children together. More importantly, discrimination at the institutional level (from the *hukou* system and the housing security system) and at the individual level (native residents) against migrant populations are two substantial reasons behind the residence problem of migrants. These problems are recognised by the central government, and responded with *New-Type Urbanisation Plan,* which I will elaborate on in the next section.

**5.7 The New Policy: *New-Type Urbanisation Plan***

In this section, I aim to establish an understanding of the main policy on which this research depends: The *New-Type Urbanisation Plan (2014-2020)* (Central Government Portal 2014)*.* It is in this plan that reducing educational inequality amongst migrant children has been raised to a new level, requiring governments on different levels in China confront and respond to this problem. I start with discussing how the state became concerned with the severe integration problem of migrants in urban China. Then I introduce the emergence and content of this new policy, its ambition in terms of *hukou* reform, its primary purpose of ‘*citizenisation* of migrants’ and its implications. Finally, I demonstrate how this new policy intends to help migrants integrate into cities in relation to *hukou* reform, guaranteeing migrant children’s educational rights, and broadening channels of housing security for migrants at the national level. The extent to which this new policy genuinely addresses migrant children’s educational problems can only be checked at the local level through an analysis of policy implementation.

After the *Chinese Economic Reform* (referred to as the programme of *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*) and *Opening-up Policy* promulgated in 1978, and which expedited industrialisation, urbanisation in China experienced a period of rapid development from a low starting point. The sharp contradictions and problems that emerged in the process of urbanisation cannot be hidden (Central Government Portal 2014). On a state level, the Chinese central governing administration has acknowledged the issue that a substantial number of migrants from rural areas are facing difficulties in integrating to the urban life. More specifically, statistics indicate that from a total of 274 million migrant workers in 2014, a remarkable figure of 234 million migrant employees and their accompanying families have been underprivileged in having access to the most fundamental public services available to most urban residents, these vary from education, equal employment opportunities, medical care, pensions, affordable housing, and other aspects (Central Government Portal 2014).

Aiming to rectify this situation, on 16 March 2014, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council of China promulgated a document that aims at the most extensive social reform since the establishment of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan from 2014 to 2020* (Central Government Portal 2014). According to Keqiang Li, the Premier of the State Council of China, the integration of migrant workers into cities is the main challenge of this ambitious programme (NHK 2014). The focus of the programme (Transformation of Urban Village, One Billion Floating People 2014) is transformation (in terms of identities from rural migrant workers to urban citizens) of millions of rural migrant workers who have left agricultural work, and are currently living in cities. In order to help migrants integrate into cities, it is imperative to provide them with access to basic public services and rights. The programme aimed to reform the *hukou* system and achieve equalisation of access to basic public services at the same time (Central Government Portal 2014). According to the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan,* citizenisation of migrants will be completed by 2020. By ‘*citizenisation’,* the government means transferring migrants from ‘rural/migrant status’ to a new identity - permanent citizens -through a three-pronged strategy. First, the policy aims to differentiate *hukou* settlement policy between small towns, medium-sized cities, and megacities; secondly, it aims to guarantee migrant children’s rights to compulsory education equally with local urban children; and third, it aims to enlarge channels for migrants to access housing security/insurance (Central Government Portal 2014).

Corresponding to this plan to differentiate *hukou* settlement policy, a series of *hukou* system reforms has been unfolded. For example, *The State Council’s Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of The Household Registration System* was issued in 2014. It suggests relaxing the conditions required for *hukou* settlement in medium-to-large cities and eliminating the conditions for *hukou* settlement in small towns. Meanwhile, the unification of the urban-rural household registration system is considered as an essential purpose of *hukou* system reform. Through implementing a *residential certificate system*, basic public services that were dependent on urban *hukou* status are expected to have been brought to migrant workers without an urban *hukou*. Mandatory education provision, basic pension, employment service, basic medical care and health, and housing security are listed as basic public services (Central Government Portal 2014). However, the required conditions for *hukou* settlement in cities still include legal and stable residence (in small cities); residence and stable employment (in medium-sized cities), and in addition, the self-employed need to pay their own social insurance. In large cities, the two conditions mentioned above need to be met and participation in urban social insurance for a certain number of years is required. Some mega-cities like Beijing and Shanghai require even more than these two conditions through a Points System for Household Registration. This turns the requirements for obtaining local *hukou* into an indexed quantification through which, given a certain number of points, migrants can get a local city *hukou* (Central Government Portal 2014). A large proportion of migrants finds achieving settlement *hukou* in cities difficult under these demanding requirements. For example, from 2010 to 2014, about 360,000 residents obtained local *hukou* in Dongguan (which has a Points System for Household Registration) meaning that 7200 residents gained local *hukou* each year*,* which is only 0.1% of the migrant population of that city (Ou 2016).

In guaranteeing migrant children’s educational rights, the policy required that their education should be covered by local governments’ education development plans and financial security. However, if migrant children cannot be enrolled into public schools, the government will purchase services to assure migrant children’s educational rights by providing education in inclusive private schools (Central Government Portal 2014).

In the work of broadening the channels of housing security for migrants, it was suggested by the national *NTUP* that migrant workers’ living conditions should be improved by giving them access to low-rent housing, public rental housing, and rental subsidies. In addition, migrant workers who settled their *hukou* in the cities should be covered by the housing security system. The housing policy that binds construction of commercial housing together with affordable housing is expected to improved and implemented, while dormitory-like public rental housing is proposed in areas of migrant concentration and industrial parks (Central Government Portal 2014).

**5.8 Changes in Employment Patterns**

In this section, I examine the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan (NTUP)* according to different actors, stages and aspects of urbanisation in China, which aim to bring about policies targeted at the critical areas of *urbanisation of people.* In the next section, I draw on experiences of urbanisation processes in other countries to compare with the urbanisation model adopted by the state of China, followed by a discussion of conditions to be met to achieve *population urbanisation.*

The national *NTUP* is the first planning program released jointly by the Party Central Committee and the State Council of China. It shows that the state is paying greater attention to urbanisation and its problems. In China, ‘urbanisation' is considered to be a social project in which four main bodies cooperate and participate: the government, enterprises, residents, and think tanks. Like many other places, outsourcing policy implementation to the private sector is a common style of policy making in China. The government has also planned for development of urbanisation in China by dividing it into three stages: exploring the characteristic path for China’s urbanisation development (from 2002 to 2012); confirming the *New Type Urbanisation* strategy (from 2012 to 2014); full implementation of *New Type Urbanisation* (from 2014 to 2020) (Meng2016). According to this chronological arrangement, China’s urbanisation is currently near the end of the third stage (from 2014 to 2020). Hence it can provide ample empirical materials for this implementation study.

To achieve the successful development of urbanisation, China has also aimed to learn from other countries’ experiences. For example, according to Li (2018), a basic model has been developed from the experiences of urbanisation progress in other countries across the world: the order progress of urbanisation is from *location transformation* (from countryside to cities or from small towns to big cities etc.), to *occupational transformation* (i.e. change of employment categories, from doing work that are categorised as ‘agricultural’ to work that are categorised as ‘non-agricultural’), and finally to *identity transformation* (from rural population to urban population) (Li 2018). Considering this, what China’s stated aims for the *NTUP* are remarkably ambitious given the current conditions of urbanisation. The plan is entering the last stage of urbanisation - *identity transformation* - on such a large scale, involving reforms of several of the largest national systems in China (education system, housing system, *hukou* system, and social security system). I argue that this is why the implementation process of this plan in local cities is so difficult to predict, and perhaps it is even too ambitious to achieve its full implementation.

The guiding ideology of the *New Type Urbanisation Plan* that the “urbanisation of people is the core(of China’s urbanisation development at this stage)” (Central Government Portal 2014), has highlighted a shifting mode of urbanisation in China, moving from the *urbanisation of land* to the *urbanisation of people*. It has raised the labour security problem of migrants to a new level, along with increasing need for the integration of migrants. However, the *urbanisation of people* cannot be completed without including the critical step of *occupational urbanisation* as a precondition *population urbanisation* (Meng 2016). Migrants can only be transformed into an urban population through having a stable occupation, income, corresponding social security and acquiring work and lifestyle consistent with local urban residents. Admittedly, migrant workers in China fundamentally lack a sufficient income stream and it has been a widely acknowledged problem which unfortunately is yet to be resolved. Based on the findings from a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2010, it has been estimated that half of the entire new generation of migrant workers[[15]](#footnote-15) (the total number of new generation migrant workers is around 84,870,000 across China) intend to build their lives within the urban zones in China, yet low income and housing problems play a significant role in impeding this migration from the rural areas to the urban areas. These difficulties and obstacles are the main ones restricting migrants from moving to urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2011). Moreover, in the construction industry, migrant workers not only have low incomes, but also have encountered arrears in payment of wages (and sometimes non-payment) (Guo & Huang 2014). As shown in a survey of migrants’ income situations in the construction industry in 2013, most migrant workers (80.1%) in this industry cannot get a monthly settlement (pay by month), and some of them (12%) are not even being paid after working for a whole year (Pan, Wu & Wen 2014). Low/unstable incomes and the privatization of public services (such as education) have contributed to an increase in the numbers of working poor, and worsened the difficulties migrant workers confront during their integration into urban life. The central government has promoted a series of policies in order to complete the *occupational urbanisation* of migrants, transferring them from agricultural work to non-agricultural work, and from rural areas to urban areas, which I discuss in more detail in the next section.

**5.9 Adjustment of Policy towards the Transference of Migrant Labour**

This section takes a closer look at the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms of its efforts to promote rural labour transference to urban conditions.[[16]](#footnote-16) It maps the overall development trajectory of the policy system for labour security for rural labour transferring to non-agricultural work at both national and provincial level. First, I employ the *Red/Green Light* theory (a theory to describe stages of adjustment of policy about migrants, which will be explained in detail later in this chapter) to show how policies about the migration of the rural population evolved to a stage in which promoting labour transference has become an unstoppable trend. After that, a discussion of the problems confronted by migrants during the labour transferring process is presented, followed by an examination of policies at the national level and programmes at the provincial level as government responses to address these problems in order to complete *occupational urbanisation* as an essential part of the *urbanisation of people.*

Economist Angang Hu’s *Red/Green Light* theory describes stages of the adjustment of policy about migrants, arguing that social policies targeting rural migrants in China have experienced three stages, using *red light*, *yellow light* and *green light* as metaphors (Sun2015). From the 1950s to the end of 1983, the migration of rural populations to cities was basically forbidden (the *red light* period). From 1984 to the end of the 1990s, rural populations have been allowed to migrate to cities as long as they can support themselves, yet migration of rural populations was still against urban local regulations on employment and residence (the *yellow light* period). From the start of the 21st Century, the promotion of large-scale transformation of agricultural labour to urban occupations was put forward for the first time in the 10th Five-Year Plan (the *green light* period (Sun 2015).

2003 was a turning point for the employment of migrant labour employment, when the General Office of the State Council (2003) promulgated *State Council’s Notification about Employment Management of and Service Work for Migrants.* In this notification, specific regulations about migrants’ salaries, vocational training, working environment, and follow-up services for migrants were announced. Obtaining high salaries in cities was considered the main motivation for migrants to find jobs out of their rural hometown, but instead they have faced low salaries, malicious non-payment of wages, and lack of basic workers’ rights for a long time. It is also difficult for them to safeguard their legal rights to payment, especially in the engineering construction field. As a result, a range of policies have been promulgated at the national level. For example, in 2004, the former Ministry of Labour Social Security, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Transport all released official notifications in successive years, carrying out special studies in order to address the problematic institutional mechanisms for non-payment of wages confronted by migrants (Meng 2016). At the provincial level, in 2008, the Human Resources Department and the Social Security Department carried out "Spring Action" to provide working opportunities for migrants and guarantee migrants' legal rights. This is intended to help migrants to gain employment as soon as possible, promoting rural surplus labour transfer to non-agricultural industries in Hunan Province (Changsha Evening Newspaper 2008). In 2014, the state issued *New-Type Urbanisation from 2014-2020* (Central Government Portal 2014)*, The State Council’s Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System* (General Office of the State Council 2014a)*,* and *The State Council’s Opinions about Further Improving Service for Migrants.* (General Office of the State Council 2014b)Till then, the systematic and integral policy system of labour security for rural labour transferring has been formed by and large at the national level.

**5.10 Summary**

This chapter has further examined China’s central government intention to break down the roots of educational inequality through launching large-scale reforms in several policy contexts including education, housing and the *hukou* system. In principle, *The New -Type Urbanisation Plan* could help reduce educational inequality and injustice in residence between the migrant population and the local population. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these programmes and reforms are made at the national level, but their implementation is in the hands of local governments. The central government intends to implement the plan in all cities, yet local governments still have the autonomy to make regulations and implement policies at the local level according to their specific situations. Therefore, there is a need to attend to how the context-contingent implementation process is carried out through situated interactions and practices at the local level.

This chapter also refers to the multi-scalar and complex Chinese policy system (Chapter 4. *Social and Political Change in China*). Within a multi-scalar administrative and policy system, making and implementing policies with space for deliberation to adjust to practical situations at local levels becomes feasible. However, this is not to presume that full implementation of a series of policies can easily occur on such a large scale. It is also difficult to predict the actual outcome or effectiveness of these reforms. Whether, or to what extent, these programmes and policies can help address migrants’ education and housing issues and to what extent this programme could reduce inequality in education enrolment for migrant children in practice remains unknown, which made this implementation study necessary. Before moving into implementation analysis in Changsha city, I want to present the position of migrants in the bigger picture of this educational inequality battle, as their experiences provide essential clues to what has compromised effectiveness of the *NTUP* policy in the case city.

**CHAPTER SIX – SUBJECT POSITION OF MIGRANTS**

## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on how life situation, prejudice and misunderstanding coming from teachers, local parents, local policy and institutions work together as a robust joint force, making potential policy efforts in the national and municipal *NTUP* challenging to put into effect. This illustration of experiences between migrants, teachers and local parents is based around my own primary fieldwork. It is essential to understand the current conditions which the migrant group lives in before jumping into how the *NTUP* policy worked in the case city. This not only provides an ‘original case' that can be used to compare with later analysis of the detailed implementation process, but also reveals several crucial factors behind educational inequality experienced by migrants in the city.

I start with introducing the life situation of the migrants group. I draw on Saunder’s (2010) *arrival city* and Tilly’s (1978) *chain migration* to analyse living pattern and migrating pattern of migrants in Changsha, followed by an analysis of the increased workload for the teachers group and related prejudice, as well as teachers’ resistance psychology towards migrant students. After that, I use *individual exclusion strategies* (Ball 2010) to examine how urban local parents monopolise better educational resources for their children through intervening in their children’s school choice, reflecting how geographical separation and social separation between local urban groups and migrants are established and maintained. In this chapter, I build up a picture of how inequality experienced by migrant children is being entrenched through negative assumptions about migrants, through local parents’ protection of their self-interest, and through the pressure of resources and time that are placed on teachers. Therefore, teachers’ perspective play an important role in my narrative (and a lesser degree local parents), because they are who actively constructing the subject position of migrant parents and migrant children in the education system.

## **6.2 Obstacles coming from the life situation**

According to interviews with teachers and school presidents, jobs of migrant parents in Changsha can no longer be categorised merely as the building industry, as they have been enlarged in recent years (most of them were concentrated in the building industry before as construction workers). Nowadays migrant parents have spread into various freelance jobs with a low-budget operation (such as running a small grocery shops, running small breakfast booths, driving taxis), or work as manual labourers, work in manufacturing industries (such as Shanghai Volkswagen and BYD Company in Yuhua District, Zoomlion Heavy Industry, Sany Heavy Industry, Lens Technology), and service industries (such as sanitation workers, shippers in Gaoqiao Market, etc.). In addition, many migrant mothers have given up their jobs because of the need to look after children. At the same time, a large number of migrants work in unstable/low-salaried and labour-intensive jobs, such as helping to sell goods in Grand Market or help with selling motor parts in Motor Parts Town. Their jobs generally require long working hours, and this means that most of them lack the time to take good care of children in terms of both education and daily care. For example, because most migrant parents are busy with work/finding a job, many migrant students are taken care of by their grandparents instead of parents, or by trusteeship organisations around schools. Generation-skipping education[[17]](#footnote-17)has made teaching migrant students a more difficult thing for teachers. Moreover, it has been pointed out by many teachers that most of the migrant parents are unable to carry out ‘after-school education', including supervising the completion and quality of children's homework and providing help and guidance when needed. This is partially due to their demanding work and partly because of their education situation, as shown in the following transcripts.

*Teacher F: Now there is a problem. There are many things that we need parents to cooperate with us to complete. For example, when there is homework including something that should be sent to the teacher through voicemail (via the we-chat social platform), and because they are migrant parents and they do not have that much time, then they could not do it. However, I am working hard to make these things work, but it is not enough only through my hard-work alone. [Teacher F, interview, 09/02/2017]*

The lack of parental supervision of children's school work has become a consistent source of complaints from teachers and sounded a dissatisfied keynote in teachers' perspective on migrant parents.

*Teacher A: A large part of them are doing small business, or work for somebody else when they do not have the ability or capital to run their own business. Most of them are running low-budget operations, wholesale. Those migrant workers who live near Linyuan and Shangyuan are concentrated in plastics, wholesale, umbrellas, small commodity business. Also...selling fruit, snacks, running small supermarkets, restaurants etc., including those who sell deep-fried dough cakes along the street. Their work is painstaking...so teachers need to spend a lot of time to work on their kids, to educate them carefully. Parents do not do much management/education of children. [Teacher A, interview, 10/02/2017]*

It is important to mention that many migrant workers find blending into city life in Changsha difficult. This is not only because of the limited opportunities to interact with local urban residents, as residents living in their communities are mainly migrant workers (not many local residents live in that district), but also the discrimination from a small section of the local population. Different lifestyle and habits have also decreased their chances to integrate into the city.

## **6.3 Living Pattern, Enrolment Situation, and Migrating History**

According to interviews with migrants, school presidents, teachers, and governmental officials, it is safe to say that migrant parents in Changsha are usually concentrated in suburban areas of the city. It is rare for migrant parents to live in central areas in this city because there is a lack of job opportunities that are suitable for them. Meanwhile, properties in the central city usually come with high rents, which are too expensive for most migrant parents' salaries. Additionally, places in schools located in the central city are usually very competitive and limited. Therefore, few school positions are left for migrant students who have no local *hukou* and do not own local properties. Renting properties to get children into respectable public schools in the central city is nearly impossible for most migrant parents, especially for those who have just arrived in this city.

*Interviewer: When I was visiting Bocaimeixihu Primary School (located in the central city), it seems most of their students get enrolled via purchasing properties instead of renting properties.*

*Government Official E: Yeah, few of them live in rented properties.*

*Interviewer: Why is that?*

*Government Official E: Because there are no job opportunities, and rent is high, there is little available land, so there are few factories and shops, so few (migrant workers) rent properties there. [Government Official E, interview, 13/10/2017]*

As shown in table (6-1)[[18]](#footnote-18) below, nearly a third of migrants in Changsha choose to rent properties, and those who can afford commercial residential buildings do not represent even one-tenth of the migrant population in Changsha in 2015. Migrant parents are concentrated in Yuhua District in Changsha, where it has the most complex urban construction and poorer facilities compared to other districts in Changsha. The District is known for its crowded streets and inadequate facilities. It is a district which borders on a countryside area. The logistics industry is located in that district and causes severe traffic jams. The high-speed railway station of Changsha is also located in that district, making travel around that area quite complicated. Most of the migrant parents rent small (typically one bedroom, one living room type) apartments as their home instead of purchasing properties in Changsha directly.

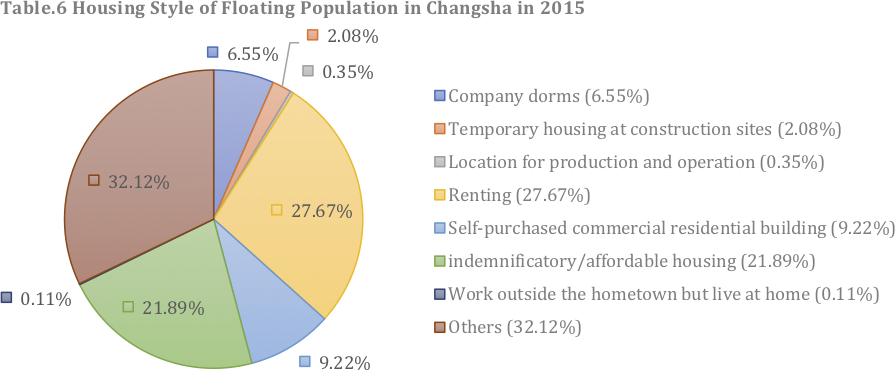


Table 6-1. Housing Style of Floating Population in Changsha in 2015

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p. 49) (translated by author, 2017)

It is worth mentioning that social-housing benefit - a central plank of the national *NTUP* has excluded migrants in Changsha. Public rental housing and low-rent housing is not accessible to migrants without local hukou according to local policies. It has become another exclusionary mechanism. According to local policies, low-rent housing is restricted to residents with local hukou. Public rental housing requires at least a one-year work contract or three-year social insurance, which is difficult for freelance and manual labour migrant workers. Therefore, many migrant workers from rural areas refused to give up their rural hukou and change it into urban hukou, because to do so they would need to give up the land (they own the land right) and the income from the land they owned as rural residents in their hometown. Many of them are not willing to (or are afraid to) give up the land, when they are excluded from most of the social welfare system in cities, and the land in their hometown becomes a type of "social safety net". As an example of implementation failure of a national policy in a provincial city like Changsha, it shows that the national policymakers of *NTUP* did not think of the lived reality of migrants’ lives, which has resulted in rural migrants’ reluctance during the implementation process of hukou system reform in practice.

In addition, ‘arrival city’, normally representing the fringe of cities where immigrant neighbourhoods are concentrated as a base for transition from rural villages to cities (Saunders 2010), for migrant families in Changsha emerged within certain suburban areas, corresponding with two typical types of migrants living in these 'arrival cities'. Certain suburban areas have become a transitional place for migrant families that have just arrived in Changsha because the rental there is relatively low and affordable for migrants without specific skills. The first type of migrants are freelance workers or those doing business with an individual operation. Many of them choose to open small shops, restaurants, grocery stores, or work as itinerant vendors etc., to survive in the first place, and move towards the central city, climbing higher up the social ladder to improve opportunities for their children and families once they acquire a foothold. They tend to concentrate in areas such as Changsha Metro station/Gaoqiao Grand Market in Yuhua District and around transportation junctions. This first type of migrants (especially in Yuhua District) usually rent properties in the beginning, instead of purchasing properties to get an educational opportunity for their children. This is partially because many of them have to send money back to provide for their parents who still live in their rural hometowns, but also because of the increasing price of properties in Changsha. Therefore, most migrant children in these suburban areas are enrolled in nearby public schools or migrant children-concentrated public schools.

*School president A: Parents of those kids (migrant children), they are busy with making money. You see, their salaries are not high, those who work in factories, around 1000 yuan (around 850 sterling) per month, being a waitress or something. They have to support the family, and they want to develop in Changsha. Do they want to buy a property in Changsha? That is not possible. From what I know of current house prices in Changsha, it is very difficult (for migrant workers) to settle and purchase properties in Changsha. However, there are some migrant workers (a small part of this group) who make a lot of money. You see those who open a supermarket and leasing building materials, they make money, or purchase properties in the city, but that is the minority. Because there is a boom in real estate in recent years, so leasing building material is hot, they can make some money. [School President A, interview, 10/10/2017]*

The second type is technology-oriented, concentrated in industrial parks in Wangcheng District. According to interviews with the second type of migrant workers, their migration history in Wangcheng District reflects an immigration mode identified by Charles Tilly (1978), *chain migration*. Their migration pattern could be summarised simply as following steps: after a single migrant find a job in a company/industrial park in Wangcheng district, he/she brings many more family members/relatives/friends from his/her hometown to work in the same company/industrial park. As stated in interviews with managers in several companies, industrial parks located within Wangcheng District mainly have migrant workers, with many fewer local workers. Migrants concentrated there share a common ground: they are all migrant workers with a particular skill/technology. Many of them have even purchased their properties in other districts of Changsha or Wangcheng District after years of hard work.

As pointed out by migrant workers in industrial parks, some of the companies in industrial parks within Wangcheng district have cooperated with local public primary schools within the district. Those companies arrange for children of migrant employees to go to public primary schools. However, there is a disconnect in educational opportunities between schools in Changsha central city and suburban areas like Wangcheng district. According to the National Entrance Exam for High School and High School Admissions Work Plan in Changsha in 2017, the education system in Wangcheng District has not been completely integrated with the education system in central Changsha city in terms of grading and admission system. Moreover, elite middle and high schools are concentrated in central Changsha city. Only students who graduated from primary schools in five other districts (Yuelu, Tianxin, Furong, Kaifu, and Yuhua) can have a chance to be allocated to those middle schools through the Microcomputer Central Allocation system[[19]](#footnote-19). Meanwhile, only students in middle schools in the five districts mentioned above can apply to high schools in central Changsha city. In this system, every public primary school in the five districts mentioned above has several corresponding public middle schools within its respective district. Students who graduate from them can be allocated through the Microcomputer Central Allocation system to one of those corresponding public middle schools at random. Every public primary school in the Wangcheng District has one corresponding public middle school within the district, and their primary and secondary school students cannot be allocated or apply to schools in the other five districts unless their parents purchase properties with school places in the respective schools, or enrol into elite private schools in the other five districts. There are historical reasons behind this disconnected education system between Wangcheng District and central Changsha district. Before 2011, Wangcheng was a small county near the central Changsha city area, and it was not a part of Changsha city until 2011 (when it was officially integrated into Changsha as a district). Therefore, schools in this district were not treated as a part of Changsha city in the planned education system for a long time. The entrance examination for high schools in Wangcheng district has not been integrated with the one in central Changsha district. There are few official explanations about why there has been this disconnect in the two education systems, except that a plan to integrate them with the other five districts was proposed in February of 2019 during the conference on education work in Wangcheng District Education Bureau, promising to do so by 2020.

## **6.4 Increased workload for teachers**

During the interview, many teachers have pointed out an increase in workload due to migrant parents and migrant students in Changsha, which can be divided into the following aspects. Firstly, migrant students have poorer basic knowledge compared to local urban students due to the disparity of teaching quality between rural schools and urban schools. Teachers in local schools need to spend more time and efforts on migrant students’ study.

*Governmental Official C: Migrant parents and students, their (cultural) quality is relatively low, so local schools are not willing to accept them to a certain extent. Because teaching them well take more time and effort, but the budget we get per student (no matter whether we accept migrant students or local students) is the same. Therefore, if they could choose, they would instead choose a local urban student, or, (they would choose to) accept less migrant students, so the burden on them is lighter. [Governmental Official C, interview, 16/10/2017]*

Secondly, most migrant parents have a limited educational level, and their work usually is laborious, requiring long working hours. Therefore, they neither have time to participate in collective activities organised by schools nor do they have the ability and time to undertake ‘after-school education' (tutor children's homework and supervise them). Thirdly, in many migrant families in Changsha, there exists generation-skipping education. Busy migrant parents leave their children to their grandparents, and most grandparents from rural areas cannot keep up with proper scientific educational methods to take care of grandchildren; and grandparents tend to spoil them. Because of this, teachers complain about these migrant students because of their poor behavioural habits and bad manners etc., which increases teachers' workload in correcting them. These problems potentially add fire to pushing teachers away from helping migrant students.

*Teacher B: What other problems do migrant students have? Most of them are experiencing generation-skipping education. They are taken care of by their grandparents. In this generation-skipping education, they (migrant children) have lots of bad habits. They do not have team spirit. They do not have a concept that they need to obey specific rules in the school. These issues require (us teachers) to spend a very long time correcting them. This is what happened in my class.*

*Teacher D: There is a child (migrant student) who is not clean. It might be...the habits he had in his rural hometown...he has severe hygiene issues, like playing with saliva, picking his nose, which just means teachers do not want to come near him. [Teacher B and Teacher D, interview, 12/02/2017]*

Even though migrant students are the ones who accept teachers' teaching at school, migrant parents are an important part of the increased workload for teachers as they are the ones who should be cooperating with teachers in educating students, even influencing the effectiveness of school education, as a school president commented:

*So we always say, "Five is smaller than two": our education of students in school for five days (from Monday to Friday) cannot be compared to their education of students at home for two days (from Saturday to Sunday)...We always (need to) start over again (in terms of educating students), many things are starting from the beginning. [School President C, interview, 16/02/2017]*

According to teachers and school presidents, many migrant parents are counteracting teachers' efforts to cultivate students’ learning and behavioural habits at school.

*Teacher C: Why do students in my class have such poor grades? Because there are some students with bad habits. No one’s tutoring them at home. So they drive down the overall level of the class. Then I tried some new methods this semester. Parents gradually adjust to them, but their adaptive capacity is not as good as the children’s. Children may take a semester to adjust to school life, but I think parents have not adjusted to school life until their children go into 2nd grade. By then they start to understand why teachers need to do that. I feel it is more tiring to teach parents than teaching students. [Teacher C, interview, 13/02/2017]*

Specifically, migrant parents' poor manners (teachers need to take extra efforts to teach parents), low educational level (difficult to communicate with; unable to tutor children’s homework), lack of collective sense, and belittling children’s education (in terms of not taking responsibility for ‘after school education/home education’) are considered by teachers as the main reasons causing the increased workload for teachers where migrant parents are concerned.

*Teacher J: As teachers who are teaching at the front line, I need to give more love and care to those kids (migrant children), in terms of their life, their study, their behavioural habits, various aspects. We not only need to teach students, but we also need to teach parents as well. Lots of parents even,especially those who come from the countryside, their ‘civilised manners’ [[20]](#footnote-20) are poor, teachers need to (teach them) on the side. Because if parents cannot do it properly, then how their children grow up will be a problem. So, teaching students can be quite complicated for teachers. [Teacher J, interview, 18/02/2017]*

With different recognition towards children’s education responsibility, different expectations about home education emerged between migrant parents and schools.

*Teacher H: Another thing is checking children's homework. They just sign a name on it. Actually, I had told them, "you check their homework a bit, of course, that is my job, but you should check a bit at least. If you leave every mistake in their homework to teachers, then the second day he/she (the student) would spend all the break time to do that (correcting the mistakes in the homework)".[Teacher H, interview, 20/02/2017]*

Unable to tutor children’s homework is another reason behind increased workload and dissatisfaction of teachers towards migrant children. This dissatisfaction has also caused pressure to school presidents as the school leader, which potentially become a reason why local public schools are reluctant to accept more migrant children. It can be seen that there is no attempting from schools (either teachers or school presidents) to understand this what are behind migrant parents’ inability in home tutoring, while they are exhausted in dealing with increased workload.

*School President C: For example, their children do not finish their homework. We told them that they should supervise their children at home, and they answer us "We did." ...I mean they have not done those things with their hearts. Maybe it is just their lifestyle. They think that it is fine. So we are faced with problems concerning (migrant) parents and students. What could we do? We comfort ourselves. Also, they (migrant parents) do not understand teachers. They think educating children is all teachers' responsibility. They think "I send my children to the school, and your teacher should teach them well."[School President C, interview, 16/02/2017]*

However, migrant parents hold different voices to the issue of home education. They consider home education as schools’s responsibility. Therefore, such requirements from schools also become a source of complaints for migrant parents to local public schools.

*Migrant Parent A: Homework (of students), these shouldn’t be completed with (the help of) parents.* *Nowadays there is loads of homework that they (he means teachers) say it’s left to students to finish, but actually parents need to invest a lot of energy in doing it.[Migrant Parent A, interview, 19/02/2017]*

As to those migrant students whose both parents and grandparents are not able to take care of them in outside school hours, most of them have been left to trusteeship organisations[[21]](#footnote-21) outside school for tutoring their homework and taking care of them until their parents/grandparents pick them up go back to home. However, the quality of the trusteeship organisations outside school cannot be guaranteed. As a result, in certain schools, noon trusteeship classes are organised, becomeing an added burden for teachers.

*Teacher G: His (a migrant student) family cannot provide him with tutoring, and his family knows that their children are falling behind other students, so probably they can only get help from a trusteeship organisation outside school. However, those trusteeship organisations might not be so responsible, they (the staff in trusteeship organisation) just let him finish his homework; it is possible that they just let him copy other students' homework, we cannot be sure. So that child's grades are really poor.[Teacher G, interview, 19/02/2017]*

*Teacher I: Those busy parents cannot go back home to supervise their children's homework on time. So now, noon trusteeship classes are on the rise, to provide what those parents lack, the time and conditions (to take care of children). The Price Bureau appraised the lunch price in noon trusteeship classes, and then...our regular dismissal time in school is 5 pm, and 2nd-grade students are dismissed at 4 pm. So in this one hour, students are taken in charge by teachers in the school. [Teacher I, interview, 19/02/2017]*

For migrant parents, trusteeship classes outside of school is an ideal, yet expensive way to educate children, while noon trusteeship class are partially available in Changsha (only a part of public schools have set noon class).

*Migrant Parent C: Trusteeship organization, I know! There are loads of them outside of my boy’s school. But it takes a lot of money. Maybe not for urban parents, but it is expensive for us to send my boy there every week, even every day.[Migrant Parent C, interview, 20/02/2017]*

*Migrant Parent G: Noon trusteeship class? That sounds good. But which school are you talking about? Shazitang Primay School (it is an elite primary school in Changsha)? I’ve never been told by my daughter’s teacher about that kind of class. Maybe they don’t have it in my daughter’s school.[ Migrant Parent G, interview, 17/02/2017]*

In addition, recognising that many migrant parents with busy schedules cannot take care of their children after school time, schools, communities and other NGOs have cooperated to help migrant parents by organising interest clubs (students who share common hobbies would be organised into a group, for example, dance group, singing group, etc.) and noon trusteeship classes in school or in the communities, which increases teachers’ workload in non-working time.

*School President B: These NGOs or individuals, [they help and provide opportunities] to migrant students [in many ways]...whether in material or spiritual aspects, [such as] visiting three main museums and concert halls etc.. Now we have an activity, on Saturday/Sunday, we collaborate with the communities. Considering migrant parents and migrant students, the parents are not working nine-to-five like us, having time to rest every day; lots of migrant parents may not have time to rest, they do not have a concept of Saturday and Sunday off. So what happens when children are off school at home during the weekend? They are free from parents' restrictions at the weekend, watching TV at home. Safety was also a big hidden danger. Without a teacher to supervise, it is not good for students either. We feel that deeply. The homework we collected on Monday was the worst because no one's supervising them during the weekend. So the quality of their weekend homework is very poor. Therefore now we hold an activity with the community, collaborating with Hunan University, the community, and our school, we created a ‘City-Melting Scheme'. It is to help those migrant students. We detect some families that have real difficulties, that no one takes care of. We take a day off to help them for free to tutor them with their homework. After that, we take them to choose one of the two clubs we opened. The chorus club and calligraphy club are held for them for free. At weekends, I think, there are schools taking care of their children from Monday to Friday, and there is such a loving organisation organised by volunteers in Hunan University to take care of their children on a weekend day. This platform is created by our city, our school, and the community. Students in our school need to sign up, and then on Saturday and Sunday, they will be tutored about their homework within our current community. [School President B, interview, 15/10/2017]*

Various forms of help are at hand, noon trusteeship class and *city-melting scheme,* yet to what extent these organisations or activities helped with migrant parents’ home education and migrant children is unknown. What can be anticipated is that these off-work duties have placed even more burden on the already increased workload for teachers. Therefore, the effectiveness of these activities raises a question about whether they are truly beneficial for migrant children, especially when such arrangements have overlooked teacher’s capacities in coping with increased workload, and can potentially lead to more biased attitudes to migrant students as trouble-maker.

## **6.5 Differences in expectations and communication style**

The cultural distance between migrant parents and teachers creates various problems for both groups. Part of the ‘cultural distance’ between them comes from different expectations that teachers have of parents and the expectations of migrant parents themselves, and it also involves a discussion around the ‘quality’ of parents. For teachers, migrant parents are identified as a group with ‘low overall quality’ who cannot provide proper home education to children, and ones who do not attach enough importance in cooperating with teacher on the issue of children’s education compared to urban local parents, therefore adding difficulty to their work in educating migrant students.

*School President C: Generally, the most significant difference between migrant parents and local parents [is that migrant parents'] cultural level and educational level are poorer (compared to local urban parents). Many migrant parents only graduated from middle school and did not continue studying. Nowadays many migrant parents cannot tutor their children (in their study). You ask parents to tutor their children to learn Chinese pinyin (like phonetics in English), they cannot even read it properly themselves. 90% of them cannot read it correctly. There is a significant deficiency in family/home education. [School President C, interview, 16/02/2017]*

*Teacher D: I think migrant parents do not attach much importance to children's study. (They are) Indifferent to it, like, "whatever". They act as if they take it as a big deal. Urban parents are those who pay attention to children’s study within our district. [Teacher D, interview, 12/02/2017]*

For migrant parents, school teachers are expecting more than what the nature of their work allows them to do as parents, thereby creating an incompatiblility between handling children's education and their work.

*Migrant Parent B: Sometimes my children’s homework requires parents use a mobile phone to) scan a QR code, then answer some questions (to finish). All of these questions, to be answered using a mobile phone. What if I don’t have a smartphone? What if I’m a parent who is pretty old (and I don’t know how to use this technology)? Aren’t they (teachers) giving pressure on parents? They pass on pressure on to parents. You can do it in another way at school! Right? Why do you pass (the responsibility and pressure) to parents? This is not right. As to those parents who are not willing to have the company of children, these things have no use as well, they would just muddle through these things.[Migrant Parent B, interview, 21/02/2017]*

As I quote from interviews with several teachers and migrant parents in Changsha's public primary schools, this doubt about the ‘quality' of migrant parents is based on teachers' observation and understanding in terms of the ability and attitudes of migrant parents in the home-education process and school participation. Specifically, migrant parents are normally considered (by teachers) as parents with a low cultural/education level, which makes them seem unqualified to provide children's home education. There were often complaints by teachers about how the ‘fact' that migrant parents lack of educating methods has caused an increased workload for them at school.

*Teacher C: Lots of parents told me "Oh teacher, I cannot control him/her! He/she does not listen to me!" I mean, in terms of home education, they do not know how to communicate with their children. So it is so tiring when I teach students in this class: the good ones are excellent, and the bad ones are left behind. Because now, you cannot teach students well without parents' support. You really can't, because for all sorts of activities organised by the school, you need parents’ support (to do them well). Otherwise, there is no way.[Teacher C, interview, 13/02/2017]*

From teachers’ perspective, migrant parents do not bear educational responsibility as qualified parents. Along with limited education level, this doubting in migrant parents’ attitudes towards children’s education have resulted in further discrimination from teachers to migrant parents.

*Teacher G: Some migrant parents do not attach much importance to children's education […] they do small business and they have no time, they just tell you "I have no time", no matter what you tell them, they answer “I have no time”. They put their children in the school, and then they think taking care and educating their children is the responsibility of teachers and the school. They do not recognise that they are the leading force in the matter of cultivating their children. So you call them and tell them their children's problem, they do not have time to deal with it. [Teacher G, 19/02/2017]*

From migrant parents perspective, home education is a burden that it is difficult for them to shoulder, also a responsibility that belongs to schools rather than parents.

*Migrant Parent B: For example, in a holiday homework, making a fruit combination dish, and there should be elements of celebrating the country’s holiday, moon cake, and drawing stuff. How would a kid know about that? Why don’t I just stay with kids all the time then? Can I even go to the work? I mean this sort of things. [Migrant Parent B, 21/02/2017]*

Besides, the lack of willingness or confidence to communicate with teachers has become another reason for identifying their ‘irresponsible attitude' from the perspective of teachers. Yet it is the limited education level has led to migrant parents’ lack of confidence in handing children’s education in a more proactive way, rather than irresponsibility.

*Teacher F: There is another type of (migrant) parents who literally listen to what teachers say […] whatever teachers say, they take it as if it was an imperial edict, and then they get to really nervous, whenever the teacher says their children made any mistakes in school. [They say] "teacher, what should I do? I do not know how to do this. I do not know how to do that." They do not have that kind of ability, and they are anxious (about this situation). They hope their children do not grow up like and become like them. [Teacher F, interview, 09/02/2017]*

*Migrant Parent E: I didn’t accepted much education myself. But they (she means teachers) have much more experience than me, right? They are professional at educating children. They are not like me.[Migrant Parent E, 23/02/2017]*

Meanwhile, because migrant parents are rarely able to participate in collective activities organised by schools (such as parent-child campaigns, spring cleaning etc.), this phenomenon was labelled as a ‘lack of collective sense' by teachers groups.

*Teacher F: Maybe because they (migrant parents) do freelance work, they do not have companies to restrain them, so they do not have much awareness of collectivity. I remember once we had a sports meet, I said in our we-chat group, and I said to students, I said to parents as well, I told them what kind of trousers and the short version of school uniform the students need to wear next day for the sports meet, I said it clearly, because this is a collective activity. However, the next day, the weather was a bit cold. A (migrant) parent thought the children would feel cold, so she changed it, she let the student wear the extended version of school uniform. I said that it is okay if you feel cold, but you can ask me, ask the teacher first if I (meaning the migrant parent) can change it to the extended version, right? This is a standard procedure. You cannot just do whatever you want, I already told them the rules, and I did not text them about any changes made to that rule. This is THE problem. So…this made their children become quite careless. [Teacher F, interview, 09/02/2017]*

This labeling has reflected a conflictual expectation on migrant parents from teachers. On the one hand, teachers expect migrant parents can be confident enough to handle issues related to their children at school, rather than following everything what teachers said. On the other hand, when migrant parents act in a way that is not in line with teachers’ expectation or school procedure, such action would bring out teachers’ dissatisfaction and discrimination, while relating it to the judgment to migrant children.

## **6.6 Prejudice towards migrant students and resistance psychology**

Throughout the interviews, it is safe to say that teachers' attitudes and perspectives about migrant students are related to their understanding of migrant parents' status, and the grading process plays an important role in this prejudice. When teachers grade students based on students' family backgrounds and personal abilities[[22]](#footnote-22), this reinforces their negative impression about migrant students, which in turn increases their *resistance psychology*[[23]](#footnote-23) to the potentially increased workload because of migrant students. In the grading process, teachers built their own ‘good/bad student resource’ standards. When they talk about *student resource*[[24]](#footnote-24) in the current year they are taking charge of, they evaluate the student body mainly according to students' family background and students' ability, while behavioural habits jump out of all criteria when comparing migrant students and local students.

*Teacher C: We have measured (students) before, sometimes we would evaluate/measure whether the student resource is good or bad, and we would compare. "You see, your class is full of students with local Changsha hukou," "many students in your class come from the countryside/rural areas." Why would we think the student resource consisting of migrant children from the rural area is inferior to another one? Because their (migrant students from rural areas) behavioural habits are bad. [Teacher C, interview, 13/02/2017]*

Teachers in Changsha share similar perspective with Wu (2013), that differences in the family background, especially parents’ education is an essential factor that affects students' potential attainment in early stage of education. Meanwhile, in my case, it seems that parents' financial situation is the main determinant influencing student background in the teacher's mind. Specifically, a ‘good student resource’ comes along with following conditions: parents with a decent job with a stable and relatively high income, parents with a high educational level (went to college or university), better cooperation with teachers’ work, greater intelligence of students, and students with better learning ability/habits.

*Interviewer: what aspects do you mean by “good student resource”?*

*Teacher C: Like Shazitang Primary School, except those households which live there all the time (she means original residents who have stayed there for a very long tim,e even for generations), houses/apartments around there are extremely expensive. […] then you have to buy a property there to get a school place. Families with an average financial situation cannot afford it. Parents who are not (at least) white-collar workers, who are not very competitive, cannot afford the property there […] So, students in that school must have parents with a higher educational level and better capability, which means those parents can cultivate their children better, and they are more affluent. That is what I called "student resource". If they are parents with high quality, how stupid you think their offspring will be? So their offspring's learning ability, family financial situation, cultivation, and parents’ cooperation with teachers (all will be better). [Teacher C, interview, 13/02/2017]*

According to the interview, due to the “low overall quality” of migrant parents, migrant students manifested themselves in teachers’ minds as a group of students with “low starting points", who were brought to local schools in the city from their rural hometown, with plenty of seemingly ‘uncultured defects’ teachers say give them a headache. This impression of migrant students resulted from the difficult living conditions of migrant families, previous educational experience in rural schools, and the culture gap between urban residents (teachers) and rural residents (migrant students and parents).

*Interviewer: Do you mind explaining in more detail what you just mentioned about “kids here (migrant children) [being] a long way off students in surrounding schools”?*

*School President B: Behavioural habits. Their initiative, creativity, these aspects. They study passively, they will not use their initiative in learning, and they lag behind in terms of creativity […] I would say if I was five years younger, I would not stay in this school. I come here because it is near my home. Children in this school (most of them are migrant students) cannot compete with other kids. [School President B, interview, 15/10/2017]*

It can be seen that both school presidents and teachers in local public schools have not taken a position to sympathize or understand that the poorer academic and behaviour performance of migrant children is resulted from long-term institutional deprivation of their education (rural schools have poorer teaching quality compared to urban schools). Instead of understanding, migrant student experienced prejudice from teachers and school presidents.

*Teacher D: The early childhood education [is] between 0-6 years old. There are defects in their (meaning migrant children0 character shaping, habits, knowledge accumulation and cultivation because their parents don’t have time to educate them […] So he/she comes to school, his/her starting point in terms of behavioural habits, manners is lower, poorer (compared to other local urban students).* *[Teacher D, interview, 12/02/2017]*

These behavioural examinations on students’ manner, personality, EQ etc., are mostly done by teachers under the table in Changsha’s public schools. It is an informal evaluation process based on common sense and teachers’ own conception and expectations about ‘what makes a good student’.

*Teacher H: I mean, some kids, when they grow up, he missed a stage when he built the sense of honour. He did not have a typical experience of that. It will take you a long time to correct that. Some students in my class are taken care of by their grandparents. When they were in 1st grade, you (meaning teachers) can only praise them, and you cannot criticise them. (If you criticise them), they will lie down on the ground and cry no matter what you say after. Because they do not know what the teacher doing here, what kind of punishment the teacher will give, they do not know, and they do not care, you need to coax them. They are taken care of by their grandparents in their rural hometown when their parents go to Changsha to do small business. Their parents don't have time (to take care of them), so they are how they are right now, like a bumpkin, put their foot (on the desk) like this in class, or put it like this (the teacher imitates the migrant children), or stand up on the chair. It is a situation like this. You tell them (about the rules), they understand you, but his attentiveness and persistence are really bad, really bad. That is how is when he has missed the stage he is supposed to experience. It is so hard to make it up now.[Teacher H, interview, 20/02/2017]*

This is different from its counterparts in western countries, which involve formal written report or using a standard grading system such as *Ofsted behavioural grades*[[25]](#footnote-25) in UK and year-end report forms such as *Pupil’s Book[[26]](#footnote-26)*in Finland (Department for Education 2012; Simola 2014). As stated by Simola (2014), the effects of these types of examinations of students’ performance are in essence processes of *normalizing* and *individualizing,* shaping students’ behaviour and qualities according to a system of norms (*normalizing*) and encouraging unique associations of these norms according to students’ characteristics (*individualizing*).

*Teacher J: We found out that migrant children are generally ok in the intelligence quotient, but their emotional quotient tends to be low.*

*Interviewer: What makes you think they have “low emotional quotient”?*

*Teacher J: It is when you talk to them, he/she would be scared. He would be very much afraid of the teachers. That is a low emotional quotient. However, when I guide them, you can say what you think, as long as you pay attention to the way you talk, be polite, that is it. However, he/she is too afraid to speak to teachers. Even for a while, he would pee himself. He does not talk in the class. That is a low emotional quotient. Some kids saw you left something in the classroom, they send it to your office immediately, they see, and they do things, that is high emotional quotient. [Teacher J, interview, 18/02/2017]*

Similar to examining practices in Finnish primary schools, these top-down procedures, ‘representing the classic, *prepressive*[[27]](#footnote-27) use of power produces what are good pupil and who are the bad pupil’ (Simola 2014, p. 138); migrant students in Changsha’s public schools face an exclusive evaluation process in which they are considered ‘poor students’ in teachers’ minds.

## **6.7 Discrimination from Local Parents**

In discussing discrimination from local parents in Changsha, I would like to refer to what Ball (2002) refers as *individual exclusionary strategies*, as it matches with what happens in my case in terms of the purpose of discrimination from one social group to another. *Individual exclusionary strategies* means the endeavour that individual families make to dominate particular schools while creating and retaining the social gap on the basis of such domination (Ball 2002). With increasing migrant students requiring school places in local public schools, local urban parents in Changsha also try to monopolise better educational resources in the city through discrimination and resistance towards migrant students. They send their children to elite schools for better teaching quality, separating their children from migrant children.

*Interviewer: Will local parents worry about sending their children to migrant student concentrated schools?*

*School President A: Of course there must be pressure (from parents). Actually, there must be. For example, (pressure from local parents) is embodied in the student resource (it is just the common sense way of describing parental background for teachers), right? When a public school is designated as migrant students-receiving school, local parents, especially those with an excellent financial condition, will not choose that school. They might seek far and neglect the school that lies close at hand. [School President A, interview, 14/10/2017]*

In this way, local urban parents and students get to maintain the social cleavages between them and migrants. There are differences in the strategies adopted by parents in Changsha and parents in Ball’s research in London in terms of options. In Changsha, local urban parents choose elite schools over public schools that are migrant students-concentrated, while middle-class parents in Ball’s case choose private schools over public schools. However, like parents in Ball’s case, local urban parents who make such choice in Changsha maintain their advantageous position at the cost of spatial separation of students from different social backgrounds, which I suggest is increasing the educational inequality problem in Changsha.

*Local Parent B: Of course we would not be happy about sending our children to a school with lots of migrant children. If you have a child, I promise you would make the same decision. If you got a chance to send your children to a good school, [which] can provide high quality teaching and friends from decent families, why take the risk of sending him (meaning children) to a place full of children with [academic] grades even worse than him (meaning children)? Right? [Local Parent B, interview, 20/02/2017]]*

In addition to the artificial separation between student groups due to parents' choice, there is also separation between local parents and migrant parents because of their home addresses and working time arrangements. Local parents often communicate with each other within their group, while migrant parents rarely communicate with other migrant parents, or with local parents. These two groups rarely communicate with each other (this will be discussed and analysed as a particular strategy in more detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*).

*Teacher B: They (local parents) live in the same community. Sometimes they get together after dinner, and talk about their children's situation. The migrant parents would just keep an eye on their own children. They do not have usual working time like us. They would not make a comparison. So they do not know how their children are developing (compared to other children). When teachers reflect some problems to them, they keep relying on the teachers' thoughts. They think, "teachers should manage children well, and we parents provide children with the material conditions." In this way, they do not have a consciousness to cooperate with teachers to do this work well. [Teacher B, interview, 12/02/2017]*

According to teachers in public primary schools, the home addresses of migrant parents are dispersed, while local parents of students in the same school usually live within the same or nearby communities. The different working times between the two groups result in different habits for picking up children.

*Interviewer: How come migrant students are not together after work to talk and communicate like local parents?*

*Teacher B: They live in dispersed places. They might not have settled yet. Their living place drifts from place to place. They do not live in a particular community for a long time. They might rent a property, or they live where they have purchased a shop front […] there are no students who go to the same school with their children in their community. Alternatively, they do not have the mindset to enable them to compare their children with other students. Parents in our community usually get together. Because children live in this community all attend to our school in 1st grade or 2nd grade. All in one school. [Teacher B, interview, 12/02/2017]*

These divergent cultural habits and norms have led to misunderstanding and prejudice, considering migrant students as ‘inferior students’ who do not belong to their children’s group identify and as potential threats to the development of their own children, which in turn have shaped the outcome of the policy in the middle of the implementation process to a certain extent. These prejudices and misunderstandings through urban parents' deliberate intervention into school choice and unintended geographical and habitual distance become a strong force to establish or reinforce the already existing separation and exclusion, which make it more difficult to achieve the effectiveness of the inequality-breaking policy. Unlike school admissions in England, where disadvantaged students group encounters prejudice from institutional system[[28]](#footnote-28) (Weale 2019), migrant students in China not only face institutional prejudice from the admission system on basis of their *hukou* and degree of wealth (which partly decides where they can afford to live), but also experience prejudice from family groups with more financial and social advantages, which increases the level of education segregation in another dimension.

## **6.8 Obstacles from Institution and Policy**

The existence of an imbalance between the limited increase in the number of school places and the climbing number of migrant workers/students have been mentioned by teachers, governmental officials, and migrant parents themselves. It is a widely acknowledged fact that the increase in school places cannot keep pace with emerging educational needs. When the city-construction in Changsha absorbed growing number of migrants, they were attracted by the education structure, educational resources, and teaching resources in Changsha. According to an official report, *The Cost Calculation and Sharing Mechanism of Citizenisation of Agricultural Migrant Population in Changsha City (2016),* the need for a school places in Changsha in the next four years will increase by 170,000: it will take the local government eight years to provide for this increase if they continue with their current speed of school construction.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (*Anatomy of Education System and Hukou System*) aboutt the enrolment ranking order, migrant children are at the bottom of the ladder. Since 2015, the Education Bureau in Changsha has started to limit class sizes in schools by tightening the student number in a class to a maximum of 50. With the enrolment ranking required by education policy, migrant children without local properties and hukou are falling behind in the ranking order of students when applying to local public schools; it is therefore even more difficult for them to get enrolled into schools with good teaching standards. Hence, migrant parents without particular social connections or local properties in their respective school districts have no choice but to attend less ideal or more distant schools. When there is a lack of school places, migrant student-concentrated schools become a common choice for them. This ranking of institution shows that the educational inequality experienced by migrant students is not only the result of insufficient school position and delayed school construction, it is also the result of valuing wealth over everything else embedded in the local policy logic. This indicates that a wealth bias is hard-wired into policy design. It acts as an institutional obstacle to reinforce biases and prejudice towards migrant children already there. The value disposition of local enrolment policy against what the national NTUP policy proposed and aims for and remarkably undermines the outcome of *NYUP* policy in this city.

## **6.9 Summary**

In this chapter,I illustrated how the position of migrants adversely affects them in the battle for equal educational rights. Educational inequalities persist because migrants’ life situation, prejudice and misunderstanding from teachers (out of increased workload for teachers group) and local parents, and local policy and institutions work together as a robust joint force to undermine the full potential of *NTUP* in terms of reducing educational inequality. Migrant parents enjoy limited opportunities for appeal or petition around school decisions, restricted avenues to make their voices heard, while at the same time they face the possibility of being marked as ‘dangerous citizens’, as well as discrimination on both institutional and individual levels. It has been found that urban local parents used various means to monopolise better educational resources for their children: through intervening their children’s school choice, actively reproducing continuing geographical separation and social separation between local urban groups and migrants in my case.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN – AGENDA – SETTING PROCESS**

## **7.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to examine the debate about the education problems experienced by migrant children developed in China. I explore how the education problem has been framed in a particular way, and changed over time, through analysing how different actors - including local governments, schools, media and parent groups - engaged in the framing process of the issue, and how they have changed the way people see the education problem. This chapter focuses on depicting how the discourse about the education problem evolved in the agenda-setting process under the joint influence of governmental and non-governmental actors. I found that governmental actors are closing opportunities and channels for migrants through forming a policy community excluding migrants to maintain their dominant role in policy making process. Yet media as a non-governmental actor opened a window for the issue of educational inequality to get widespread attention, pushing for governments’ response in policy measures. On the one hand, the media industry can justify discrimination towards migrant workers in its discourse, on the other hand, it can also act as a positive force to help migrant children by provoking public reaction to the responsibility of local governments for this particular social group.

According to Cairney (2012), in order to describe the agenda-setting process for a particular issue, we need to analyse the attention paid to an issue by the public, the media and the government, as well as the reasons behind the increase in or reduction of attention. In this chapter, as a foundation for research, I explore the theoretical framework of agenda-setting (in Section 7.2) and attention-attracting strategies (in Section 7.2.1) outlined in previous policy studies. I compare these studies with the situation in my case (in Section 7.2.1) to explore how this policy problem received a high level of attention from different parts of society in China, and how this attention can be easily misled by different forms of measurement, which can also potentially influence the decision-making process of policymakers. Then I introduce the current condition of the media industry in China, in order to achieve a better understanding of how and why the media play a complex role in China in later sections. After that, I borrow two important concepts in policy studies, “*discourse”* and *“framing analysis”* to explore the ways in which certain actors dominate the narrative of the policy problem, and the way other actors resist or influence this framing of the issue. Then I examine how issues related to migrant workers have been presented in the media by analysing how the construction of the image of migrant workers has changed over time in China, followed by considering the issue-framing of the problem of migrant children’s education problem in the media. After that, I use the concepts of “*policy communities”* and “*policy monopoly*” to analyse my case to see to what extent and how certain groups (migrants) are excluded from the policy formation and implementation process in Changsha.

## **7.2 The Battle for the Rights to Portray the Policy Image**

This section focuses on analysing how the problem of migrant children’s education began to appear on the policy agenda. Specifically, linking the problem to widely-accepted values in China contributed to ensuring that a larger audience paid attention to the issue. In addition, I show in this section how different groups (such as migrant parents and local parents) react to the same ‘value’ in different ways. An analysis of the strategies used to highlight a policy problem will reveal how techniques of measurement lead to different judgements and can change the attitudes of policymakers facing the mission proposed in *NTUP* (*citizenisation of migrant workers*). The fact stands that the cost calculations for solving the education problems experienced by migrant children in urban China are normally exaggerated, which potentially weakens the policymakers’ incentives to solve the problem. This will be discussed in detail in section 7.2.1 about issue-framing in terms of measurement of the education problem in the case city.

*Agenda setting* can be understood as the battle for the rights to portray a policy image (Baumgartner & Jone 2002). In this battle, the most important weapon is ‘attention’, focussing on issues that bring high levels of attention, or events/crisis that can trigger increased attention (Dearing & Rogers 1996). In addition, appealing to the public directly in order to seek an expanded audience is also an effective option for groups excluded from policy monopolies to insert their influence within a policy making process (Cairney 2012). When external attention rises, an issue can be considered in a broader political environment and new actors can insert their influences on agenda-setting because power is usually more evenly spread than it is in small policy communities (Baumgartner & Jones 2002). That is, when an issue gets more participants involved, they can often bring more ways of looking at the policy problem: then it has more chance to be considered and processed in a different way than it was by the narrow policy community that dominated it previously. When an issue is considered in a policy agenda, it is likely to be treated as an important or immediate policy problem to be solved (Cairney 2012). This is how to win a battle for the rights to portray a policy image.

### 7.2.1 Attention-Attracting Strategies

Regarding the understanding of agenda-setting in terms of selecting certain policy problems which are the highest level of the policy agenda, *problem definition* becomes a key aspect when asserting policy solutions in attempting to solve these problems (Cairney 2012). Selecting policy problems and policy solutions both involve strategies about how to direct attention. There are three factors influencing these strategies that emerged in my case: issue framing; choosing one particular image of the issue; choosing one particular measurement. Firstly, issue-framing includes the method in which the policy image is defined, and ways in which issues are portrayed (Rochefort & Cobb 1994, cited in Cairney 2012). The framing of policy issues determines whether they can be linked to wider social values to increase participation of different actors.

However, it should be noticed that in practice, social values in different countries vary considerably. For example, linking issues to ‘freedom, fairness, participation, personal values’, would gain more participants and a larger audience in the US than it would in China. To expand the attention spread of a particular issue, the issue needs to be reframed away from a focus on the self-interest of a particular group to a problem that, even if not necessarily mattering to the general public directly, at least relates to them (Hogwood 1987). When migrant parent groups and governmental policy proponents link ‘not having sufficient school positions for migrant children, difficult access to education in public schools in cities’ to ‘educational inequality’, ‘inequality in opportunity’, ‘social injustice’, even ‘unequal civil rights’ in China, the problem is elevated in the policy agenda. This is because ‘equality’ is a widely accepted social value in China and is an issue that urban parents, rural parents, and migrant parents, deeply care about, even though ‘equality’ in educational rights can have different meanings and lead to different ways of achieving it.

Secondly, a majority of the policy issues have many-sides, they could be useful when portrayed as a wide range of images. However, when a particular image is chosen, there are policy consequences since it is processed at the expense of other aspects of the issue (Cairney 2012). Gaining media professionals’ attention is a privilege for migrants that could in turn pressure governments to intervene by changing the enrolment process for migrant children. Thirdly, the existence of ‘causality, responsibility and the availability of a solution’ are also the preconditions for a policy problem to be addressed (Cairney 2012, p. 186). As pointed out by Kingdon (1984, p. 115), “only when there is a solution and a shared belief about the necessity of implementing this solution, will a policy issue be considered as a policy problem worth attention. A solution here involves a responsibility-assigning process, including what caused the problem, who is to blame, and who is responsible for solving the problem”. In the case study for this thesis, local government is held responsible for solving the education problem of migrant children as stated in The Compulsory Education Law in China (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congres 2006). Therefore it requires the Education Bureau and other departments at the local level to promulgate responsive policies to intervene in the process.

Thirdly, the measurement of a problem depends on interpretation and debate, just like issue-framing. Many policy problems are complicated and ambiguous at the same time, therefore allowing multiple ways to measure how severe the problem truly is and what should be considered first (Cairney 2012). How severe the policy problem is, especially how much it would cost, would influence the motivation of policymakers and incentive for local governments to address the problem. For example, a survey led by the National Development Reform Commission about mayors’ attitudes towards *hukou* reform (in eight provinces in China) in 2012, found that almost all mayors in China are against *hukou* reform (China Youth Daily 2012). Behind the mayors’ rejection of *hukou* reform is the logic that *citizenization* of migrant workers would put enormous pressure on local finances without economic benefit in near future. But this logic is based on the overestimated cost of *citizenisation* of migrant workers[[29]](#footnote-29) due to the measurement method (Lu 2016). According to the economist Lu (2016), there are many instances of double counting in the calculation of the cost of *citizenisation* of migrant workers, because per capita costs of public services in cities are often used to calculate the cost of *citizenisation* of migrant workers, and this calculation overlooks the cost of public services (in rural areas) that migrant workers give up during *citizenisation.* The true cost of *citizenisation* is the difference between the cost of public services for urban residents and that of the rural population. For example, in 2011, urban and rural per capita government expenditure on education in primary schools respectively in China are 6121 yuan (around 720 sterling) and 5719 yuan (around 672 sterling), the balance is 402 yuan (around 47 sterling), which means the added cost for *citizenisation* in terms of education expenditure on a migrant children is much less than average education expenditure on an urban student.

In my study of Changsha, when local government use the average cost of education expenditure of urban students to estimate the cost of providing education to migrant children, their calculations for the overall cost would be highly exaggerated, and become a potential reason for policymakers on local level to avoid facing the education problem along with their educational responsibility. For example, in an official report at the city level, *Research on cost prediction and sharing mechanism: urbanisation of agricultural migrating population in Changsha* (Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population 2016), the compulsory education cost of citizenization of the migrant population in Changsha is calculated in the following formula:

C1=C11＋C12＋C13

C1 refers to *the compulsory education cost of citizenization of migrant population in Changsha*

C11 refers to *educational expenses =* (The number of local transferred pupils in this city) \* (The difference between urban and rural subsidies for primary school students) + (The number of primary school pupils transferred from other cities and other provinces) \* (Subsidies for every urban primary school students) + (The number of junior high school students transferred locally in this city) \* (The difference between urban and rural subsidies for junior high school students)+(Number of junior high school students transferred from other cities and provinces) \* (Subsidies for every junior middle school students in urban areas)

C12 refers to *the cost of school construction =* (The number of square meters need for new school space for primary school pupils + The number of square meters need for new school space for junior high school pupils) \* Construction cost of school buildings per square meter

C13 refers to *land opportunity cost[[30]](#footnote-30) =* (The number of square meters needed for new campus space for primary school students + The number of square meters needed for new campus space for junior high school students) \* land transfer fees[[31]](#footnote-31)

The calculation formula for C11 uses the average cost of education expenditure on urban students to estimate the cost for providing education to students transferred from other cities and other provinces in both primary schools and junior high schools. Therefore, it is safe to say that even though Changsha local government did not double-count the cost difference between urban and rural students, there is still an exaggeration in the cost calculation because they have overlooked the public education expenditure that migrant students from other cities and provinces gave up during their *citizenisation* in Changsha*.* This calculation can exaggerate the true cost of providing education to migrant children for the central government in China, yet it is not exaggeration for Changsha government, since the public education expenditure between different local governments is not transferable. The local government of the migrant students’ origin gets the allocated education expenditure, yet it is the local government of arrival pays for the education of migrant children from other cities and provinces. There is no redistribution through a national Ministry of Education such that ‘the money follows the children’, as it would do within the UK. Therefore, the problem is to be with the policy of the central government that does not make the transfers of funds.

## **7.3 The Situation of the Media Industry in China**

When it was clear that local government (Education Bureau, Division of Complaints and Appeal Department), local public schools, and real estate developers have created various obstacles in the way of reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children, another social actor - the media - helped to raise the problem to the top of policy agenda. This section aims to discover the current condition of the media industry in China, in order to achieve a better understanding of how (and why) media practitioners have framed the education problem of migrant children in a particular way in a country with severe censorship like China. The section starts by looking at the reasons behind censorship of journalism in and then introduces the strategies adopted by media practitioners to survive censorship when reporting sensitive issues. This is followed by a summary of previous research findings about the role media plays in the reconstruction of the image of migrant workers and problems they face.

Media practitioners often view themselves to be under pressure constantly divided between the state and the market Stockmann (2013). It is expected of Chinese media practitioners to “consciously refuse mistaken positions (*cuowujueding*), they are also expected to be ruthlessly determined to put an end to fake news” (Stockmann 2013, p. 132). In order to provide an explanation as to why journalists are pressured, it is important to look at it from a central level, a central-level propaganda official in China proceeded to explain that journalists often had their own biased views regarding what constituted the best interest of the general public, or “vulnerable social groups”, this creates a need to introduce a balancing hand to avoid ambiguities which may occur due to biased reporting. (Stockmann 2013, p. 135). Furthermore, *social responsibility* and *social stability* are related to each other and the Party in China. It is common for propaganda officials to justify their actions by referring to social stability, even if their actions are not obviously related to mass incidents and protests, following the logic that “if the press breaks discipline, it might give rise to social disorder”, or “if the news entails too much criticism, it might result in public outrage” (Stockmann 2013, p. 135). By engaging in such actions, the aim of government officials is to influence editors and convince journalists that the only alternative to media management is social disorder and chaos in an effort to motivate journalists to voluntarily conform to instructions.

Regardless of the fact that propaganda authorities always aim to convince journalists that socially responsible behaviour requires self-censorship, certain journalists tend to have their own interpretation of what constitutes as truthful and “safe” information. Downplaying the politics attached to stories has been one strategy used to cover controversial cases. Arguments such as the public is disinterested in politics and is more inclined to know about affairs to which they can relate to is used by journalists to get some space to write about politics and claiming it is ‘social’ news. Journalists also use the technique of focusing on individuals rather than on groups to downplay the political sensitivity of an article, reporting about groups is more likely to be regarded as reporting a mass incident which might threaten social stability. As a result, we rarely see reports about migrants’ education problems described in a group-based way in China’s news media. Due to journalists’ avoiding publishing the difficulties faced by particular individuals and families, these stories get to be seen by the public, bringing more actors who are interested in the issue. This has stirred up an active debate (which will be discussed in more detail in a later section) about the educational inequality experienced by migrant children, raising the issue to the top of policy-agenda.

Meanwhile, in China, it is common for the media industry to adopt the *party newspaper system,* this requires the media to undertake a transparent political campaign “as the mouthpiece of the party, [to] promote the benefits, strategies, and party ideologies” (He 2000, p. 118). In accordance with this system, the “party principle” becomes the highest principle which guides the media operations in China (Chen 2011). Also, this system will only allow the reporting of positive news and opinions which are favourable to the government, or beneficial to, the Party’s administration (Luo 2009, p. 293). In other words, in accordance with this principle, the priority of the Chinese media industry should be the promotion of opinions and policies which are beneficial to the state and the Party, this is a contrast of the true duties of the media which is fulfilling its public duties by exposing government shortcomings and abuses of power. (C.-C. Lee, 1994). Even though the media management system during the reform period gradually completed marketisation and bureaucratisation, and brought unexpected outcomes such as allowing scrutiny of government by public opinion (de Burgh 2003; Tong 2011; Zhao 2010), the Party media still follows the propaganda principle, conveying the voice of the ruling Party and guiding public opinion in China (Li 2005).

Current academic analysis of the Chinese media in the era of reform generally tends to see it as a product of the interaction between the ruling Party-state and market forces (Chan 1993; Lee, He & Huang 2008; Zhao 1998), and in this context, the media system has played a complex and diverse role. The market has made relatively independent management possible in China, and also provides institutional space for limited media practice innovation and to public opinion to supervise government. But the market is only a necessary condition for a more open institutional reform, while further evolution requires more than the influence of the market (Berger 1986; cited in Huang, 2017, p. 61). Zhao (1998) argued that the market forces has brought about profound change to the relationship between the media and the state in China, in which such relationship cannot be characterised in nationalism or commercialism.

## **7.4 Discourse and Framing Analysis**

In this section, I borrow two concepts from policy studies: “*discourse”* from *critical discourse analysis* theory (Fairclough 1989; van Dijk 1998); and *“framing analysis”.* These two concepts allow meto ascertain how different social groups and actors compete with each other within specific institutional and cultural boundaries over defining media discourse and the way issues are reported, influencing public perception (about a particular issue) and policy making processes. It also aims to examine how the media and public opinion reflect, construct and influence collective action (Zhao 2006). A classification of the actors involved in discourses about migrant worker-related social issues in urban China is also introduced. This section aims to disclose the means certain actors (such as local governments) use to dominate the narrative of the policy problem (and policy-making process), and the ways other actors (such as media, scholars, and real estate developers) resist or influence this issue-framing. I then analyse how migrants are excluded from the institutional policy making process in the city by the operations of the Division of Complaints and Appeal Department. This helps to build a better understanding of policy implementation in reality when it comes to appeal in local cities in China, and to further indicate the importance of the position of migrants discussed in Chapter 6.

In Section 7.4.2 (*Image-construction of Migrant Workers and Their Issues in Media Discourse*), and 7.4.3 (*Issue-framing of Migrant Children’s Education problem in Media Discourse*), 7.4.4 (*Main Topics Discussed in Education Issue*), Huang’s (2017) research findings play an important role in my secondary data for *critical discourse analysis* of Chinese media’s role in education issue of migrant children. This is because the access to a complete version (from 1949-2019) of database for *The People’s Daily* is restricted, and the accessible online database has been cut down so that only reports from 2000 to the present are publicly available (these restricted databases are irreplaceably valuable sources for media discourse analysis in China, and I will come back to the reasons for their loss of accessibility later in this section). Many critical and sensitive media reports relating to migrants group have been deleted and the original links to first-hand material are now unavailable. To avoid creating a partial and possibly misleading analysis of discourses about migrant-related issues in China, I decided to draw on Huang’s (2017) research findings for my research, since he had access to the complete databases for several key media in China. Drawing on his work along with other scholars who had access to a relatively complete database allow me to produce a relatively comprehensive understanding of the ongoing discourse related to migrant workers and migrant children in China.

*Framing analysis* is useful in studying the process which underlines the competition for the definition of issues through the strategic use of discourse which can resonate with the public and construct a consensus. It is a widely used research path with regards to public policy discourse analysis, especially in examining ideological discourse in news media (Pan et al 1990). It forms a vital part of political deliberation, framing an issue is a strategical process and provides a way to participate in public deliberation, it also provides the means to improve an individual's perception of the world or to compete with others' frameworks (Reese, Gandy & Grant 2001, p. 39). In order to effectively mobilize the public and obtain the support of the public, actors need to find the most effective way to support the position they chose, they then need to establish connections with the interests and feelings of potential supporters (Ryan 1991).

According to *critical discourse analysis* theory, *discourse* plays an essential role in the reproduction of inequality, power, ideology, authority and manipulative relationships (Blommaert 2005, p. 29). Discourse is not only the production of textual practice or language practice, but also of social practice. It involves social interactions, particular contexts, and the specific social conditions constructed during discourse-forming practices (Fairclough 1989, pp. 22-25). *Discourse opportunity* refers to the institutional framework which produces conceptions and meanings of a society (Ferree et al. 2002, p. 62): the media and its institutional structure are one of the main components of this framework. As Sun (2008, p. 44) points out, the distributive regime of discourse is “a product of various intertwined and interactive elements: political, economic, institutional, cultural, and technological.” There is also a close relationship between discourse and ideology (Thompson 1984; van Dijk, 1998a, 1998b; Eagleton 1991; Milani & Johnson, 2010). It is generally believed that ideology and the process of “maintaining asymmetric power relations”, or “maintaining control” are closely connected, as they all play an important role in consolidating the interests of individuals or groups in power (Thompson 1984, p4).

The role and influences of discourse cannot be ignored in the analysis of the agenda-setting process, as well as policy formulation and policy implementation. Not only does it provide moral significance to the issue that a policy/law concentrates on (Stone, 1997; cited in Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017), linking policy values, objectives of the policy, the interpretation of policy objectives into practicable regulations, and the consequences of such regulations together; it also acts as a background for people to evaluate whether the policy has reached the objectives expressed in the policy text as the interpretation of politicians, administrators and professionals. More importantly, discourse guides the public’s attention to what is stressed in the master narrative, and forms the evaluation criteria of the policy outcomes, while reflecting back a sense of accountability back to the policy formulation. It is through discourse that a shared master narrative about a social issue is formed. The analysis of discourse can be used as a framework to examine how administrators eventually come to understand the relevant issue and interpret the related policy, utilizing their discretion in their work (Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink, 2017). Therefore, understanding how discourse exerts its shaping power on the agenda-setting process in my study of migrant children’s education in Changsha is as important as understanding how the policies are formulated and implemented on the ground.

Regardless whether it is democratic or whether its centralized, the process of public deliberation is most likely to involve ideological and political struggles, these struggles arise from within different social groups that have different interests. The different types of discourses presented by different actors or sponsors using the media remains as one of the most fundamental forms of public debate and democratic deliberation (Chambers & Costain, 2000, p. 1996; Livingston & Lunt 2013). All kinds of discourses found in the public domain, like media discourses, and news discourses, has a significant influence on the social aspect of life (van Dijk 1988b). In many strands of discourse analysis, the media is considered one of the most important tools that can be used to help, or compete with the official account of issue-framing. For instance, Wagenaar, Amesberger and Altink (2017) have revealed the complex relationship between discourse and policy implementation under the influence of media, showing how politicians and administrators in Netherlands and Vienna utilise media to influence public consciousness about a particular social issue (prostitution in this case), and show that sometimes this backfires, with policy-makers being compelled by the media to change their policies.

The potential power of discourse in the agenda-setting process, and the influence the media exerts on issue-framing and policy formulation/implementation should be emphasized, yet it is important to note that framing and formulation are also constrained by institutional factors within their particular context. When analysing discourse around specific social issues in China, differences in the media and social political system cannot be overlooked. Specifically, there are two preconditions of analyses of Western agenda-setting missing from China: a relatively mature civil society; and media industries that are relatively independent of political parties and the state. The political and social conditions that critical discourse analysis is applied to in the West are not present in China. The authoritarian nature of the social political system in China has limited the degree of autonomy of political discourse outside the governmental system. Even though there is increasing participation by citizens in public affairs and discourse shaping, public discourse on specific social issues (especially politically sensitive issues) is still under strict supervision of the Party’s ideological agencies and propaganda system (Li 2007). Therefore, it would be misleading to put the media, public opinion mechanism, other social actors, and the ruling Party at the same level in discourse analysis about their influences in a particular issue in the context of China.

### 7.4.1 How Migrant Worker Issues are Presented in Media Discourse in China

7.4.1.1Classification of Involved Actors

In a country with a strong political party like China, resources for different actors to participate in policy debates vary greatly. Different actors participate in discourse and debate on issues related to the status of migrant workers in urban China, and they compete over the *discourse boundaries* of these issues (Du 2013). Actors participating in the discourse have unequal social resources, especially the access to and use of media (Bourdieu, 1989). Competition about *discourse boundaries* represents how participating actors try to define/redefine a certain social issue, or negotiate its connotations among different discourse communities (Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017). In the discourse around migrant workers, three actors are involved in the issue-framing process: CCP and the state, society and market (Huang 2017). With market reform gradually developing since 1978, the state has reduced its direct control over society. But the party-state still maintains its dominant role in major social and market economic activities, having great influence on media’s reports (Wang 2004).

### 7.4.2 Image-construction in Media Discourse of Migrant Workers and Their Issues

Since the image of migrant workers is strongly connected to how the education problem is framed in the media (as well as how the public perceive this issue) in China, it is necessary to give an overall introduction to how this social group has been presented in the public discourse. Discrimination towards migrant workers has played an essential role in the exclusion of migrant children in urban society, and the change of the image of this group in the media has brought a shift in attitudes by local governments and the public towards the education problem experienced by migrant children. Based on previous research conducted by other scholars (such as Li 2006, 2007; Zeng, Yang & Zeng 2013), in this section I examine how the media has played its role in the reconstruction of the image of migrant workers at different times, and its influence on the treatment of migrants in terms of rights-protection.

The *People’s Daily* has been chosen as one of the main sources for analysis of attitudes and discourse found in newspapers and the media industry in China is because of its special status. The *People's Daily* is directly under the management of the Central Committee and the top leadership of China. It is also known as the ruling Party’s most important media mouthpiece media, and its editorial articles and opinions often directly reflect the opinions and policy positions of the highest level of the ruling Party. As a result, analysing important news and articles in this newspaper is crucial for understanding the country’s policies relating to issues of migrant workers and the ideological strategy for this marginalized group.

In China, research findings point to contrasting directions when it comes to the media’s reconstruction of the image of migrant workers, and to the discourse space the media created for the education problem of migrant children. On the one hand, the media has stirred up a hot debate about the difficulties faced by migrants in China, focusing attention on their living conditions. For example, Du (2013) pointed out that even under the limitations imposed by the state, the market and mainstream of society, mainstream media in China has still played a *positive* role in promoting rights-protection, social equality, identity and dignity for the migrant population in urban China, helping to express their needs and difficulties after the *Open-up Reform* of 1978. Similarly, it has been argued that reports in the *People’s Daily* about migrant workers[[32]](#footnote-32) have concentrated on their living conditions, rights protection, training and employment, and policies on care of and assistance for migrant population: these issues have taken up to 80% of the overall reports about migrant workers. Among these reports, descriptions of migrants’ living conditions and rights protection are the main aspects, accounting for 25% and 22% respectively (Zeng, Yang & Zeng 2013).

On the other hand, the media has been argued it exist as an actor that legitimises a new authoritarianism and policies with a developmentalist logic (that is, policies which aim to promote economic development yet neglect other aspects of the outcomes). It mediates the sharp conflict between the marginalised positions of migrant workers in daily life and what has been claimed in the political ideology[[33]](#footnote-33) of China (Huang 2017). For example, the media is responsible for selectively portraying negative or distorted images of migrants and migrant workers, there is a lack of reports on migrant-related policies, and stereotypes of migrant workers are created in media discourse (Chen 2004; Chen 2007; Xu 2009; Xu Ren & Wu 2009; Zhou & Lv, 2010). Specifically, it was argued that the media has been leading local urban residents to consider migrant workers as a group which competes with urban unemployed people in job markets (Davin 2000; Wong, Li & Song, 2006). When the general public already possess a negative impression of migrant workers, the media also led urban local residents to consider migrant workers as people who are lazy and foolish, and therefore responsible for any misfortune that happens in their lives (Davin, 2000; Wong, Li & Song, 2006). A large amount of media space has been used to report the uncertainty and anxiety brought by migrant workers into the family space of urban residents, while the marginalisation and alienation experienced by migrants group has been rarely mentioned, let alone been understood. Therefore, even though the general public acknowledges the educational problem encountered by migrant children, the migrant population as a whole continue to experience prejudiced social encounters with local urban residents, which further widening the gap between migrants and local residents (Guo 2004).

In order to examine the general trajectory of media discourse related to migrant workers, Huang (2017) analysed data in the *People’s Daily* full text database from 1979, at the start of the Opening-Up reform, to 2010. This produced three important findings indicating the evolution of general discourse around migrant worker issues and meanings in urban China, which I will expand on in later analysis for my research on education issue of migrant children. First, 2002 is a dividing point in terms of the number of related articles and the image of migrant group in media. Second, the period in which the number of front-page articles increased is substantially coincident with the period in which the total number of articles relating to migrant workers increases. Third, the image of migrant workers gradually changed from seeing them as a source of social chaos and crisis to portraying them as an active social force indispensable for economic development.

The increase of migrant workers-related reports since 2002 can also be understood as a direct reflection of a series of important policy actions taken by the top leadership and the central government during this period. For instance, in 2003, a journalist at the Xinhua News Agency published a very influential news article about Wen Jiabao (Premier of the People's Republic of China) demanding an end to unpaid salaries (Central Government Portal 2003). This famous news article triggered a nationwide “clearing” campaign launched by governments in China. In this campaign, the central government demanded that all local governments in China take action to resolve the arrears of wages for beleaguered migrant workers. Since then, a series of administrative guidance documents relating to migrant workers (General Office of the State Council 2003a, 2003b, 2003c , 2006, 2008) have been released by the State Council (General Office of the State Council 2006), requiring local governments to eliminate discriminatory policies against migrant workers, and improve the provision of social services to them.

Secondly, being printed on the front page of the *People’s Daily* means that the issues covered by the report have important political or economic implications, indicating these issues have already been incorporated into the main political and economic agenda of the state and the Party. This trend indicates that issues relating to migrant workers have gradually shifted from the marginalised edge of the policy domain and become one of the main concerns of the top leadership during the last decade (Huang 2017, pp. 234-235).

Thirdly, the way in which migrant workers issues have been presented in these articles in the *People’s Daily* also implies a significant drift in the state’s attitude to migrant workers and the image of this group in public discourse. Specifically, the image of migrant workers gradually changed from seeing them as a source of social chaos and crisis to portraying them as an active social force indispensable for economic development (Huang, 2017, p. 264).

Large scale migration was called “mangliu” (盲流，an abbreviation of “盲目流动“，meaning ‘blind mobility’), and this term always appeared linked to any mention of migrant workers at that time with a strong negative connotation of “blind” and “irrational” (Zhu 1989). With this strongly negative term, the spontaneous movement of migrant workers was defined as the blind movement of the rabble without direction. When this term began to become a widely used vocabulary by the media, the public, and in official discourse in the 1980s, migrant workers were not only considered as the main source of the great pressure on the public service system, but in this crisis-dominant discourse, also appeared in public’s mind as likely to be a cause of danger and instability, breaching the order of society in cities. Affirmative voices of other actors, such as scholars and migrant workers themselves, supporting the migration of workers were not eliminated, but were marginalised in the media discourse (Guo 1989).

With an appearance of this discourse of “crisis control” at the institutional level in 1980s, the state adopted various types of control and restrictive measures for migrant workers, while an increasing number of reports about enhanced regulation appeared in the media discourse. For example, the system of detention and repatriation initiated by the central government for migrant workers has gradually been implemented on a large scale nationwide, and the *People’s Daily* has published a series of reports to promote government control-oriented policies and justify local governments’ actions (People’s Daily 1994).

In 2002, media discourse about the migrant group changed considerably in terms of their group image and their position in society. This was partly because new leadership took over state power in 2002,[[34]](#footnote-34) and this was also when the dominant political discourse started to emphasize resolving social conflicts caused by unbalanced reform policies, such as the growing gap between rich and poor, regional development gap, unemployment problem and environment crisis etc. (Zheng & Tok, 2007). Also, because China had joined the WTO in 2001, this required adjustments of strict policies on controlling migrant workers. In 2003, there was a major social event[[35]](#footnote-35) (People’s Daily 2003) which brought an end to the containment and removal of migrant workers from cities. As a result, discriminatory policies towards migrant workers in cities were to a certain extent relaxed. At an institutional level, the spontaneous migration of workers was defined in official documents as a positive force important to urbanisation and economic development of the state. The *People’s Daily* published a series of editorials and review articles written by government officials to support and explain these new opinions and related policies (Xinhua News Daily 2004). This indicated that government at all levels in China had actively taken a new position, which realised the need for migrant workers in cities, valuing the contribution made by this group, and starting to pay attention to their difficulties. Such shift in ideology towards the migrant group has been instilled into policy-making and policy implementation dealing with migrant-related issues.

More importantly, the position of migrant workers described in media discourse has changed significantly for the first time (from “city invaders” to “wealth creators”) (Li 2002), from portraying them as traditional farmers to seeing them as taking a "leading role of the Chinese working class", from a marginalised group to a member of the official Workers’ Union (China Economic Net 2017). Between 2002 and 2008, most articles relating to migrant worker issues in the *People’s Daily* are positive, using news articles written about individual lives to present the group image of migrant workers as law-abiding and progressive with noble moral character. Hence migrant workers shifted from being a dangerous “blindly flowing stream” to “our brothers and sisters” (Jiang 2002). Yet whether their position in real life is equal to urban citizens is another story.

“Rights protection” has become one of the key words in the public discourse related to the migrant worker group since 2003, after Wen Jiabao’s incident (as discussed earlier) that stirred up hot debate. This term indicates various actions to protect basic citizenship rights such as individual resistance and large-scale collective incidents in China. These various types of activities aim to improve and protect individual and group basic citizenship rights, protecting citizen rights from invasion and corruption by public power. In a citizenship hierarchy based on the *hukou* system, migrant workers as a marginalised social group are one of the main actors participating in rights protection action (Yu & Yang 2011).

### 7.4.3 Framing the Issue of Migrant Children’s Education in Media Discourse

This section aims to examine how media practitioners have framed the education problem of migrant children in a particular way in a country with severe censorship like China. Their discussions follow two main directions: who is responsible for the current problems; and what are the most feasible measures for solving them (Huang 2017, p. 364). Therefore, the focus of this section is on how different actors participate and compete with each other in discourse-construction around equal social rights, especially the equal educational rights of migrant children.

As discussed in a previous chapter (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2), the combination of the *hukou* system andexpensive requirements for enrolment excludes the majority of migrant children from the urban public education system. This huge gap in educational services creates a space for the rapid development of migrant schools. However, these schools are constantly being closed or rectified by urban local governments. The problem of education for migrant children is associated with intense conflicts and confrontations between state power and civilian forces. Under these circumstances, the friction between the equal educational rights of migrant children and the *hukou* barrier that excludes these children from urban educational resources has become one of the lasting sources of urban social conflicts and public debates. For example, before the *Guidelines of the National Program for Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development* (I use GMLE as its abbreviation hereafter) was passed at the Executive Meeting of the State Council at May 2009,[[36]](#footnote-36) there had been two large-scale advice-seeking activities (about the GMLE) open to the public solicited in January and February 2009, which received more than 2,100,000 items of advice and 140,000 emails via the internet (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China 2010).

The problem of migrant children’s education is one of the most controversial topics in the media relating to the issue of migrant workers, and the attitudes of media (newspapers) in different cities/provinces, with different nature (that is, Party newspaper or city newspaper), vary greatly. When Huang (2017) compares different kinds of newspapers in China, the issue of migrant education appears more often in the Party newspapers than it does in the city newspapers. However, in city newspapers, such as the *Beijing Daily* and the *Jiefang Daily*, most reports are about the positive measures taken by local government and their achievements, rather than about the persistent restrictive policies towards migrant schools and the resistance of migrant workers (Huang 2017, p. 396). The *Nanfang Daily* has been critical in reporting on this issue in other cities, but focussed on the positive aspects when it came to the local situation in *Nanfang Daily.* In contrast, newspapers in places where most migrant workers originate such the *Sichuan Daily* and the *Henan Daily*, have taken a critical position when reporting discriminatory policies against migrant children in urban areas. The implication of Huang’s (2017) findings stated for this part of my research is that the emergence and intensification of debates around educational responsibility for migrant children has played an important role in policy-formulation targeted at reducing the educational inequality experienced by migrant children. Meanwhile, the ambivalence of the media, with some media having sympathy for this group, and other media considering them as a dangerous unruly force, is an important element of the issue-framing process related to the education of migrant children in China.

### 7.4.4 Main Topics Discussed in Relation to Migrant Children’s Education

Specifically, the examination of this topic points out the kind of arguments that have been proposed by different actors to legitimise or challenge related governmental policies. At the same time, how different actors discuss the issue of equal education rights and the government's responsibility in reforming the current system also needs to be examined in the discourse analysis.

Many media reports focused on the discriminatory treatments and social exclusion experienced by migrant children in their daily lives, and how these institutional and cultural exclusion mechanisms have led to the disruption of upward social mobility, thus solidifying intergenerational status transfer (Li 2016). In these media reports, the various negative effects of the *hukou* system have come to be seen as the source of discrimination experienced by migrant children, including urban public schools’ exclusion of migrant children, local governments’ systematic suppression of privately sponsored migrant schools, and the cultural and identity discrimination by mainstream society in cities in China (People’s Daily 2007; Wang 2016; Cai & Jin 2011).

For example, many reports revealed that most urban public schools are not willing to accept migrant children. Local families in cities oppose public schools accepting migrant children because migrant children would adversely affect the spirit and academic atmosphere of their own children’s schools. Similarly, school presidents worry about the potential influences of migrant children, such as the possibility that migrant children could reduce the average progression rate of the school (Xiong 2011). Ironically, according to an official in the Beijing local government, local government worry that if they significantly improved access to education for migrant children, their cities would attract even more migrant children to overwhelm the city. Therefore, they think it is wise to create barriers to educational opportunity for migrant children for the sake of the city (The Beijing News 2011a). Even though migrant children succeed in enrolling in public schools in cities, they are still receiving different treatment from urban students. For example, segregation between migrant students and local urban students (for instance, they are taught in different classrooms) often appears in media reports (Qiu 2018).

It is safe to say that migrant children are considered not only as invaders who threaten the vested interests of the mainstream urban residents in the city, for instance, by having a negative effect on "excellent" urban children; but are also described in some media discourse as innately “low quality” along with their parents. This narrative has marked migrant children and migrant parents as an inferior social group, and therefore justifies the overall poor academic performance of migrant children as an intergenerational quality problem of migrants, rather than the consequences of long-term systematic deprivation of migrant children’s educational rights.

The legitimacy of migrant schools is one of the core issues debated in the public discourse concerning the education of migrant children. Most Party media reports focus on the reasons for the existence of these schools, and how to understand local government policy measures for them. In order to legalize the practice of rectifying migrant schools, local governments usually characterise them as illegal schools (Lu, 2014). Some migrant schools are considered to be extremely dangerous by local governments because of their low-quality teaching, substandard facilities or administrative irregularities, hence must be closed or rectified immediately (China Youth Daily 2007a; The Beijing News 2011b). Among these reasons, lack of qualification or other potential safety problems are the most common reason for the closure and rectification of migrant schools (Yang, 2016).

In contrast, instead of justifying discriminatory policy measures taken by local governments, market-oriented urban newspapers and opinion leaders with inclinations towards reform have questioned the reasons behind the existence of migrant schools, while criticising the way local government deal with them (Lin 2011). They have attributed the existence of migrant schools to institutional exclusion and government inaction in providing basic public services for the migrant group (Workers Daily 2007). Compared to the high thresholds and high costs of local public schools, these private migrant schools have very low tuition fees and easy access in terms of enrolment. An editorial believes that migrant school buildings should not be seen as ordinary illegal buildings because they are closely related to the fate of millions of migrant children (The Beijing News 2011c). At the same time, many local governments have introduced policies to encourage migrant children to attend local vocational schools because those schools do not have enough students. In this regard, the commentator Yu Qian (2011) in *Dahe Daily* pointed out that local governments should actively provide opportunities for migrants in order to protect their rights and interests, achieving equal rights between urban residents and migrants, instead of providing limited access to public services to migrants for short term financial pragmatic reasons. Although the description of migrant schools in the metropolitan newspapers is generally positive, there are also some investigative reports digging deep into the problems of these schools. For example, a report published in *Southern Weekly* surveyed how the sponsors of migrant schools used migrant children’s marginal identity to gain public sympathy and donations (Chen 2011). Sometimes, conflicts between state national rights and migrant schools provide opportunities for sponsors of these schools to maintain their own interests by attracting attention from the media and the public, and in many media reports, the voices of individual teachers and parents are relatively unimportant compared to the voices of sponsors/presidents.

To sum up, the first major aspect in public discourse related to the education problem of migrant children is the negative impact of social exclusion on the social integration of this group and their social mobility. Most commentators believe that under the current hukou system, migrant children experience severe discrimination, and are being excluded from the mainstream of urban society. The second aspect is the legitimacy of private migrant schools which the media are ambivalent about. These schools have been considered as trouble-makers by local governments and Party-led media, but market-oriented media and public opinion leaders have a relatively fair assessment of them.

### 7.4.5 Policy Communities and Policy Monopolies

In this section, I use two concepts - ‘*policy communities’* (Jordan & Maloney 1997) and *‘policy monopoly’* (Cairney 2012) - as a lens to look at two things: how the image of a policy problem is constructed; and how migrants are excluded from the policy community that influences policy-making and policy implementation process in Changsha. *Policy communities* in public policy studies *refer to* close relationships between government officials and interest groups. These two groups establish stable relationships between them by exchanging information for influence. The relationships between them endure as they share a broad agreement on a policy problem in the first place, and few other actors are interested in changing the nature of the policy problem they agreed on (Jordan & Maloney 1997). These relationships can remain stable if they can create a *policy monopoly,* or somehow maintain a dominant narrative/image of the policy problem (Cairney 2012). Typically, participants secure *policy monopoly* or dominant image of the policy problem by constructing the issue in a particular way when they are within a *policy community.* Measures used to protect the policy may include arguing the policy problem as sufficiently solved, only awaiting implementation, it is also a strategy to frame the issue in a dull way to reduce external attention and interest. Another measure is presenting the policy problem in the form of a technical issue which requires expertise. As such, related government officials and interested groups within the *policy communities* establish relationships away from the focus of public attention, moreover, a majority of the political actors does not possess enough resources to engage in the policy-development process. More often, policymaking which takes place under these circumstances paves the way to incremental policies that are formed based on previous agreements achieved between a small number of participants within the *policy community* (Cairney 2012).

In my study of Changsha, policy communities include government officials in several local government departments (especially, the Education Bureau, the Ministry of Housing, and the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development), school presidents and teachers in local public schools. In addition, scholars, mass media professionals and real estate developers are three important groups of social actors which have tried to influence the portrayal of the educational problems migrants face. Even though these three groups do not have direct decision-making power in policy-making, they have contributed to how the public perceive the educational problem faced by migrants.

Migrant parents and children are the groups primarily affected by this issue, but they do not have much influence within the policy-making process. They are therefore excluded actors from this policy community. As pointed out by the Vice Chairman of China Association for Promoting Democracy, Yongxin Zhu (also a National People’s Political Consultant), at The Third China Education 30 Forum in 2016, when it comes to educational problem-resolving policies, many educational policies were promulgated without seeking advice or comments from the public or understanding the needs of parents in China. For example, even though theNational Development and Reform Commission and Education Bureau has introduced a system of public hearing on education changes, there are few signs of its implementation (Sohu 2018). The role played by migrant parents and children played is that of excluded and disadvantaged outsiders due to their current marginalised position in society. Previous research on migrant workers in urban China (Wong, Li & Song, 2006), has documented abundant evidence of the marginalisation faced by migrant workers in terms of their experiences on occupational conditions, social security and health care, education of migrant children, poor housing condition, and discrimination by local urban residents. Wong, Li & Song (2006) analyse these marginalised migrant workers’ experiences in a framework focusing on three definitions of marginalisation: prevention from participating in various domains of society; exclusion from social life (by urban local residents); and limited financial capabilities and social resources.

First, the involuntary exclusion of migrant workers prevents them from participating in various domains of society. Migrant workers are not included in social security and benefits by the social welfare system that is oriented to urban local residents and tied with *hukou* system. At the same time, migrant workers have a deprived status concerning poor housing condition, lack of opportunities for education, unprotected health conditions, and restricted opportunities to increase income (Kuitenbrouwer 1973; Wong, Li & Song, 2006). In addition, a process of excluding migrant workers from participating in social life by the discrimination they encountered from local urban residents is confirmed (Wong, Li & Song 2006; Guo 2004). In addition, migrant parents’ financial capabilities and social resources are quite limited further contributing to them having little chance of influencing the policy-making process.

Migrant parents and children as excluded groups in this policy problem have tried to reach out to the Division of Complaints and Appeal Department in order to solve their problems. This Department in all government institutions bears the main job of communicating with them and dealing with citizens’ problems and difficulties. Normally, when citizens come to the Division of Complaints and Appeal Department in a governmental institution, for example, the Construction Committee, officers who work in this Division are responsible for dealing with letters from petitioners, and responding within 15 working days. Sometimes they are also responsible for receiving petitioners when they come to the Division in person. Officers meet with petitioners, listen to their problems and experiences, give advice, but if the problems discussed are considered not in accordance with policies, they cannot always help with the difficulties citizens have encountered. Instead, they would report to higher levels of the Division or pass the issue on to, or inform, other relevant departments according to the type of problem. The channels for appeals by migrants are quite limited by the policy and petitioning procedures and migrant parents’ complaints get lost in bureaucratic procedure.

According to my interviews with Division of Complaints and Appeal Department in Changsha, street level public workers and other governmental institutions at different levels have indicated a firm intention of controlling collective action.

The following interview was conducted in a community office in Changsha with two street-level officers who deal with citizens in their daily work [Street level worker C, Street level worker B, 23/10/2017].

Street level worker C: I work in the [Municipal Construction] Division of Complaints and Appeal.

Street level worker B: Ha ha [Interviewee B laughs when saying], Division of Complaints and Appeal? Then you’ve got more things to do [than us].

Street level worker C: Yeah, anyway, displacement and resettlement, those who haven’t been resettled properly, or [preventing civilians] from finding some reason to petition anyway.

They have expressed their attitudes towards potential collective action by following and monitoring ‘*dangerous citizens*’. In this case, ‘dangerous citizens’ refers to those residents/citizens who have the possibility, or who show the will to complain and appeal because they have encountered some problems or difficulties that have not been resolved, or those who petition frequently.

Street level worker C: Maintaining stability, they [staff working in community committees and neighbourhood communities] have no other choice […] they are tired [of preventing petitions] too. They need to watch over these people [attempting to petition] and not let them slip away, [when there are] National People’s Congress & Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference [meetings / conferences] or when there is an important [event] going on in the country. [To] maintain stability, [they] have to keep their eyes upon these petition people, send staff and take turns to watch over [them].

Interviewer: Take turns to watch over them? How? Do you mind explaining that in more detail?

Street level worker C: Do not let them (citizen who want to petition) go to Beijing. Send people to follow them during that time [when there is an important national conference going on or important events in China].

Interviewer: You mean, following them literally?

Street level worker C: Two staff watch over one civilian, that’s [how we work] in terms of maintenance of stability. If there is a shortage of staff, then the neighbourhood (committee) coordinates the job. If the neighbourhood committee can’t coordinate this, the District (respective administrative institution) helps to coordinate it.

Interviewer: I see. So, how do they know which one wants to petition, or whatever other things?

Street level worker C: There are tricks in it of course, and [there are ways of knowing] who is the key person [to be watched over].

Interviewer: Can you tell me in more detail about who would be considered as key persons (to be watched over)?

Street level worker C: Those who always go to Beijing, and those who always got some reasons [to appeal]… Those who often go to municipal and provincial government to petition. [Street level worker C, Street level worker B, 23/10/2017].

Tracking and monitoring work normally happens when there is an important event or during national conference time. There are many cases where two staff working in government are responsible for one particular ‘dangerous citizen’ and their goal is to prevent petitioners going to Beijing to appeal, as this is important for an officer’s promotion and career that there should be no complaints to Beijing by people he is assigned to watch.

Street level worker C: So speaking of community, [staff working in] the community [committee] have the most laborious job. A secretary of a community committee once said, (the job in the community service centre, following and watching over people, make him feel like) he lost all his own personality. [People who watch over] petitioning civilians have to endure that

Interviewer: I’m sorry, what? I don’t understand.

Street level worker C: [For example, if] you need to watch over two civilians (who want to go petition). If one wants to go, you cannot restrict his freedom, right? So you have to follow him, right? (Interviewer: Yeah) And he takes a bus, so you have to get onto the bus and follow him, right? When the bus goes to a relatively remote place, [he] gets off, and he has asked somebody else or other petition people drive there to pick him up [and they drive away]. You are [left] sitting there, resting in the shade [with nothing to do]. They fool you.

Interviewer: OK. Well, why are you scared of them petitioning?

Street level worker C: If he goes to Beijing’s NPC & CPPCC [to petition], then he will be on the record as a petition person from Changsha, then you (who is responsible for watching over this person) will get criticised.

Interviewer: Under what circumstances you will get criticised?

Street level worker C: In these petition situations, [it means] you haven’t done your job properly [Street level worker C, Street level worker B, 23/10/2017].

From what governmental officers said in the following transcripts, it is clear that petitioning bypassing the immediate leadership is prevented by the joint efforts of street level bureaucrats, community committees, and governments at the district and municipal levels.

Interviewer: Do you mean that, no petition in any way, should be conveyed to Beijing?

Street level worker C: Yes, Beijing. If civilians from all over the country all go to Beijing to petition, what should (the person responsible) Beijing do? So, you have to watch over and keep those petition people [away from Beijing], when there is important event.

Interviewer: But, you work in the Division of Complaints and Appeal, you receive petitioners every day, why not stop them there? Why can they petition to municipal (governmental institutions)?

Street level worker C: Some of them often go to Beijing, some of them rarely go. You can coordinate with them for some problems, but some difficult ones go to Beijing on purpose.

Interviewer: So, as aspects of maintaining stability, other than when there are important events, and sending staff to follow petition-oriented civilians, what other jobs do you need to do?

Street level worker C: In other periods, if [a petitioner] encounters any difficulties, and I cannot help him solve this particular problem, I can look after him within my power. Community is the grassroots, who really deal with civilians.

Interviewer: So there is a lot of manpower required, in terms of maintaining stability.

In the minds of these community officers, petitioners cause them (the officials) difficulties so they want to minimise their own workloads by finding other ways of dealing with complaints.Such stability-maintaining work is both labour-intensive and time-consuming. But adoption of monitoring and following by street-level workers to supervise citizens in the community on behalf of local governments is still considered necessary to maintain stability. It can be seen from the interviews that street-level workers implementing such stability-maintaining work for controlling *collective action* is not of their free-will (because the job is labour intensive and a waste of their time), and is sometimes in conflict with their own values. But they are institutionally compelled to do this because petitioning is considered a form of ‘instability’ that needs to be controlled from the perspective of local government.

## **7.5 Summary**

It can be seen from this chapter that when local officials form a policy community that excludes migrants outside, and dominate the policy making process by closing down opportunities for complaint, different actors’ (especially media's) play an essential role in the issue-framing discourse and agenda-setting process in Changsha. The media as an actor outside of government system mainly supported the reconstruction of the image of migrants workers (negative one, such as city invaders) portrayed by the state narrative (especially before 2002), but it also challenged the discourse on education problem of migrant children that was previously dominated by the state Party through questioning the existence of migrant schools and government’s arrangements towards migrant children under the discussion of ‘equality’. Meanwhile, even though the media is under strict political control, faces severe market competition, and the requirements to maintain its credibility in China, it still provided space in the discourse for voices different from the official account of issue, especially when concerning the responsibility for providing education for migrant children, and the way to deal with migrant schools. Through joint efforts of journalist professionals in China’s media industry (especially metropolitan newspapers), the discourse boundaries of the education issue that had been dominated by the state Party has been moved, allowing different voices, even critical of policies of local governments to be heard, provoking attention and support from the public for the equal educational rights of migrant children.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT – POLICY FORMULATION AND POLICY DESIGN: PROVINCIAL AND CITY LEVEL**

## **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to investigate how national policies are translated into provincial and city level policies in the policy formulation stage. To answer this question, I divide this chapter into four main sections, looking at the “translation” process from two different angles. The first section focuses on interpretation of national policy (i.e. *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*) at a provincial and city level, to compare the differences in policy texts and their underlying implications in terms of policy goal-shifting. The second section explores the interaction among involved actors at the city level, explaining their different interests over substantive issues in the educational problems experienced by migrant children. The third section examines the policy instruments used to address the pressure from the national policy on city level government, in order to show how local government deals with the pressure from the central government. In the last section, how local parent groups and migrant parents communicate their conflicting educational interests in various types of protests and resistance in response to local policies will be presented.

As said by a government official in Changsha, “*those (education) needs are too intensive, it’s impossible to satisfy them (migrant parents) all”* [Government Official D, interview, 20/10/2017]. The national government transfers an impossible task to local government, which leaves local government no choice but to shift this pressure at local level through local policies, which is the major premise of this chapter on policy formulation. It can be seen from this chapter that the policy formulation and policy design at local city level in Changsha have created a goal-shifting process compared to the original intention of the national policy, because the strategy chosen by the local government and local schools has compromised the educational opportunities of migrant children. In the meantime, the local policies in Changsha have shifted the responsibility of providing education services to migrant children to other actors through a sharing mechanism in the local policy formulation process. Last but not least, different attitudes of school leaders and local government towards protests and resistance (organised by migrant parents and local parents) have also created an even more difficult environment for migrants to fight for their educational rights, and made continuing segregation between urban local students and migrant students possible.

## **8.2 Interpretation of National *NTUP* at Local Levels**

This section focuses on the analysis of interpretation of policy (text) at local levels. I start by looking at the provincial and city level policy documents to introduce what decisions have been agreed before the implementation process of local *NTUP*, and comparing provincial and city level policy with the national policy. I use Hunan province and Changsha city as examples. Linking back to Chapter 5 (*Policy Context: National Level*) enables me to see which key ideas in the national policy are being emphasized, avoided, or shifted at the provincial and city levels. I observe the local government’s interpretation of national policy from the level of agreement on the policy text among three levels of government. After that, I show how city level policies interpret “integration” of migrants (which is an important purpose of national *NTUP*) in practice, clarifying the definition of *integration* through a brief literature review, and comparing it with how these two concepts are perceived and manifested in my case.

### 8.2.1 Comparison of Policy Texts of *NTUP* on Different Levels

Comparing *NTUP* at both provincial level and Changsha city level with the national *NTUP* in terms of reducing educational inequality of migrant children and enhancing social integration of migrants into cities, it can be seen that two main points from the national *NTUP* are also emphasized in the *NTUP* at provincial and city level. First, they all attach importance to guiding the migration of people, and promoting the orderly citizenisation[[37]](#footnote-37) of migrant workers. The application of this principle at provincial and city level includes providing migrants with social services equal to those which have been provided to local citizens in Hunan/Changsha and helping migrants to acquire a local *hukou*. Secondly, they both emphasize guaranteeing migrant children’s educational rights in public schools within the compulsory education stage. They both propose incorporating migrant children’s compulsory education into the ‘educational development and planning’ and ‘financial security’ of local governments. This principle has implied that local governments are responsible for providing school places to migrant children either through public schools or purchase of private educational services. Yet the *NTUP* on a provincial level did not clarify Hunan Provincial government’s responsibility in this issue, with no mention of official subsidy towards governments on a lower level, which means that the provincial government has passed the buck of financial responsibility in terms of providing education services to migrant children to Changsha municipal government (Hunan Provincial People's Government 2015; Central Government Portal 2014; Changsha Municipal Government 2017).

Meanwhile, three points in the national *NTUP* have been either changed or deleted in the local *NTUP* in Hunan province and Changsha city. First, under the “*people-oriented, fair-sharing*” principle in the *NTUP*, the national *NTUP* directly emphasizes “steadily promoting covering all permanent residents into the scope of receiving urban basic public services, and enhancing the all-round development of people and social justice” (The Central Government 2014), which is converted into “steadily advancing equalisation of urban public services, and respecting the independent choice of urban residents and rural population” in Changsha’s *NTUP* (Changsha Municipal Government 2017). The local version does not coincide with the national version in the policy text: it is not only less demanding than *NTUP* at national level, but also indicates Changsha government’s attitude of avoiding setting ‘enhancing social justice’ as their interpretation of national *NTUP* and their starting point in formulation of their local policies. Secondly, under the “*s*y*nchronisation of four (dimensions of) modernisation[[38]](#footnote-38), coordinating urban and rural areas”* principle, the national *NTUP* stresses “forming an urban-rural relationship in which cities lead rural areas, and rural areas integrate with cities”, which is changed to “forming a gradient order between city and country, in which city and country are closely connected.” This modification has softened the requirements stated in the national *NTUP,* and signifies a thinking that accepts sequencing order when it comes to cities and rural areas (meet the needs of cities first, then deal with the countryside), instead of treating cities and the country equally. It implies that rural areas hold an inferior position compared to cities, which also relates to the local governments’ differentiated attitudes in providing public services to urban residents and the rural population (categorised by *hukou* status, migrant workers whose *hukou* is rural are still considered to be rural population here).

Finally, the national *NTUP* directly underscores “accelerating the full coverage towards all permanent population in terms of providing a compulsory education service”; this is deleted from the Changsha *NTUP,* which used “residents from different areas achieve equal integration, getting fair protection, greatly improving social inclusion […] achieve basic elimination of systemic barriers which impair healthy development of urbanization […] establish a *Cost-Sharing Mechanism of Citizenisation*” (analysis of the working rationale and implementation of which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*) instead. This modification proved a shift of policy interpretation from the central government to local government in Changsha. In the central *NTUP,* governments should bear the responsibility for providing educational services to all citizens within their jurisdiction and within the compulsory education stage, unconditionally, but the Changsha government has interpreted this responsibility-assigning principle into a *Cost-Sharing* mechanism which transfers its responsibility to other social actors (including the migrant parents).

### 8.2.2 Interpretation of the “Integration” Process

8.2.2.1 Definition of *Integration*

The concept of integration has been explored by many previous researchers, yet there is no standard clear definition due to its contested nature and the complexity built into the varying socio-economic, political, legal and cultural dimensions of its process (Castle, Korac & Vertovec 2002; Entzinger & Biezeveld 2003; Korac 2003, cited in Haghighi & Lynch 2012). Although this term, “integration”, has been frequently mentioned in policies/state programmes, its meaning has rarely been clarified by politicians and policy-makers. It has multiple interpretations under different circumstances (Phillips 2010). In addition, the context to which the terms “integration” and “inclusion” refer seems uncertain and confusing in many cases. To be specific, “integration” is conceptualised as a “two-way process” in *A Common Agenda for Integration* by the *European Commission* (Phillips 2010, p. 211), by which the non-local population and the local population both commit to change equally. Yet officials and policy-makers tend to merge “integration” and “assimilation”, while the latter term refers to a one-way process that the migrants try to acculturate into and disperse across the dominant cultural and spatial environment. It is important to notice that even with the property of “integration” as a two-way process being acknowledged widely, many studies have indicated that most efforts committed to adaptation are expected to be undertaken by the migrants or minority groups (Phillips 2010).

8.2.2.2 Manifestation of *Integration* in My Case

In my case, what national and local policies emphasize in terms of promoting *integration* of migrants is more about granting migrants access to the city’s public services: helping migrants adapt to urban lifestyles through providing various training projects for them. For example, Changsha Federation of Trade Unions has provided training classes to migrant workers in Gaoxin District, which gives them knowledge about labour contracts, social insurance and trade union rights (People’s Government of Hunan Province 2011). These classes aim at helping migrant workers to effectively protect their legitimate rights and interests, enhancing their awareness of safe production and labour protection, to achieve better integration into urban life. On the one hand, migrants either accept what services are given to them by the government, or are expected to play their own ‘part’ (such as go to training classes organised by the government) to complete the integration process. On the other hand, local urban residents are excluded from this integration process in policies, although they actually have an important role in determining the extent of integration of migrants in Changsha, because urban local residents’ attitudes have significant influences on the integration process of migrants in cities. What is missing from the integration-oriented policies here is the responsibility or limitation of urban local residents in the process of integrating with migrants actively.

Meanwhile, the mismatch between the definition of *integration* and its manifestation in my case does not only involve neglect in policy, but also involves social and geographical dimensions. Specifically, migrant workers in Changsha, especially in Yu Hua District, have been separated and marginalised both socially and spatially (due to the high price of school district housing). They have formed their social networks neither with other migrants nor with local residents. According to Chen and Wang (2015), When social networks is a crucial factor that influences integration process of migrants (Poros 2011), lack of interaction between migrants and local people in Changsha could impair the integration process of migrants in this city. In an integration-oriented policy such as the *NTUP,* there is no interpretation of how to achieve two-way ‘integration’ in the local policies in Changsha.

## **8.3 Interaction between Actors at the City Level**

In this section, I investigate how actors have interacted with each other during the policy formulation process at the city level. First, the process of *policy design* is introduced through depicting multidimensional cooperation among different actors at city level (supported by interview data). I categorise cooperation in my case into three dimensions according to the nature of the actors involved: among different government institutions, among different departments in the same institution, and between government and non-governmental actors, and give a brief discussion of its limitations and potential influences on the later implementation stage. Then I examine strategies adopted by local governments and schools to cope with the pressure from the national policy, in order to demonstrate the autonomy of local government and schools in making local policies/regulations.

### 8.3.1 Policy Design

Policy design encompasses various efforts to develop effective policies through adoption of knowledge about policy instruments obtained from experience and understanding about development, and the means of achieving the desired ends within specific contexts (Howlett 2011). According to interviews with governmental officials in the Education Bureau on both municipal and district levels, in the case of enrolment policy for migrant children in local public schools in Changsha, the policy-making process involves eight actors. Categorised according to the nature of cooperation and the actors involved, cooperation is adopted three dimensions in the policy-making process, through producing policy documents or consultation via meetings. Specifically, there is cooperation between different departments in the same institution; coordination among different governmental institutions; and collaboration between governmental institutions and non-governmental actors. Even though the process involves non-governmental actors, it starts within governmental institutions.

To begin with, the Basic Education Department in the municipal Education Bureau in Changsha would organise a team to read up and study the national policy document to produce an enrolment policy reform document at the municipal level. Then this document would be discussed between the Basic Education Department and the Business Office in the municipal Education Bureau to produce a unanimous draft of related policy within the Education Bureau itself before discussing with school presidents in local public schools for policy forecasts and further modification. Social actors are not engaged in the process until the unanimous draft is produced, and school presidents (of public schools) are the first social actors involved. According to the official in the Education Bureau [Governmental Official H, interview, 17/10/2017], consultation between school presidents and the Education Bureau would produce a policy text. However, it is important to note that there is no evidence in my interview to show that the participation of school presidents has played an important role in the policy formulation process at local level. As stated in *Primary School Management Procedures (National Education Commission Order No. 26),* themain duties of school presidents in primary schools do not include providing consultation to the Education Bureau in the policy-formulation stage (State Education Commission 1996).

After that, cooperation among different governmental institutions begins. The National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Public Security at the county level, and local governments on a district level in Changsha would be consulted for advice in meetings organized by the Changsha municipal government. A relatively mature policy text would be produced in this stage. Henceforth, policy text generated from the last stage would be handed to the Legislative Affairs Office to check and audit. Finally, it would be discussed in the Standing Committee of the government/Changsha Municipal Committee, preparing for promulgation.

*Interviewer: How have policies been made? For example, enrolment policy in local public primary schools.*

*Governmental Official H: The policymaking process, of course, is very rigorous. First, our Basic Education Department would organise a team. We would read up educational policies on the national and provincial levels. It starts inside our (team) because it does not only involve the Basic Education Department, there are other departments involved. The Business Office in our department is the one discussing the (policy-making) process...after discussion, we’d make a discussion paper (of new policies). After the discussion paper, we would bring it to several school presidents for policy (effectiveness) prediction. After policy prediction, there would be modification, after modification, there would be policy text. enrolment policy involves a wide range of aspects, not only us (Education Bureau). Like the enrolment policy promulgated in Changsha last year, it involves other relevant government departments including the National Development and Reform Commission, Financial Bureau, Personnel Department, Public Security Bureau etc, who would be consulted. After the consultation, because this is a big reform, there would be a meeting held by (local) governments. Governments at district and county levels would also be consulted. So after extensive consultation, and a mature policy text has been made, we probably still...governments and the Office of Legislative Affairs would review the policy. After the policy has passed its review...it would be taken to a governmental standing committee/municipal standing committee* [Governmental Official H, interview, 17/10/2017].

Involvement on such a wide scale in the educational policy making process is not common. The extent of involvement represents the degree of importance attached to the issue, and the level of reform being undergone.

*Governmental Official H: The reform document, last year [...] our enrolment policy document on reform within the compulsory education stage is the only one that has been promulgated in the name of the municipal party committee and municipal government* [Governmental Official H, interview, 17/10/2017]

It also indicates a high level of difficulty in this policy formulation process, because of the extensive coordination work required. The involvement of a wide range of governmental departments increased the complexity of the bureaucratic procedure required in the policy formulation process. Yet this wide range of involvement still remains inside the government system, and the role social actors played at this stage appears to be nearly invisible. This could potentially become a reason for low acceptance or low motivation for actors outside government (such as school teachers and school presidents) to follow and cooperate on implementation stage.

*The intensity of reform last year is very profound. So when it involves a profound enrolment policy reform, the policy-making process would be very...on the one hand, it would take a long time, on the other hand, the problems we consider would be (complicated), and we wouldn’t make the policy randomly. But if there is not so much to change and reform, we would do that within our Municipal Education Bureau. It would become a professional policy adjustment completed within our department. But enrolment reform like last year, because it touches upon a ‘global’ work [he means extensive]...you were not in Changsha last year so you might not know that very clearly, because the intensity of reform last year was very great.* [Governmental Official H, interview, 17/10/2017]

After these promulgations, policy advocacy will be organised through publication online and press conferences held by the local municipal government, as these are the main ‘information-based instruments’ used in this case. This aim not only to notify the public about the new policies, but also to make a concrete foundation on an ideology level, in terms of reaching an agreement about the nature of the problem, the priority of the solutions waiting to be stressed in the policy, which is an essential part of the preparation work for a smooth policy implementation at the local level.

*Interviewer: How do you make sure that your policies would be implemented on the ground?*

*Governmental Official H: Well, the first thing is advertising the policy from top to bottom so that everyone knows to do things as the policy said. Our municipal government holds a press conference. We promulgate the policy through a press conference, we announce the statement. Then local governments on different levels would work together...otherwise how do you think we should do it? The document we just mentioned has made the administration arrangement clear. People unify their understanding. We need to clarify things about the necessity and urgency of the problem, as well as why we should do this, so people would reach an agreement that we should indeed do this, so it could be fair and canonical. Otherwise, civilians don’t recognize it (the policy), or they have differing opinions about it, that’s not going to work* [Governmental Official H, interview, 17/10/2017].

We can see from the interview that social actors, especially the affected ones such as the parents' group, as well as schools, are not been involved in the policy design process, which is similar to the situation in the West, where parents are usually also not involved. Therefore, the migrant parents' group and schools have not been given a chance to negotiate in the “who wins/loses, who gets what” question at the policy-making stage. The lack of their voices in the policy-making process has become a source of pressures that shaped the definition of the educational problem and make its implementation more difficult in the later stages, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 (*Policy Implementation*).

## **8.4 Policy Instruments**

In this section, how local government adopts different policy instruments and strategies to cope with the pressure of providing school positions to migrant children will be presented. First, I borrow several concepts from policy studies to analyse how the local government promulgates and advocates policies in Changsha in more detail. After that, I explore how the local government in Changsha increases education provision, related problems, and the implications of their strategies in terms of reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children. To begin with, policy instruments are defined as the tools or actual means that governments adopt in the implementation of policies (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl 2009) All the policy instruments found in current policy studies have been adopted in my case, including *information-based policy instruments, authority-based policy instruments, treasury-based policy instruments, organization-based policy instruments,* and *network instruments* (Howlett 2011; Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017).I have summarised their basic characteristics and their use in my case in the following table (8-1).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Types of policy Instruments** | **Definition and characteristics** | **Examples in my case** |
| Information-based policy instruments | ‘Those policy techniques or mechanisms which rely on the use of information to directly or indirectly affect the behaviour of those involved in the production, consumption and distribution of different kinds of goods and services in society’ (Howlett, 2011, p116) | Public information campaigns, publication online, and press conferences held by the local municipal government |
| Authority-based policy instruments | ‘Involve, and rely primarily on the ability of governments to direct or steer targets in the directions they would prefer them to go through the use of the real or perceived threat of state-enforced sanctions’ (Howlett, 2011, p83) | command-and-control regulation |
| Treasury-based policy instruments | ‘Specific techniques involved in transferring treasure [treasury] resources to or from other actors in order to encourage them to undertake some activity desired by governments through the provision of financial incentives, or to discourage them through the imposition of financial costs’ (Howlett, 2011, p101) | financial transfers from the central government to local governments and vice versa; from local governments to public schools; and from real estate developers to local governments. |
| Organisation-based policy instruments | ‘Rely upon the use of government institutions and personnel to affect policy output delivery and policy process change’ (Howlett, 2011, p63) | *direct provision* (local governments delivering the education service for the central government, regulating the private sector’s performance etc.) |
| Network instruments | ‘Consist of attempts by government agencies to bring together actors from government and civil society to inform, consult or deliberate on the design and implementation of policies’ (Wagenaar et al., 2017, p82) | voluntary services provided by communities to public schools |

Table 8-1. Types of Policy Instruments Used in My Case (Author, 2019)

Source: Howlett (2011, pp.63-116); Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink (2017, p. 82)

### 8.4.1 How Policy Instruments are Used in My Case

Inthe case of *information-based policy instruments,* China’s government has adopted *public information campaigns* to inform the public, including migrant workers and urban residents, about schools, new regulations/policies, and school districts. This type of instrument also appears in policy advocacy through publication online and press conferences held by the local municipal government to let the public know about the new policies. In the case of *authority-based policy instruments*, what China’s central/provincial/local governments normally adopt is *command-and-control regulation*, through policies (i.e. instruments) such as *Entering Neighbourhood Schools* (commanding local governments to provide educational services to all residents within their jurisdiction; no independent choice of school is allowed in public schools)*,* the *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* (commanding local governments help with integration of migrants in cities through various types of reforms and policies)*.* Its target groups include lower level (local) governments, the employees working in them, the public, especially migrant workers (with migrant children), urban residents, and real estate developers.

In *treasury-based policy instruments,* financial transfers from the central government to local governments and vice versa, from local governments to public schools, and from real estate developers to local governments have been conducted. The transfers from higher level governments to lower level governments and from local governments to public schools serve as incentives for local governments to follow central government’s arrangements and for public schools to follow local governments’ wishes to a certain extent. In addition, there are tax incentives for private schools from the local governments. Specifically, they enjoy tax reductions as stated in the P. R. C. Law for Promoting Private Schools (Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress 2005). Meanwhile, the grants from the central government to local governments, and from local governments to public schools have been reported as insufficient to support achieving the objectives (which will be discussed in the later section 8.3.2). This financial deficiency has become an important reason why local governments and local public schools in Changsha have adopted a ranking mechanism in enrolment policies.

In *organisation-based policy instruments, direct provision* (Hood 1986) has been adopted through local governments in the lower level and employees working in them implementing the policy, delivering education services for the central government, and regulating the private sector’s performance, such as private schools and real estate developers. The Education Bureau, municipal police station, municipal HRSSB, and municipal Centre for Real Estate, as government institutions, are the ‘organisational instruments’ used in the implementation process of educational enrolment policy. Public schools exist as *public enterprises* in this case, as public schools are partially owned by the state yet still enjoy a certain degree of autonomy on enrolment requirements. Additionally, private migrant schools which could exist as *voluntary organisations* are not found in Changsha, with all migrant children-concentrated schools being public schools in this city.

Meanwhile, except for the above-mentioned traditional policy instruments, a new type of instrument has been adopted in my case - ‘*network instruments*’ (Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017, p. 82). It means government institutions assemble actors not only from governmental departments but also from social actors into the formulation or implementation of the policy. It is a type of instrument used in “network governance” that stresses the cooperative relationship between the state and society in the problem-solving process (Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017). It has played an essential role as a potentially influential policy instrument here in my case because voluntary service being a part of the assessment, *Changsha City Property Management Excellence Project (Enterprise) Standards and Rating Rules,* brings a change of attitude: it urges them to provide help to migrant schools actively. This helps with the deliberation of policy implementation through combining efforts from both government actors and social actors in the policy implementation process to help to enhance education provision to migrant students. It has also won over the attention and social resources for schools with high concentrations of migrant students.

However, the reason and the form of expression behind the use of this type of instrument in my case are different from those in Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink (2017). The key incentive of its adoption in their case is that the institutions involved in prostitution-regulating policy implementation recognized the lack of collaboration among themselves, and that this poor coordination led to the duplication of work, resulting in less than ideal outcomes (Wagenaar, Amesberger & Altink 2017). In my case, there was no initial questioning of the current institutional arrangements or recognition of their limitations. Instead, its introduction was motivated by a community-assessment policy which rewarded doing so. When the community provides such services to schools, they obtain higher scores in the rating process. The Changsha Property Management Institute would check the record of the community, interviewing related departments about their perspectives on the performance of the community in this respect. If the community has done several activities under this standard, they receive 3 points, 2 points for acceptable, and 0 for none. This is an institutional motivation as well as pressure for local communities to involve themselves in the projects organised by schools to help migrants.

Local government introduced this policy to bring more social actors such as communities into the integration process of migrants, instead of rethinking and questioning the current education system and policies that tolerate and even encourages educational inequality between local children and migrant children. Furthermore, there was no consultation about involved actors’ needs and positions in my case. Instead, a steering group was formed with the local government remaining the leading actor in the policy’s adoption, urging communities to provide help to schools in this involuntary network. It is important to mention that this instrument’s target group has been limited to migrant children who already have a school place in the public education system in Changsha, instead of targeting migrant children as a whole group in the city. The mix of instruments adopted in my case resulted from the complexity of and potential resistance which emerged during the policy formulation (and implementation) stage, in which governments do not only need motivation (from treasury-based policy instruments) and pressure (from authority-based policy instruments) to push local governments to formulate and implement local policies that share a common goal with the idealistic national policy in terms of reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children, but also need to obtain support from society (through network instruments) to carry forward the policy of addressing the educational problem of migrant children.

### 8.4.2 Strategies Adopted by Local Government Facing Pressures

This part aims to analyse how different local government institutions and schools cooperate to deal with pressure from the national policy. There are two types of effort that appear in the picture: those that increase education provision (increase school positions), and those that raise the threshold that determines who can access the education provision (decrease “rightful” educational needs). The local government uses various strategies to cope with the pressure of accepting migrant students required by national policy: accelerating school construction and conversion, distributing students, enrolment ranking, and improving rural schools to discourage migration of families. These strategies represent different positions of the local governments and public schools along with their pressures. Meanwhile, the nuance in its design (such as enrolment ranking) has shown the government’s attitudes, which is not in favour of migrants.

With the rapidly growing number of migrant workers in urban areas, the emergence of great numbers of migrant children has resulted in a serious burden on various levels of the educational system in the city. Therefore, urban public schools resist this burden by setting strict entrance requirements to migrant children which is discussed in a previous chapter (Chapter 3. *Anatomy of Education System and Hukou System*). Furthermore, the national *NTUP* and a problematic financial mechanism (which will be explained in detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*) and the education system have added financial expenditure and responsibility for providing education at the compulsory education stage to the burden on the shoulders of local governments in China. As a result, it is likely that local governments will resort to political inaction when interpreting the national *NTUP* in terms of providing equal educational services to migrant children, which I will explain in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*.

To cope with enrolment pressure, the municipal and district Education Bureaux in Changsha have come up with several solutions in terms of local educational policies. Firstly, the municipal Education Bureau has created an enrolment order and set out a local enrolment policy, which is then applied by the district Education Bureau to all public schools in Changsha. This enrolment order is based on migrant students’ *hukou* status and migrant parents’ property ownership status, as we discussed in Chapter 2 in detail. Secondly, constructing new schools has appeared effective in soothing the imbalance between educational needs and the availability of school places in Changsha. This strategy also involves additional support from non-governmental actors and is adapted to reduce the financial pressure on local governments. The additional support here is guaranteed by local policies towards constructing commercial residential buildings, as we discussed earlier in Chapter 2. Local governments would supervise real estate developers in Changsha to construct premises for new schools together.

*Government Official F: On the one hand, [we] plan and construct schools well. If the city is expanding, and when you (the local government) develop a new property, then you (the local government) must supervise real estate developers. We have a building construction regulation in Changsha, stating that [real estate developers who construct] properties [to a certain scale need] to construct equipped schools as well. If you don’t construct equipped schools yourself, then you submit a certain amount of money (that can be used to construct the school to the local government), and the local government would construct the new school synchronously [with the construction of developer’s properties]. On the other hand, the system may be changed. Those old schools, their facilities might not be adequate, then they would be pulled down and reconstructed. Our education department might re-plan the classrooms so the school could be expanded relatively in order to increase the number of new classrooms. And then it could increase the number of teachers as well* [Government Official F, interview, 15/10/2017].

When the funding for constructing new schools comes from governments, the completion of construction work requires cooperation from several governmental institutions. It involves the municipal and district Education Bureaux (responsible for formulating school construction plans: The Municipal Education Bureau makes plans for the construction of new schools within Changsha city, while the district Education Bureau makes plans for the construction of new schools within their own district), the National Development and Reform Commission at the municipal level (responsible for setting projects and controlling the flow of capital from governments at the upper level into construction work), the municipal and district Ministry of Finance (to take care of financial investment, within their own jurisdiction), the municipal Planning department (to designate land for educational use), and help from district/county governments. It is important to mention that although the construction costs of building new schools are inevitably going to be high, the costs of staffing and running/maintaining them are likely to be very high as well, yet these costs have not been eased in any way by the involvement of real estate developers. Local governments in Changsha therefore need to provide it on their own.

*Governmental Official F: The construction of schools, our Education Bureau must [be involved] constructing new schools needs other governmental institutions [to participate and cooperate with each other), National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance etc, they all need to cooperate, including the Planning Department, even local governments on district and city level, they all need to work together.*

*Interview: Do you mind giving an example of how they cooperate with each other?*

*Governmental Official F: Constructing any new school needs related governmental institutions to cooperate. It’s not done by only one institution. For example, if we develop/construct any new school, our Planning Department (needs to plan) land for education use in advance, so that the land wouldn’t be sold for any commercial projects. You can only use it as education land, only for building schools. It’s not any particular case is like this. [Including] financial investment, there is a series of procedures in the planning and construction process.* [Government Official F, interview, 15/10/2017]

The cooperation among these different government institutions is an essential link between education provision-enhancing policies and meeting pressing needs from growing numbers of migrant children. It is their joint efforts that make extra education provision from governments to migrant children possible in this city, and this cooperation appears as a model of complicated administrative coordination in China’s political system. It also means that the extra education provision can only be achieved when all institutions in this “chain of possibility” approve the necessity of constructing new schools over other issues. It is not clear from the interview whether there were conflicts and, if there were, what kinds of conflicts or difficulties emerged during their communication and cooperation. However, as the following interview shows, this administrative complexity has potentially increased the difficulties in the school construction process, especially when the capital flow is controlled by other institutions (i.e. The National Development and Reform Commission at the municipal level in this case) which does not necessarily share a common perception with the Education Bureau of the priority of investments in the city. As a result, the “chain of possibility” for migrant children can only be completed on the basis that officials working in this critical link (The National Development and Reform Commission at the municipal level) consider increasing education provision more important compared to other social and economic projects.

*Government Official G: The National Development and Reform Commission is very powerful, it is in charge of a wide range of issues, so it’s known as the ‘little State Council’. It covers a lot of governmental functions. The National Development and Reform Commission always do things that nobody would like to do in some department, or they do it on behalf of the municipal government.*

*Interviewer: You just said the NDRC is powerful, can you explain in what aspects is it powerful？*

*Government Official G: Its duty is to conduct the five year plan from the central government to the local authorities, do you remember? The top priority of the NDRC is to carefully formulate, coordinate and implement a plan for economic and social development for the next five years in the country, a province, a city or a county, because the country's funds follow the project, the project must enter the planning process, that is to say which one comes first, which one comes second, it all depends on the NDRC’s decision. So we need to talk about the opinions of different departments, we summarize what they want to do, then we extract and refine some of them according to the planning at provincial and national level, as well as the actual situation in Changsha city. After that, we send it to the decision level, to ask the Municipal government make their choice. Once the decision is made, we drive and implement it through an invisible hand, that is projects and financial. Each batch of planning is actually projects, they are all funds, that is what I mean.*

*Interviewer: Taking this project as an example, the NDRC is responsible for coordinating what?*

*Government Official G: The specific task belongs to specific departments. We (National Development and Reform Commission) are mainly responsible for “grasping its lifeblood”. The first (lifeblood) one is the project, the second one is funding...If you want to get national funds, you have to apply for it through the National Development and Reform Commission. The provincial government puts out a certain amount of money every year [if] Changsha municipal government wants to obtain funds from the provincial government [for a particular issue], how can it achieve this goal? Of course it has to get to the provincial development and Reform Commission through us (the Municipal National Development and Reform Commission). Changsha city is very rich, right? 70% of Changsha's money is used for the construction of the people's livelihood, transportation, electricity, water conservancy and school education. As for what to do in the next five years, there are some plans and arrangements. The adjustment about annual spending also needs to be made through the NDRC. So the reason why we say it (The National Development and Reform Commission) is powerful is because it manages the project and the funds. It manages the economic and social development of the whole region* [Government Official G, interview, 13/10/2017].

Besides strengthening education provision through constructing new schools, the Education Bureau in Changsha also considers exploiting the potentialities of existing schools as a reasonable solution to increase the provision of school positions from the perspectives of officials working in the Education Bureau. Specifically, it requires converting rooms with other functions in existing schools into classrooms, or reconstructing some old and small schools in order to increase their capacity.

*Interviewer: What would you do if you knew the enrolment pressure for this year would be quite big?*

*Governmental Official F: One (solution) is expediting construction of new schools. The second one is...we would see which schools could exploit their potential.*

*Interviewer: Exploit potential how?*

*Governmental Official F: Mainly is, if they had more, spare classrooms (in their schools) then they (would accept more students). If this is not applicable, then we need to convert other rooms into classrooms.* [Governmental Official F, interview, 15/02/201*7*]

Comparing two unpublished government documents (*The List of Standardised School Construction within Compulsory Education Stage in Changsha in 2017, The Breakdown Table of Task of School Construction within Compulsory Education Stage in 2016*) and the statistics from Changsha Education Work Conference (in 2017), not only does Changsha government meet its scheduled task of school construction, but also the number of school construction/expansions in Changsha is climbing very fast in order to increase school places in the city. For example, there were 25 schools within compulsory education stage constructed/expanded in 2016, but the number increased to 130 in 2017 in five districts of Changsha.

At the same time, redistributing students is another strategy commonly used by the local Education Bureau in Changsha and other cities. It means that the Education Bureau at the district level allocates students to schools with relatively more school positions within the District when the respective primary school that students were supposed to go to cannot accept more students due to their limited capacity. In this way, the Education Bureau sometimes encounters resistance from students’ parents because the location and the teaching quality of their destination schools are not as good as the one that parents wanted for their children.

*Governmental Official F: e prepare for student bypass. I mean some migrant students can’t get enrolled in this school, then they would be ‘shunted’ into another school. Therefore there must be a part of them being coordinated (allocated) into other schools with relatively more school places. This work needs to be coordinated, and (we have) encountered more or fewer difficulties.*

*Interviewer: For example, difficulties like what?*

*Governmental Official F: For example, they as parents, what if they don’t understand? (They could ask) why don’t you allocate our children to this school, and you put my children into that school? Isn’t it? It’s for sure that there is a lack of understanding.* [Governmental Official F, interview, 15/02/2017]

When comparing these two strategies, even though they both aim at exploiting the potentials of current schools, the latter one provokes more resistance from migrant parents, because this redistribution strategy is putting migrant children in a vulnerable position where school places in respective schools (according to “Entering Nearby Schools”policy) are uncertain, thereby compromising migrant children’s educational opportunities at random. Moreover, this redistribution strategy is connected with the enrolment ranking order policy, because students at the bottom of the ranking order are the ones who are most likely to be redistributed. Under the influence of enrolment order and this redistribution arrangement, it is migrant children (who are at the bottom of the order) who are most likely to pay the price when the school places in local schools are not sufficient. This strategy easily causes misunderstandings and even resistance from parents because of the ambiguity in the justification of this arrangement and its randomness. Therefore, this redistribution process is the manifestation of double-compromises on both sides. When migrant children are transferred to more distant schools or schools with poorer teaching quality under this arrangement, the Education Bureau faces potential resistance from migrant parents, and loses its credibility because its arrangement is in conflict with its own policy, “Entering Nearby Schools”.

Meanwhile, because increasing education provision in cities is financially demanding, reducing the pressure to accept an increasing number of migrant students from a rural area becomes important. This can be achieved through integration of urban and rural education by forging alliances in terms of sharing teaching resources (exchange of teachers) and management methods between urban and rural schools, which is an important part of local government’s work.

*Interviewer: What efforts has the Education Bureau made to expand school places to satisfy more migrant students in the future?*

*Governmental Official F: Integrate urban and rural education so that people (migrants) do not need to leave their hometown, children can receive good education in their hometown.*

*Interviewer: What do you mean? Do you mean people go to the countryside and build schools there or sending local teachers to countryside schools?*

*Governmental Official F: Of course there are lots of solutions. For example, we are doing ‘counterpart support’. Changsha has 15 small towns, and they have their own primary schools and secondary schools, so we let our high-quality secondary schools in the city make an alliance with them, I mean as a counterpart, in order to improve teaching quality, conditions for running those rural primary school and secondary schools.* [Governmental Official F, interview, 15/02/2017]

In this way, the pressure on education provision can be shared across the education system in both urban and rural areas. Theoretically, it will improve the quality of teaching in rural schools, and cut down the number of migrant children in cities as they can access high-quality teaching resources in their rural hometown. This urban-rural education alliance in Changsha has been formulated under the influence of a national policy which aims to help improve the quality of educational resources in rural areas and reduce educational inequality experienced by rural children. However, this alliance was designed on the basis of an unconvincing assumption by the central government that, once there are improved educational resources, more migrant children will stay in rural schools, which is not necessarily the case since migrant families move to cities for more than better educational resources.

*Governmental Official D: There are many cases where migrant parents want their children to enjoy better education so they bring their children to the city when they work here. If one of the parents, mother or father stays in the countryside and takes care of children, then the children would stay in their hometown to receive education. There is no need to move around in that case. This integration of urban and rural education is an important concept now. Last year (2016) the State Council promulgated ‘Advance Integration of Urban and Rural Education’, so we are doing that since the document came out.* [Government Official D, interview, 20/10/2017]

In addition, when the beneficiary of this alliance is mostly rural schools, the sustainability and the extent of implementation of this policy at city level becomes doubtful. The consequences of unstable teaching resources for students in rural schools (due to the short-term exchange of teachers within this alliance) can also impair the policy’s original attention. Whether there are differences, or what kind of effect this strategy has brought to rural schools, requires further comparative research on teaching quality and the academic achievement of students in rural schools.

*Interviewer: Do you mind explaining in more detail how rural schools make an alliance with urban schools?*

*Governmental Official F: The Education Bureau leads this. We help to construct new schools. Urban schools send a vice president (to rural schools), or send teachers to support education in rural schools, and rural schools send their teachers to the city to listen to classes held by urban teachers.*

*Interviewer: Do you mean sending urban teachers to rural schools for the long term?*

*Governmental Official F: Supporting education [...] usually it takes one to two years.*

*Interviewer: I see. What are the arrangements for countryside teachers to come to the city to learn?*

*Governmental Official F: Urban teachers go to the countryside schools to support education there for one or two years. They go down to the countryside, and their education ideas and methods will play a leading role. There are activities which let rural teachers come to the city for teaching and researching activity. And some teaching facilities in urban schools, urban schools might not use them anymore but they are quite good for those countryside schools. So (we) send those teaching facilities to rural schools to improve their supply conditions* [Government Official F, interview, 15/10/2017]

Finally, due to the nature of migration, the number of migrant students already in the city and those who are about to enrol in local public schools in the near future is unpredictable.

*Governmental Official E: We are experiencing quite a lot of pressure to address migrant students’ enrolment. The number of them is increasing every year. Sometimes, as an education administration (department) and a department in local government, we feel that no matter how many new schools we build, we can’t keep pace with the increased number of migrants. I mean the increase in school places can’t satisfy the increased number of migrant students, because Changsha is developing fast in recent years. It’s a provincial capital, and its ‘absorption’ (attraction power) as a city is very strong, so there are lots of people come to the city for work, to do business etc. But how long is the period for constructing a new school? And the number (of increasing migrant students) is unpredictable. I don’t know how many migrant children are about to enrol in our local schools. So it’s quite passive for us in most situations.* [Government Official E, interview, 13/10/2017]

Therefore, the Education Bureau in Changsha felt it necessary to reduce their passivity resulting from the unpredictable nature of migrant student enrolments. From the interview transcripts below, we can see that making arrangements in advance for migrant students and managing them in local public schools are two indispensable aspects of the work of providing education to migrant children in the city. As a result, an online admission system was created and put into use at the end of 2016 for better preparation and releasing enrolment pressure, although migrant parents may not know this system or how to use it.

*Governmental Official E: According to our statistics, now the migrant students make up almost 30% of all students. There are three migrant students in every ten students. So the pressure this year is [heavy].We developed a very good thing, we created software, which is ‘Changsha Primary and Secondary Schools’ Admission and Enrolment System’. We [let migrant students] apply through the admission and enrolment system at least half a year to one year in advance. Then there is a reasonable prediction for the education administrative department and local schools. In this way we would have a basic judgement [about the upcoming students] for later enrolment stage, because this software is constantly being improved, we would probably open it at the end of this year (2016). I should say that this online admission and enrolment system provides a lot of convenience for us. One is the collection of students’ information, in the past, it was quite a task.* [Government Official E, 13/10/2017]

However, having a relatively accurate prediction about the number of migrant students in the city is only the first step. The financial investments that need to follow into building new schools, expanding existing schools, hiring more teachers and other support are the decisive factor in the process. As pointed out by a government official in Changsha [Government Official E, interview, 13/10/2017], “the most difficult part of things (in their work) is to secure funds.'' Apart from receiving appropriations from the higher levels of government (the central government and Hunan provincial government) and letting real estate developers pay for school construction, they need to raise funds themselves. Expenditure on education in Changsha appears to climb steadily[[39]](#footnote-39), as is shown in the following table comparing the official statistics from 2014 to 2018 (Changsha Finance Bureau 2015; Changsha Government 2016; Changsha Finance Bureau 2017; Changsha Finance Bureau 2018; Changsha Finance Bureau 2019).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| Money Spent on Education (billion yuan) | 3.621 | 4.088 | 4.199 | 4.733 | 5.771 |

Table 8-2. Expenditure on Education in Changsha from 2014-2017

Source: Changsha Finance Bureau 2015; Changsha Government 2016; Changsha Finance Bureau 2017; Changsha Finance Bureau 2018; Changsha Finance Bureau 2019 (translated by author, 2019)

In the issue of raising funds for increasing school places (through building new schools and expanding/advancing existing schools) in Changsha, governments at different levels are the main financial source supporting these projects. Taking statistics in 2016 as an example, governments are responsible for 78% of investments in school construction-related projects, while non-governmental financial sources provide around 22% (21.86%) (Changsha Development and Reform Commission 2016). Yet from this restricted data[[40]](#footnote-40) from Changsha local government, it is safe to say that school-construction/expansion has not been considered as a priority by the Changsha government in policy-making and project-setting, since it only takes a very small part of its investment, as shown in the following figures(8-1, 8-2).

Figure 8-1. Proportion of Investment Projects in Changsha in 2016. (author, 2017)

Figure 8-2. Proportion of Investment in Changsha in 2016. (author, 2017)

Source: Changsha Development and Reform Commission (2016, pp. 2-195)

Specifically, among overall 808 major investment projects in Changsha in 2016, school-construction/school-expansion-related projects take up to around 9% (77), compared to other types of projects including agricultural industrialisation projects, industrial high-tech projects, energy conservation and environmental protection projects, service industry projects, trade and logistics projects, urban complex projects, and other government investment projects. Financial investments into these projects take up 1.8% of the overall investments (around 4.9 billion RMB out of 267.4 billion RMB, which is around £0.49 billion sterling out of £26.74 billion sterling). It is important to mention that even though the up-front capital expenditure on building/expanding schools is high, recurrent costs of staffing and running schools are higher in the long term, because staffing expenses are the main part of the overall cost of education, according to the *Annual Report on Education for China’s Migrant Children* (Yang, Qin & Wei 2017).

## **8.5 Protests and Resistance by Parents in China**

When the educational resources and school places in the city are quite limited due to the lack of investment, as stated in the last section, conflicting interests of local parent groups and migrant parents have manifested themselves in various types of protests and resistance, which is the theme of this section. Here I aim to answer one question: how do parents express their attitudes and protect their interests through protests and resistance in response to local educational policies in Changsha? And what do these responses reflect? I start with a brief introduction of the concept ‘*protest*’ and its major characteristics before examining its specific forms in the context of Changsha. Then I give a more fine-grained analysis about different forms of protests and resistance organised by parents groups in my case, followed by a summary of how governments respond to different types of protests and resistance to infer their attitudes in reducing educational inequality through local policies in Changsha. This section examines the limited safe space left for migrant parents to scramble for school resources for their children. Meanwhile, the differentiated attitudes of local governments towards two groups of parents indicate a need for *discretion* on the partof street-level public workers to reconcile the conflicts existing among migrant parents and children, local parents and children, and local governments (which will be discussed in Chapter 9). This section is a foundation for understanding the power of street-level public workers in the implementation process.

### 8.5.1 Different Responses of Local Parents and Migrant Parents

Around the issue of educational inequality, there have been various types of practices adopted by different groups as response to the local educational policies, especially between local and migrant parents. The responses of parents towards the local educational policies in Changsha are not characterised by overt confrontation between local urban parents and migrant parents, but by the ongoing interplay in terms of different types of protests and resistance between the two groups. Even though there are no media reports that can be found about protests organised by migrant parents about the educational problems within Changsha city, there are reports of migrant parents’ protests in other cities in Hunan province (Xiangyang Police 2018; Ye 2019), as well as in other provinces in urban China, as shown in the following figures (8-3, 8-4).

图片包含 户外, 人员, 建筑物, 道路

描述已自动生成

Figure 8-3. Migrant parents protest by lying on the ground in front of the demolished migrant school. Reference source: <http://news.163.com/photoview/00AP0001/17058.html#p=7BIK52PC00AP0001>

图片包含 人员, 户外, 掌握

描述已自动生成

Figure 8-4. A migrant parent protests because she found no place to safeguard her child’s educational rights. Reference source: <http://news.163.com/photoview/00AP0001/17058.html#p=7BIK5PKB00AP0001>

In the meantime, there are local urban parents in Changsha that reject letting an increasing number of migrant children attend local public schools and share their educational resources in the city. According to the interviews with local urban parents, there is resistance from urban residents in subtle ways, such as sending their children to schools with more local children instead of migrant students, or excluding migrant parents and children from their social life/circle (which will be elaborated later in this section)

*Local Parent D: Just to clarify first, I don’t have any complaints about them (migrant children) myself, but I’m not going to send my child to schools with lots of migrant children either, if I have a choice. It is a fact that their (migrant children’s) academic performance is normally not very good, and their study habits are kind of poor as well. We send our child to school. [we do not only expect the school can teach our child] to accomplish good academic performance, but also to develop good study habits. Children are easily affected by each other in schools, you know? Your parents also want you to make friends with classmates whose schools grades are good instead of ones with bad grades, right? Perhaps the school grades are temporary, but study habits are going to affect the child for a long time. So, as parents, it is natural for us to [...] we hope to send them to schools with a good learning atmosphere. This is the case, not that I exclude them personally.* [Local Parent D, interview, 18/02/2017]

Local parents’ resistance towards migrant children in terms of school choice is out of fear that migrant children may have a negative impact on their children because of migrant children’s lower school performance (which is an outcome of a long-standing unequal institutional arrangement for students in urban and rural areas, rather than a natural inferiority in intelligence). Their resistance in this form has continued de facto segregation between local urban students and migrant students, and brought pressure on local public schools against accepting more migrant children in Changsha.

In the following part I would like to illustrate the *protest* in my case. In an authoritarian country like China, with its strong control over collective actions, especially protests, there are still many types of *popular protests* formed by different groups of citizens. Within the field of educational inequality, these popular protests mainly come from migrant parents. From my observation, the *popular protests* in my case are usually *substantive protest* in terms of their display form. Before elaborating on *substantive protest,* I would like to point out several characteristics of *popular protests.* Firstly, they are usually formed in a way that is intertwined with various types of social contradictions among the people, in terms of economics, politics, culture or education. They are rarely involved with a single conflict. Secondly, disadvantaged groups (in this case, migrants) play an important role in this type of *popular protests*, as the subject group (who is initiating the protest). This is because disadvantaged groups are normally in a weaker position in social life or resource distribution, while lacking opportunities to express their self-interests as a whole group (as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. *Policy Implementation*) effectively in a more “safe” (less aggressive) way.

*Substantive protests* are usually those organized by migrants around the issue of educational problems. The manifestation is partially in line with the official definition of *mass incidents* in China in terms of the way it unfolds. Officially, *mass incidents* are usually incidents that “are caused by some social conflicts, a certain type of social group/non-specific public united together and become a large-scale concentration without lawful basis, adopting collective action to resolve contradictions among the people, which brings negative influence on society, contradictions among the people” (Ye 2009, pp. 114-115). They usually involve a large-scale concentration of people expressing their needs or venting emotion in a non-institutionalized way, which then influences the social order within a certain scope. A large portion of *substantive protests* manifest themselves as ‘tangible’ mass incidents (the number of people who are involved could be hundreds or thousands or more), such as unlawful assembly, sit-in petitions, collective strikes, class boycotts, shopkeepers’ strikes, containment/besieging of party and government offices/key construction projects, protest marches, or collective petitions (Qiu 2004).

From the perspective of government officials, the *substantive protests*, especially those that involve a large number of people, belong to a type of *mass incident* which should be prevented, as they are organized by an aggregation of people implementing collective actions that could either break the law/regulation of the state, or endanger public safety, violating civil safety, and harming public and private property security (Public Security Bureau Regulation of Dealing with Mass Incidents 2000, cited in Yu 2009, p. 114). For example, at the end of August (just before the opening day in schools), 2013, thousands of migrant parents united together to safeguard their children’s educational rights by occupying and attacking municipal governmental buildings in both Xiamen and Jinhua City. In response, local governments sent police to clear the group protest activity organised by migrant parents (Xinlin 2013).

Resistance, on the other hand, is usually launched by local parents against migrants, and the possibility/fact that migrant children might be enrolling into urban public schools in cities, which becomes an educational problem. Migrants are involved in this resistance as the target group (who are being opposed by the resistance). Such resistance is usually manifested in subtler ways than marching to protest, sit-in petitions or other aggressive forms which have emerged in *substantive protests* adopted by migrant parents*.* In addition, there are different types of resistance classified by school enrolment stage. Before migrant children are enrolled into local public schools in cities, local parents would organize resistanceby putting pressure on local governments to set thresholds for entrance to migrant children, preventing more and more migrant children competing for limited educational resources in cities with their local children. According to Yang (CCTV News: Concerning the difficulty of school entrance for migrants children 2014), the reason why local governments make policies that set school entrance thresholds for migrant children is to control population growth while pursuing ‘*realistic* educational equality’. From his perspective and probably in many local parents’ minds as well, the educational resources and carrying capacity in/of cities are very limited, therefore letting migrant children enrol into public schools in cities without setting any threshold would impact on the educational quality that could be enjoyed by urban local children (CCTV News: Concerning the difficulty of school entrance for migrants children 2014). From this starting point, it is not difficult to understand the incentive for local urban parents to launch their resistance against those ‘resource-seizer’.

After migrant children are enrolled into local public schools, local parents launch their resistanceby preventing communication/interaction between their children and migrant children at all costs. For example, as Lan (2014) stated in her study about segmented incorporation between migrant students and local students (in Shanghai), local public schools that accept many migrant students face a great amount of pressure from urban local parents. According to staff in those schools, when local parents heard there would be migrant children transferring to the school which their own children attend, they would transfer their children to another school in other school districts with less migrant children, in order to avoid attending a school which had been influenced by ‘low quality migrant children’; or requiring schools to separate their children (local urban students) from migrant students both spatially and educationally, such as using different school gates, different facilities, arranging the two groups into different classes, wearing different school uniforms, applying different intermission timetables, different classrooms/buildings. Even though there are policy changes that aim to provide more educational opportunities to migrant children, pressure and *resistance* from parents have greatly influenced the implementation of the original intention of such policy changes.

Finally, when we look beyond the school environment, we can also find evidence that migrants have faced resistancefrom local urban residents in their communities. As pointed out by a migrant mother in Changsha in interview, they have very limited opportunity to interact with local urban residents, as residents living in their communities are mainly migrant workers, as discussed in an earlier chapter (Chapter 6. *Subject position of Migrants*).

*Migrant Parent F: Anyway, the contact with local people is…it’s like there is a dozen houses, and only two of them are local families. How many chances do you think we have to make contact with them? Right? It’s the same for them, they don’t want to…Some local people who live here are ok, but some rich local people are not willing to make contact with migrants. How do I put this…hmm, maybe they have relatively stronger defence modes, right?* [Migrant Parent F, interview, 10/02/2017]

Therefore, not living near or sharing communities with migrants is similar to the resistancethat happens in schools mentioned above. It is not only the manifestation of discrimination, but also a type of silent resistancefrom local urban residents against migrants.

### 8.5.2 Reaction of Governments towards Protests and Resistance

Reactions toward *substantive protests* and resistancein China are very different. *Substantive protests* are usually considered and dealt with as *mass incidents* due to their tangibility and possible impacts on the stability of society. China’s central state and local governments have made strict coping strategies for these. Specifically, the central state copes with *substantive protests/mass incidents* very carefully. One important indicator of the state and local governments’ reaction towards *substantive protests/mass incidents* is their relationship with the media, which is related to the condition of media industry in China, as discussed in Chapter 7 (*Agenda-setting Process*). Firstly, there is a strong intention to control information flow in China. According to Li (2013), to achieve unifying statements and stabilize people, major news about *substantive protests/ mass incidents* is presented by the Xinhua News Agency (China’s national news agency, an institution directly under the State Council). Local governments block the passage of information about *mass incidents* through government mandates, which results in a time lag of media reports. In addition to the time lag, there is very limited amount of information when authorities do release news about *mass incidents.* This control tradition has to do with a traditional theory of *collective action.* As stated in Li’s (2013) report, participants in *mass incidents* (including *social movements*) were normally considered ‘irrational’ people who have been deluded and instigated to commit to the incidents. This cognition has created a mind-set for government officials and media thatleads to a biased reporting frame for news and reports on *mass incidents.* This ideological and politicized view of *mass incidents,* considering participators involved as (the party/government’s) enemies, has been broadly resisted and criticized by the public (Li 2013).

Second, there is an interactive space left between the media and the political elite that influences the reaction of state and local governments towards *mass incidents/ substantive protests.* Since 1st May 2008, *CCP Regulations on Open Government Information*, which set out rules guaranteeing the citizen’s right to know, have provided an institutional guarantee for the media industries to report *mass incidents* in China*.* However,according to Stockmann (2013), the central propaganda department in China required that media should refrain from reporting dramatic incidents, in part because the journalistic ethic of, *social responsibility* (to report true and accurate news), has a different meaning in China compared to its meaning in western reports, as discussed earlier in Chapter 7 (*Agenda-setting Process*). *Social responsibility* for journalists in China designates attitudes and actions conforming to policy goals of the state and governments (Stockmann 2013), which would inevitably lay pressure on reporters to filter stories containing information like *mass incidents/ substantive protests* that might influence the goal-achieving and harmonious image-building of the Party and local governments. There is another law worth mentioning in local governments’ reaction towards press reporting on incidents: “when there is little potential for conflict, space widens, whereas issues about which the Party suspects or has experienced conflict remain more closed” (Stockmann 2013, pp.139, 2013). In the case addressed here, the educational inequality experienced by migrant children has been a long-standing controversial issue which has resulted in a decrease in the credibility of governments and the image of the state (Stockmann 2013). It is therefore not unusual for media staff to encounter resistance when reporting incidents involving *substantive protests* organized by migrant parents.

When it comes to resistance organised by local urban parents, the state and local governments’ reaction seems more tolerant compared with their attitudes towards *substantive protests.* For example, when local urban parents organise their resistance towards migrant children by transferring their children to another school, or requiring spatial and educational separation between two groups of students in schools, the school leaders tend to cooperate, partially because the exam-oriented mechanism has also given incentives to school leaders to cut down the number of migrant students, who normally have been considered students with lower achievement records. It is also because higher general academic records of students could bring more donations to the school; and in return, higher *sponsorship fees[[41]](#footnote-41)* can be charged when the school becomes better(Lan 2014). Such separation of two groups of students within schools has not been found in Changsha according to the interviews, yet there are many media reports about such phenomena in other cities (Lin 2006). Local governments have not done anything to protect migrant students from this *resistance.* Instead, they have accelerated this kind of resistance against migrants through formulating and implementing local educational policies that are not in favour of migrant children*.* In addition, because the exam-oriented mechanism has made competition in the education system in China quite fierce, local parents think accepting too many migrant students would put their own children at a disadvantage, as migrant children would bring down the academic performance of the school, carving up their share of educational resources. For example, when around 800 migrant students in a private primary school (migrant children-concentrated) in Suzhou were temporarily relocated to another public elementary school (which is an elite school) due to being forced to vacate their school building, an isolation fence was established to separate the children of the two schools under the pressure of local urban parents. Local parents claimed that this arrangement (the relocation of migrant children into this school) broke the local policy of *Entering Nearby Schools* (strictly enrolling students within the respective school district) because the school allowed students who did not reside within the respective school district to seize the educational resources of public schools (Qiu, 2018).

This section implies that these two distinct phenomena - protests by migrant parents, and resistance by affluent local parents have reflected the considerable socio-economic inequality between local parents and migrant parents. Affluent parents engage in looting school resources by playing the education system and in discriminatory behaviour towards migrant children in school choice. This is similar to buying a house in the right school district, in which there is no risk involved and no public course is served. Migrant parents, on the other hand, have no choice but to engage in very risky public protest. Meanwhile, local governments treat these responses in very different ways, which shows that the need for maintaining the image of social stability is considered Poirier compared to the need to reduce educational inequalities from the perspective of local governments.

## **8.6 Summary**

To sum up, the first section of this chapter examined the interpretation of national policies at provincial and city levels through exploring the concepts and manifestations of *integration* of migrants (as the core of *NTUP)*. It reveals the goal-shifting and responsibility-shifting during the policy formulation process in Changsha.

In the second section, I investigated the interaction patterns among actors involved in the policy formulation process by introducing policy design and cooperation in three dimensions in Changsha: among different government institutions, among different departments in the same institution, and between government and non-governmental actors. This section pointed out that the policy making style of China is prone to making idealistic large-scale systematic and institutional reforms aimed at eliminating educational inequality, without giving sufficient institutional and financial support in policies. It imposes great pressures on lower-level governments and schools in Changsha to rely on various types of strategies in the local policy-making process to chase up the educational needs of migrant children, and lift the threshold of accessing high quality education for them in this city.

This local policy-making process was the theme of the analysis in the third section. Local governments, therefore, are moving between following central government’s policy in terms of reducing educational inequality and coping with pressures with strategies that can potentially compromise the educational opportunities provided to migrant children.

In the last section, I discussed parents’ groups’ different responses to the local educational policies through introducing protests and resistance and their implications, which provides a bridge to shift analysis of policy formation and design to the policy implementation process. Meanwhile, the unaddressed educational inequality in local policy formulation shown in this chapter has laid a foundation for understanding the necessity of discretion on the street level in the implementation process, as developed in the next chapter (Policy Implementation).

# **CHAPTER NINE – POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

## **9.1 Introduction**

To understand how city level policies are interpreted in the process of putting them into practice, it is necessary to investigate how officials in local governments, teachers and school presidents in local schools, both local and migrant parents in Changsha respond to the implementation of policy in practice. In addition, it is important to explore how street-level public workers use their discretion to interpret policies and regulations and put them into practice, and with what outcomes. In the four sections of this chapter, I aim to answer four important sub- questions in the following order: How does local government in Changsha implement city level *NTUP* policies and why? How does Changsha government interpret local educational policies and put them into practice and why? What are the perceptions and actions of parents in response to the implementation of local educational policies? How do *street-level public workers* translate local policies into practices in their work? and what are the influences of their *discretion* (in interpreting local policies and dealing with situation at hand) on the overall policy outcomes in terms of reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children?

These questions require closer reading and analysis of *policy implementation* and *administrative discretion*. With reference to broader theoretical debates regarding the *legitimacy* and influence of discretion in policy implementation processes, I draw on the relationship among these concepts and their implications to discuss the coping mechanisms that street-level workers developed at the frontline in Changsha. This chapter outlines two critical perspectives which have implications for understanding the power of street-level workers in the policy implementation process in an authoritarian country like China. First, there is devolution of responsibility from the central government to local governments in China, which causes resistance from various levels and shifts in the implementation process. Second, the coping mechanisms that street-level workers have developed are not necessarily intended to cater to their organisations’ policy: strategies that run counter to local policies can be the key that keeps the system running and which prevents sharp social conflicts in certain conditions.

## **9.2 Putting City Level Policies (*NTUP*) into Practice**

The main question this section explores is: How does local government in Changsha implement city level *NTUP* policies and why? I start the analysis and portraits of implementation in practice by giving a brief introduction to the concept of *policy implementation,* and examine the *policy networks* formed for policy implementation in my case. I then review actors involved in implementing local policies (*NTUP* at the city level in Changsha) through introducing the interdependence and tension among them, and examine the steering group for implementation in order to account for the roles they played in the policy output of national policy. Finally, I analyse the adopted *Cost Prediction and Sharing Mechanism* in Changsha to show how the content and the focus of the local level *NTUP* has been accordingly transformed. The previous focus on reducing inequality gave way to reduce pressure on local level governments and public schools. By drawing on theoretical insights into *policy implementation* and through analysis of the actors involved in the implementation process in practice, this section explains how the conflict between the altered local policy and the expectations of the original national policy are reconciled.

### 9.2.1 What is Policy Implementation?

The purpose of *implementation analysis* is to find out ‘what happens between policy expectations and (perceived) policy results’ (Ferman 1990, in Hill & Hupe 2002, p.2). It reveals the process of how a policy is put into action and practice. Looking at the implementation of the *NTUP* in China at the national level shows that the central government is acting as the policy formulator, and officials in the central government act as decision-makers, while policy implementers are a much broader group which includes: local governments (and street level servants/officials in local governments); street office and community commissions (which are combined as one actor in my case as they work very closely together and it is hard to divide their responsibility); Education Bureaus at the municipal and district levels; municipal police; municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau; municipal Centre for Real Estate; and local public schools.

Generally, before the start of the ‘implementation’ process, there would be a prior stage of coming up with the answers for what needs to be done, and making a decision about it. In this case, decisions are taken by actors on different administrative levels before the implementation process starts (see Chapter 5. *Policy Context on National Level*, and Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*). To glance back briefly, the decisions made at the national level that underlie the formation of policies at the local level in Changsha include: enhancing integration of rural migrants into cities as the core of national *NTUP;* achieving equalisation of basic public services between rural and urban populationsthrough reform of the *hukou* system in guaranteeing migrant children’s rights of access to compulsory education equally with urban local children; and improving housing security for migrants. These are all important reforms to achieve integration and equalisation. Local governments have accepted the central government’s guidance in *NTUP* and made their own policies according to specific situations such as in Changsha. This has created enormous pressure on local education systems when providing education to migrant children in Changsha and reducing educational inequality experienced by them in this city. As a result, the *Cost Prediction and Sharing Mechanism* (which is discussed in more detail in Section 9.2.4) has been created and adopted by Changsha local government to complete the urbanisation of *agricultural migration population[[42]](#footnote-42)* in this city (see Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*). The decisions made at the national level mentioned above have been officially announced by the central and local governments in China. Theoretically, these reforms and decisions could help to reduce the educational inequality of migrant children in urban China. However, the reform is only as effective as the people carrying it out. How these decisions and policies have been implemented and interpreted at the local level, and to what extent these decisions and the implementation of them actually changed the inequality of migrant children will be discussed in this chapter, involving analysis of formed *policy networks,* discussion of relationships among involved actors, the steering group of implementation, and their adopted strategy.

### 9.2.2 Interdependence among and Tension between Different Actors

The implementation process for this national policy involves complex networks, because the policy itself was formulated in a complicated interaction process, involving many interdependent actors. To formulate and analyse the networks within the implementation process, the interaction processes among the involved actors need to be specified. To begin with, the central government made new policies and conveyed them to local governments. In the centralized system in China, local governments cannot ignore central policy, but they are able not only to resist the responsibility transferred by the policy through negative political inaction or resistance, but they can also adapt it to their local possibilities and needs.

The networks involved in this process connect with each other vertically and horizontally. Vertical relationships in this case exist between: central government and local governments in both migrant-receiving areas and migrants-outflow areas; local governments and street-level public workers working in local governments; local governments and local public schools; local public schools and migrant workers and migrant children. At the same time, horizontal relationships exist between local governments and real estate developers; real estate developers and migrant workers and migrant children; local public schools and real estate developers; local governments in migrant-receiving areas and local governments in migrants-outflow areas; street office and community commissions, Education Bureaux, local police; Human Resources and Social Security Bureaux; the municipal Centre for Real Estate, and local public schools. Figure 9-1 below shows how actors involved in this policy network positioned in ‘vertical relationship’ and ‘horizontal relationship’.

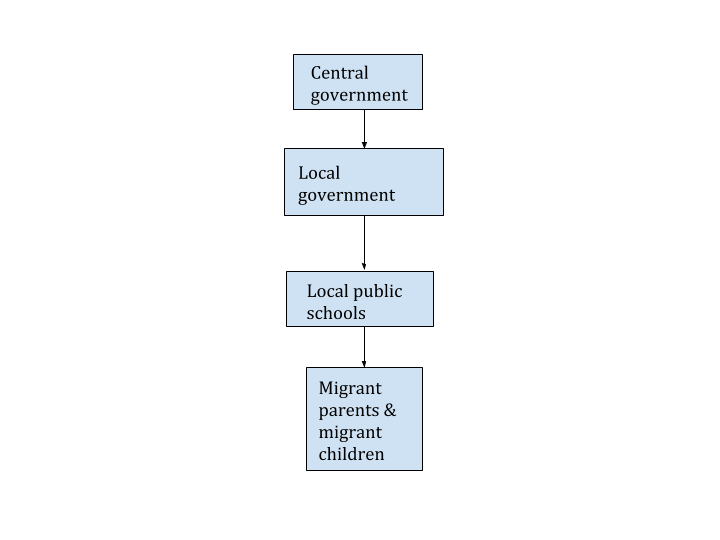


Figure 9-1. Vertical relationship in the policy network (Author, 2018)

Apart from migrant parents and migrant children, the rest of the actors involved in the vertical relationship are all within the government system (local public schools in China are managed by the Education Bureau, therefore they are categorised as part of the ‘government system’), through which they are administratively connected. By ‘vertical’, I mean their authorities are in a top-to-bottom hierarchical structure. The higher position of an actor in the diagram, the more authority and power that actor has compared to lower positions. In this vertical relationship, the decisions of actors at the upper level influences the decisions of actors at the lower level, and actors at the lower level translate, or cope with, the decisions made at the higher levels.

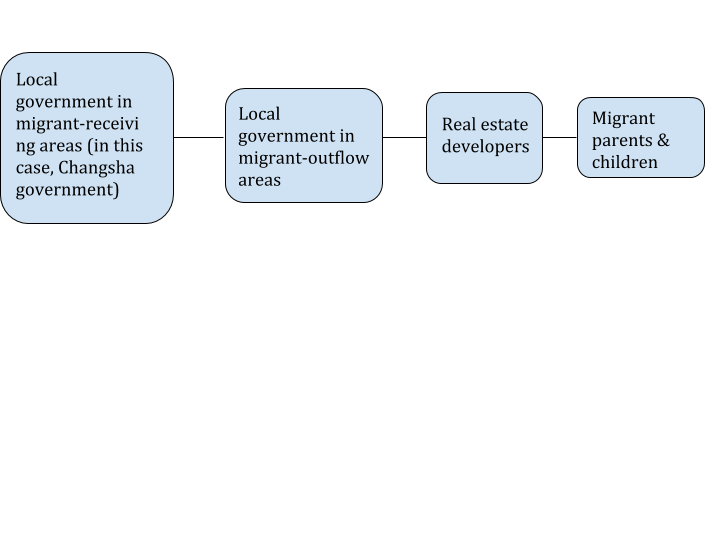


Figure 9-2. Horizontal relationship in the policy network (Author, 2018)

In contrast, within the ‘horizontal relationship’, there is little administrative hierarchy among the involved actors. Even though local governments have political authority over real estate developers and migrant parents and children in terms of making policies, their decisions and actions are potentially independent of each other within the boundaries of law and policies. This ‘horizontal relationship’ consists both of governmental actors and non-governmental actors. There is interaction among them, yet there is no “command/guide and obey/follow” relationship as with the ‘vertical relationship’. But this does not mean that this ‘independent’ decision-making has no influence on each other.

Within the networks in this policy implementation process, involved actors are interdependent with each other, while they have different interests and even conflicts, because they need each other’s resources to implement the policy and achieve the policy goals. The ways in which they are interdependent with each other are analysed in this part. Firstly, the central government relies on regional governments to implement the new policy (national *NTUP*), while local governments need to make their own regional level policies in accordance with policy made by the central government. Local governments, in return, need a certain degree of financial support and authority granted by the central government to implement the policies at the local level. At the same time, local governments need local public schools to obey the regulations stated in the regional level policy, and also to cooperate with them through implementing the policy, taking as many migrant children as they can to complete the goal set in local policies. Local public schools need financial compensation from local governments to increase capacity to enrol migrant children into schools. On the one hand, local governments need real estate developers to build cheaper buildings to accommodate migrant workers and their families; on the other, they want to sell land to real estate developers at higher prices to increase their income, and real estate developers need planning permission to construct buildings from local governments.

The decisions mentioned in the national *NTUP* involves divergent, and sometimes conflicting, interests and values. In this case, the central government needs to guarantee migrant children’s access to education because it could improve integration of rural migrants. This in turn generates better social management, contributes to the construction of a harmonious community, enhances social justice, boosts the development of urbanization, and maintains the stable rule of CCP in China. To local governments, the guarantee of migrant children’s access to education means greater pressure on financial expenditure to provide education services and to purchase more land for educational use, especially for local governments of migrant children-receiving areas. It is important to realize that the distribution of responsibility and cooperation between local governments of migrant-outflow areas, and local governments of migrant-inflow areas is still unclear in the policies. For local public schools, increasing the numbers of migrant children would bring overwhelming pressure on their receiving capacity. But migrant workers’ children want better accessibility to quality education in cities for their children which would make integration into cities easier.

It is city level governments which make detailed policies about how to take every migrant student who comes to their jurisdiction into the local public education system (public schools). In Changsha, a ranked entrance order of enrolment has been adopted (see Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*). But when faced by strict entrance requirements, migrant workers who find the requirements hard to meet respond to by sending their children either to migrant children-concentrated schools in Changsha, or back to their hometowns in a rural area, which is a convenient solution for urban local government.

Meanwhile, distribution of responsibility and cooperation between local governments in migrant-receiving areas and migrant-outflow areas remains vague in central government policies, and I wasn’t able to gather much information on the interdependencies and interactions between these two types of local governments for the thesis due to the limited time and personal network during fieldwork. Yet officials in the Education Bureau in Changsha have pointed out that the financial mechanism for migrant children’s education is problematic and is a reason why the integration of migrant children (which is the core of Changsha *NTUP*) is considered an “added burden”. This ambiguity in central government policies in terms of the responsibilities of local governments of migrant-outflow areas, and how they could cooperate with local governments in migrant-receiving areas to provide education to migrant children, has brought about uneven ‘give and take’ conditions for local public schools in Changsha. That is, they are obliged by the policy to accept migrant children whose *hukou* is elsewhere, but they only receive funding for children whose *hukou* is in their district. Therefore they are not funded for migrant children even though they have to take them. The interviews indicated a certain level of grievance of local governments towards this arrangement.

*According to municipal enrolment policy, a lot of migrant children - we can reject them. But we see their poor situation and we try to contact schools and make them [local public schools] accept those migrant children. But to solve this problem [education for migrant students] relies on increasing investment. Because migrant parents’ and students’ [cultural] ‘quality’ is relatively low, local schools are not very willing to accept them. Teaching them needs more time and effort, but the budget we get per student is the same [no matter if we accept migrant students or local students].Therefore, if they [local public school] could choose, they’d rather choose an urban local student, or [they’d choose to] accept fewer migrant students, so the burden on them is lighter. (Government Official B, interview, 11/10/2017)*

When the undifferentiated funds for two groups of students become one of the reasons why local public schools are reluctant to take migrant students, this reflects the “cost performance” thinking of public schools when it comes to education provision for students in the implementation of local educational policy.

*The Ministry of Finance allocate 800 yuan per student per year to local public schools. A local urban child attends the school, the school get 800 yuan. A rural migrant child attends the school, the school still gets 800 yuan. But local urban children’s ‘cultural quality’ is higher than migrant children [meaning behavioural habits and school records]. Local schools accepting [local children] is perfectly justified, but as to migrant children, it seems like an added burden. (Government Official B, interview, 11/10/2017)*

It is obvious from the interview that there are no special funds for migrant children whose *hukou* is not in Changsha. In national policies, the central government has stressed the urgency of reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children, relying on local governments to implement this. Yet the central government has not financially backed up such an arrangement in practice, neither through special funds for migrant children, nor requirements for local governments in migrant-outflow areas to cooperate with local governments in migrant-receiving areas. As a result, local government officials doubt the “legitimacy” of receiving migrant children, and are reluctant to accept responsibility for doing so, because the municipal Education Bureau considers providing education to migrant students as uneconomic, and this is more important than the responsibility for reducing educational inequality.

*Normally speaking, the school position of migrant children should be solved by the local government of their hukou. We accept them into our local public school, the government of the place of their hukou has saved money [which should be used to provide school positions for their local children]. Meanwhile, they haven’t given this money to the city government which accepts their local children. So actually, they’d build fewer schools, hire fewer teachers, while we build more schools and hire more teachers in the city. The Compulsory Education budget is allocated to every kid’s registered permanent residence [their hukou] in China. So we are thinking, if a child comes to Changsha to go to school, it would be great if the Ministry of Finance could allocate the money for that child to here. But now this is impossible. The government of where they come from is poorer than us, and they would not be willing to give us that money. (Government Official O, interview, 11/10/2017).*

There is much resistance to making changes to the financial mechanisms in the education system, and in Changsha, there are conflicting interests between the central and local governments, between the local government of migrant students’ place of origin and migrant students-receiving local government, between local public schools and local government. These conflicts could potentially result in resistance by local schools and local governments to implementing local enrolment policies.

### 9.2.3 Steering Group for Implementation of the *NTUP* at the City Level

An official document was released by the Changsha municipal government to institutionalise and systematise their ambitions for the implementation of the *New Type Urbanisation Plan* at the city level. According to the (*Notice on the Adjustment of Establishment of the Leading Group for the New Urbanisation Work in Changsha* 2016, cited in Changsha New-Type Urbanisation Work Leading Group 2017)*,* 39 departments[[43]](#footnote-43) have been involved in the Changsha New Type Urbanisation Work Leading Group (referred to as the *Leading Group* hereafter as its abbreviation)*.* This Leading Group was designated as the municipal agent taking charge of all issues related to the implementation of local *NTUP* in Changsha. The Leading Group divided its ‘members’ (departments involved) into seven special working groups as shown Table 9-1 below, who are required to report quarterly on the progress of work. They are assigned with different responsibilities and tasks, yet their connections and specific responsibilities of each group have not been clarified in the policy documents.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Individual Leader/Special Working Groups Involved in Leading Group** | **Leader/Leading Department of Special Working Groups** |
| Consultant of the Leading Group | The Municipal Party Committee Secretary |
| Group Leader of the Leading Group | The Mayor of Changsha city |
| Executive Deputy group leader of the Leading Group | The Deputy Mayor |
| Integrated Coordination Group | The Municipal Construction Committee |
| Population Transfer Special Group | Ministry of Public Security |
| Citizenisation Cost Sharing Special Group | Municipal Finance Bureau |
| Urbanisation Investment And Financing Special Group | Municipal Financial Office |
| Homestead System Reform Special Group | Municipal Land and Resource Bureau |
| Innovation Special Group | The Municipal Editorial Committee Manages |
| Institutional And Mechanism Reform Special Group | The National Development and Reform Commission (on city level) |

Table 9-1. Individual Leaders and Special Groups Involved in Implementation of Changsha *NTUP* (Author, 2019)

Source: Changsha New-Type Urbanisation Work Leading Group (2017, pp 5-6)

It is worth mentioning that the National Development and Reform Commission (I use NDRC as its abbreviation hereafter) have a very special role here. In the Leading Group, its responsibility does not include coordination, but its original administrative role (mentioned briefly in Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*) has positioned this Department in a coordinating role. Specifically, the biggest responsibility of the NDRC is to make plans and coordinate the implementation of economic and social development (e.g. The 13th *National Economic and Social Development Five-Year Plan*). Here is an example of how NDRC functions in China’s political system. Generally, the Municipal NDRC makes its *Five-Year Plan* according to advice from four sources: public opinion collected on the internet; field research conducted by the Municipal NDRC; expert opinion; and the Provincial/State *Five-Year Plan*. For instance, in *13th Five-Year Plan (2017 - 2022) for National Economic and Social Development of Changsha* (Development and Reform Commission of Hunan Province 2016), there are dozens of specific projects, which involve dozens of government departments. During the preparation for making the *Five-Year Plan*, the Municipal NDRC will organize a team in its own Department to conduct extensive field research into factories and mines, enterprises, communities, even back streets in the city, to understand the actual condition of a certain social issue. After the survey, they share their findings with every department and relevant departments give advice, followed by expert argumentation in support of their initial plan. Because national finance goes with projects, the NDRC have to take all specific projects into account when making the *Five-Year Plan*. Decisions about which projects are priorities and which ones come later are up to the Municipal NDRC in Changsha. It collects advice and opinions from departments involved in the plan, coordinating advice according to *Five-Year Plan* from higher levels of government (provincial and state Five-Year Plan) with the local situation. Then the Municipal NDRC will convey their summaries to the decision-maker in the Changsha municipal government for a decision-making meeting, so that an agreed initial *Five-Year Plan* can be reported to the National People’s Congress for final decision and confirmation.

The implementation of the municipal *Five-Year Plan* starts with the municipal NDRC summoning involved departments together, so that the Municipal NDRC can designate assignments to them according to the purpose of plan and timeline of plan. After that, the Municipal NDRC will supervise the implementation of policies and plans through allocating capital funds to projects. The Municipal NDRC coordinates the work among different government departments via scheduling meetings. Whenever the implementation is out of step with the Plan or local policies, or is producing unbalanced development, or there is incompatible delivery of policy/plan among different departments of government, the Municipal NDRC follow a procedure for solving this by contacting the project leader of the departments which are out of step to get them to coordinate. If this does not work, the process of handing over work will be required for the leader of the project in different departments. If this does not work, the head of specific departments will be required to help with coordination work. If this step fails, the Municipal NDRC reports the problem to the Vice Mayor; and the last chance lies with reporting the problem to the secretary of the Changsha Municipal Government.

The NDRC holds a strong position in the government system in China, because on different levels it has three basic functions: advise (Planning Blueprint); coordinate work (among governmental leaders, different government departments, and among provincial and State Development and Reform Commission); and project examining and approving. It influences the implementation of *NTUP* at the city level through its ‘project examining and approving’ function, as all projects involved in Changsha *NTUP* have to be approved by NDRC before implementation. It also influences the implementation of migrant school plans through deciding the number of school construction-related projects and the amount of funds allocated to school construction related projects in the Planning Blueprint.

The large number of departments involved in this implementation process has raised serious questions about its feasibility and *the problem of many hands.* This is the situation where “because many different officials contribute in many ways to decisions and policies of government, it is difficult even in principle to identify who is morally responsible for political outcomes” (Thompson 1980, p. 905). It is particularly relevant when an undesirable outcome is attributed to a collective, and no single individual can be held responsible (Bovens 1998). In the case of Changsha , the outcome of *NTUP* at the city level is far from desirable since the school positions and teaching resources provided for migrant children have not met the educational needs of this group, let alone provide education of as high quality as local urban children enjoy.

The *problem of many hands* can also be understood as a gap in the allocation of responsibility, which can be morally ambiguous (van de Poel 2011). With so many departments involved in the implementation of local *NTUP* in Changsha, the ambiguous distribution of responsibility and the complexity of cooperation due to *the problem of many hands* make it hard for the implementation process to succeed, and no one can be held accountable for its failure. Each of the special working groups bears vital functions for the implementation of *NTUP,* yet there is a lack of clarity about how the responsible department leading the special group should undertake such functions, or how different groups should cooperate with each other. In addition, there is an absence of standards for the work of each group, which makes evaluation of their accountability even more difficult.

### 9.2.4 The Mechanism for Sharing the Cost of the Urbanisation of the Agricultural Migration Population in Changsha

According to Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016), building the *mechanism for sharing the costs of urbanisation* of the agricultural migration population was considered by Changsha’s government as key to completing the work of *NYUP. “*The *cost* of urbanisation of the agricultural migration population” here represents the *economic inputs* that are needed to *transform* migrant workers and their families (children and elderly) living in Changsha into citizens, in terms of providing equal social services and respective welfare to help them settle down in this city. Since both national *NTUP* and the *National New-Type Urbanisation Integrated Pilot Work Plan* have stated the necessity of establishing and improving the cost-sharing mechanism among the government, enterprises and individuals for the urbanisation of the transferring agricultural population (Central Government Portal 2014), and the further improvement of the mechanism proposed in the *Proposal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development* linking financial transfer payments to the citizenisation of agricultural transferring population, the adoption of this sharing mechanism in Changsha city can be understood from policy level. Even though in its *NTUP,* the Changsha government has explored how to develop this sharing mechanism at the city level, some key problems in its design and implementation have not been solved. Specifically, the expenditure responsibilities remain vague, and the sharing mechanism itself has potentials for being misunderstood.

In *the mechanism for sharing the costs of urbanisation* in Changsha*,* the costs are shared by three main bodies: central and local governments; enterprises; and individuals (agricultural migrating population). Categorized by purpose, the cost of urbanisation of the migrating agricultural population is divided into six types: compulsory education; social security; employment service; basic housing security; public service and public facilities, and living costs, as shown in Table 9-2 below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First-tier Index** | **Second-tier Index** | **Detailed Meaning** | **Subject of Cost Sharing** |
| Governmental Cost | Compulsory Education Cost | Cost on providing compulsory education to migrant children | The Central Government and Local Governments |
| Social Security Cost | Cost on providing social security to agricultural transferring population |
| Employment Service Cost | Cost on providing employment service to agricultural transferring population |
| Basic Housing Security Cost | Cost on providing housing security to agricultural transferring population |
| Cost on Public Services and Public Facilities | Local governments provide cost on normal public services, public safety and building infrastructure to new agricultural transferring population |
| Enterprise Cost | Cost on Social Security | Enterprises ‘cost on paying social insurance for agricultural transferring population | Enterprises |
| Cost on housing | Enterprises ‘cost on participating in building indemnificatory/security housing |
| Personal Cost | Living Cost | The extra cost needed to transfer daily life from rural area to urban cities | Individuals in Agricultural transferring population |
| Housing Cost | Housing cost undertook by individuals in the process of urbanisation of agricultural transferring population |
| Social Security Cost | Social security cost undertook by individuals in the process of urbanisation of agricultural transferring population |

Table 9-2. The Index System of Urbanization of Agricultural Migrating Population in Changsha (translated by author, 2017)

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p.14)

Table 9-2 shows that the educational costs of migrant children at the compulsory education stage are the responsibility of governments and local governments bear most of these, putting great pressure in completing this task assigned to them in China (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). In addition, among the costs borne by governments, how these costs are shared between central and local government is unclear: there is no clear *cost-sharing mechanism* among different levels of government in China. According to national financial statistics, in 2018 central government fiscal revenue accounted for 46.6% of the country's total fiscal revenue, while central government fiscal expenditure accounted for only 14.8% of the overall public expenditure of the country (Ministry of Finance of the People’s Republic of China 2019). Under the current system of distribution of financial powers, it is reasonable to assume that the responsibility for shared costs and the financial capacities of central and local governments is unbalanced. Spending on different projects involved in compulsory education is shown in the following Table 9-3.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Type** | **Origin of Children of Agricultural Transferring Population** | **Education Subsidies (yuan/person)** | **Total number of new children of agricultural transferring population** | **The number of newly arrived children of agricultural transferring population** | **Yearly Subsidies (ten thousand yuan)** | **Education cost of 5 years (ten thousand yuan)** |
| Elementary School Students | other cities & other provinces | 13500 | 43,000 | 36,378 | 49,110 | 355,240 |
| Changsha city (Hunan Province) | 4350 | 6622 | 2,880 |
| Secondary School Students | other cities & other provinces | 19000 | 11,600 | 9814 | 18,647 |
| Changsha city (Hunan Province) | 2300 | 1786 | 411 |

Table 9-3. Cost on Education Funds of Children of Agricultural Migrating Population(translated by author, 2017)

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p.17)

Between 2015 to 2020, the average annual educational costs for migrant children in Changsha was expected to be around 710,480,000 yuan (around 82,901,200 sterling), while the total cost in five years is around 3,552,400,000 yuan (around 410,500,000 sterling). Statistics on the costs of constructing school building for migrant students at the compulsory education stage are shown in Table 9-4.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cost on Compulsory Education** | Project Index | Cost per person (unit yuan) | total cost (unit 10,000 yuan) |
| Educational expenditure | 1438.22 | 355,240 |
| Cost on school construction | 307.80 | 76,027 |
| Land opportunity cost | 1337.30 | 330,312 |
| Total | 3083.32 | 761,564 |

Table 9-4. Cost on Compulsory Education of Agricultural Migrating Population (translated by author, 2017)

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p.19)

From Table 9-4, it is safe to say that most the costs of providing compulsory education for migrant children have been spent on educational expenditure (hiring teachers and running schools - around 47% of overall cost) and purchasing lands for constructing school building (around 43% of overall cost), while the construction work of school buildings only takes up around 10% of the overall cost.

Combining the information in these two tables, also shows that, in Changsha, more new primary schools are needed than middle schools., and that the cost of building schools for migrant primary students is almost double the cost of building schools for migrant secondary students. This implies that the lack of school positions at the compulsory education stage in Changsha is mainly concentrated in primary schools. But this is a temporary situation which might change over a few years, since there would be more demand for secondary places as these children grow up. However, the continuation of these costs into secondary school level is overlooked in these calculations. Not only are the one-off costs, the current expenditure, and long-term costs for migrant children’s education confused together, the ability for inter-annual financial balance is also neglected. In the case of providing education for migrant children in the compulsory education stage, investment in school construction providing more school positions to migrant children is a one-off expenditure, while education subsidies/expenditures are required every year. Therefore, the calculations have exaggerated the financial pressures on local government in providing compulsory education for migrant children in this city.

The following Table 9-5, shows a list of cost sharing of urbanisation of the agricultural migration population, which includes ten major projects. It involves a mechanism for sharing the costs of urbanization of the agricultural population, *hukou* system reform, the construction of an information management platform, agricultural industrialization and employment program, a housing security system, a medical and social security system, an elementary education system, and an elderly service system.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| serial number | Project  entities | project name | Project overview | Investment amount (unit: 10000 yuan) | Capital source | Implementation time | Relationship with New-Type Urbanization |
| 1 | municipal finance bureau | construction of mechanism on urbanization of population cost sharing | Construct a multiple participation mechanism shared and by the government, enterprises, and society; Specify the division of cost; Undertake main body and expenditure responsibility; Optimize the financial expenditure structure; Rtablesaise public service expenditure. | - | - | Start from 2014 and basically finish at 2015 | Provide financial and investment guarantee for urbanization of workers who have left agriculture work. |
| 2 | Municipal Public Security Bureau | settling down agricultural transferring population’s hukou | To encourage the migrants to settled nearby where they work and live, the policy of settle hukou in  the county-level such as Liuyang County, Changsha County, Ningxiang County and other designated town will embrace total liberalization and less limitation within Changsha city., | - | - | Start from 2014 and basically finish at 2015 | Eliminate urban –rural census register barrier and provide guarantee and service to workers who have left agriculture work |
| 3 | Municipal Development and Reform Commission & Municipal Public Security Bureau | Population information management platform | Establish the database system that covering the information of local population and floating population.  Promote sub-system including employment, education, health care, social security, real estate, credit and etc., to improve resource integration, centralised management and mutual connectivity. | 5000 | - | Start from 2014 and finish at 2015 | To provide population information and service for urbanization |
| 4 | Municipal Human Resource and Social Security Bureau & Municipal Education Bureau | Education project of workers who have left agriculture work | To enhance the supports to the institutions of the professional education. The government should invest and purchase training service. To integrate the recourse of the government, enterprises, workers, training institution and etc. In order to improve the employability of the rural migrant workers, there should establish a dynamic education and training system that benefit multiparty. | 20000 | - | Start from 2014 and finish at 2016 | To improve entrepreneurship ability of workers who have left agriculture |
| 5 | Municipal Housing and Urban and Rural Construction Committee | Comfortable Housing Project of workers who have left agriculture | With the guide of government, developed by the market, the transformation of shatytowns and construction of resettlement housing are promoted through the whole city. Meanwhile, the supporting housing services are progressed such as sewage treatment, garbage disposal, water supply, electricity, etc. From year 2014 to 2017, it city plans to complete 237 reform projects, which will involve the land of 125,063 square meters and the agricultural population transfer of 125063 households. | 15800000 | Self-finance of project unit & financial investment (from government) | Already started, and finish at 2017 | To transform and upgrade the functions of central city area, to meet the rural migrant workers’ needs for housing, to improve the living environment |
| 6 | Municipal Health Bureau | Construction of medical system | To promote the Project of Changsha City Public Health Center Construction (Phase II). It includes a series of new constructions and relocation of the medical institutions: Changsha City CDC, Changsha City Blood Center, Changsha City Health Authority, Changsha City Medical Emergency Rescue Center, Waterfront New Center Project (Changsha City Fourth Hospital) and Relocation Project of Changsha City Health Career Academy. | 400000 | Self-finance of project unit & financial investment (from government) | Start from 2014 and finish at 2017 | Improve urban-rural medical health system, to provide medical security to workers who have left agriculture |
| 7 | Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau | Social welfare project construction | Improve the social welfare system, integrate resourses for constructing the institution, platform and labour. Enrich and raise the level of the welfare for workers who have left agricultural work. There are some projects under progress: construction of Changsha Children's Welfare institute (Changsha No. 1 Social Welfare Institute), Center of rehabilitation and Care service for the disable (Federation of the disable in Tianxin disctrict), and etc. | 40000 | Self-finance of project unit & financial investment (from government) | Start from 2014 and finish at 2017 | Strengthen social welfare infrastructure construction, perfect welfare system between city and countryside |
| 8 | Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau | elderly care service system construction | To strengthen constructions of the unified urban and rural based infrastructure for the old age service. Part of the projects under construction: Leifeng nursing home Project, (Leifeng Nursing Home), Yuchangping Town Care home and Community of integrated service (Civil Affairs Bureau of Yuelu District, related streets (towns) and community in); the third social welfare and nursing homes of Changsha City (The Third Social Welfare Home of Changsha City) and etc. | 60000 | Self-finance of project unit & financial investment (from government) | Start from 2014 and finish at 2017 | To promote the system of the unified urban and rural based old age service, as to support the old-age care for the rural migrant worker. |
| 9 | Municipal Rail Transport Co. Limited | Public transport infrastructure construction | The maglev project from Changsha South (Highspeed Railway Station) to Huanghua Airport, the construction of the rail transit line 1,3,4,5 (Phase I), the construction of the rail transit west spur line 2 (Phase I), and etc. | 1078000 | Self-finance of project unit | Start from 2014 and finish at 2020 | Perfect urban transport infrastructure construction, to satisfy travel demand of workers who have left agriculture work |
| 10 | Municipal Education Bureau | Construction of Elementary Education Syste | Complete the new construction, update reconstruction, and facility construction of more than 34 kindergarten school, primary and secondary schools, including Zhounan Fuxiao (Kaifu District), Changjun Liuyang Shiyan secondary school, and base for quality-oriented education in Yuelu District | 430000 | Self-finance of project unit & financial investment (from government) | Start from 2014 and finish at 2020 | Improve the overall planning and balanced distribution of educational resources; Improve urban and rural elementary education system; address the education problem of children of workers who have left agriculture work |

Table 9-5. List of Major Program on Constructing and Implementing the Mechanism of Cost-Sharing on Urbanisation of Agricultural Migrating Population

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p.46) (translated by author, 2017).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project | | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Cost per person beard by government（yuan） | Compulsory Education (without the cost of land for school building construction | 1746.02 | 1746.02 | 1746.02 | 1746.02 | 1746.02 |
| Social security (without pension insurance) | 396.3 | 396.3 | 396.3 | 396.3 | 396.3 |
| Employment service | 30.13 | 30.13 | 30.13 | 30.13 | 30.13 |
| Housing security (without the cost of land for public rental housing construction） | 11182.2 | 11182.2 | 11182.2 | 11182.2 | 11182.2 |
| Public services and municipal facilities | 29,920.49 | 29,920.49 | 29,920.49 | 29,920.49 | 29,920.49 |
| subtotal | 43,275.14 yuan | 43,275.14 yuan | 43,275.14 yuan | 43,275.14 yuan | 43,275.14 yuan |
| Citizenisation of agricultural transfer population in respective year (unit 10,000 person) | | 41.84 | 45.30 | 49.04 | 53.09 | 57.73 |
| Cost bear by government in respective year (unit 10,000 yuan) | | 1,810,631.86 | 1,960,363.84 | 2,122,212.87 | 2,297,477.18 | 2,498,273.83 |
| Total | | 1068.9 (unit 1 billion yuan) | | | | |

Table 9-6. Cost on Urbanisation of Agricultural Migration Population Undertook by Governments

Source: Research Group on Agricultural Migrating Population (2016, p.67) (translated by author, 2017).

As shown in Tables 9-6 above, there are 1,700,000 people to be urbanized in Changsha (migrants to be transferred to urban citizens) by 2020. To achieve the goal of ‘citizenisation/urbanisation of migrants’ stated in *NTUP* in Changsha, 2,662.46 billion yuan (around 313 billion sterling) will be supplied by: government (32.5% of overall cost, including affordable housing, urban infrastructure construction, endowment insurance, and education of migrant children); enterprises (39.2% of overall cost, including affordable housing, urban infrastructure construction, endowment insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance); individuals (28.3% of overall cost, including urban living costs,, personal housing, individual endowment, individual medical insurance, individual unemployment insurance). Costs of 156,615 yuan (around 18,425 sterling) per person need to be covered by, and shared among, local government, enterprises and individuals.

However, it is important to note that there are two overlooked misunderstandings in the calculations of the costs of the programmes and the costs per person. First, as shown in Table 9-6 listing major programmes and related costs, the costs borne by enterprises, individuals, and local government are muddled, which exaggerates the financial pressure on local government to promote the citizenisation of migrants group. Secondly, the calculation overlooks the point that these costs are partially offset by the economic contribution of migrants to the local government. Taking pension insurance as an example, the average age of migrant workers in China in 2018 was 40.2 years (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2019). When migrant workers participate in the urban state basic endowment insurance in Changsha, the payment of their endowment insurance will not occur until they reach the age of 60 and the pension insurance fees they pay will make up for the payment gap in their current pension insurance.

From this section, it can be concluded that the assignment of responsibility for these estimated costs is not clear, in terms of how much is required from local governments, enterprises, and individuals. Therefore, to correctly understand the cost of citizenship of migrant workers, and to avoid exaggeration of the pressure on public expenditure by local government, it is necessary to clarify the respective financial responsibilities of government, enterprises and individuals, which would also avoid the tendency for local governments to shift responsibility to enterprises and individuals.

There are similar debates about the costs of immigration in the global West (Card, Dustmann & Preston 2012). For example, both the Office of Budget Responsibility (2013) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013) have conducted research revealing the relationship between immigration and public finances in the UK (Preston, 2014).Only counting the costs of migrants, while neglecting the net contribution they make to the economy can create a misleading picture, because a comprehensive understanding of their effects on economy and society is an essential factor that needs to be taken into account in policy making and its implications (Preston 2014).

## **9.3 Implementation of Educational Policy in Changsha**

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, how city level policies are interpreted into practice is the main question to be answered. Apart from *NTUP* in Changsha, ‘implementation of city level policies’ here also includes the process of putting local educational policies into practice, in which the intentions are in tune with the *NTUP*, therefore exists as an important part of *NTUP* in terms of enhancing integration of migrants in the city. This section is organised around the question: How does Changsha government interpret local educational policies into practice and why? In this section, I examine several key methods the local government of Changsha has used that aim to reduce educational inequality. I start by mapping out the actors involved in the implementation of educational policies in Changsha and then examine how local government of Changsha has interpreted local educational policies into practical strategies to reduce educational disparities, in order to address various types of imbalances in Changsha’s education system. After that, I present how migrant parents’ perceptions of the implementation of educational policies in Changsha conflict with, or are in agreement with, the perceptions of government officials in Education Bureau in the city (over the effectiveness of “*Entering Nearby Schools”* and the existence of migrant schools). Finally, I analyse the reasons behind the responses and certain patterns of strategies that migrant parents have adopted towards the implementation of educational policies in this city (see Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants*) in terms of understanding the position of migrant in the implementation process in Changsha. It is also particularly important to think about the implications of their strategies and chosen patterns (individual-oriented) what their strategies and chosen patterns may have reflected through this analysis. It implies what has been overlooked, which requires further research to ascertain how migrants can be mobilised to deal with their difficulties in cities.

### 9.3.1 Involved Actors

As stated by several government officials in their interviews, there are six main actors involved in the implementation of educational policy in Changsha: street office and community commission (they are combined as one actor for the purposes of this study as they work very closely together and it is hard to separate their responsibilities); Education Bureau at the municipal and district levels; local municipal police;, municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau; municipal Centre for Real Estate; and local public schools. The relationship among these departments is mainly cooperative, while they enjoy a certain level of discretion. Education Bureau is held accountable for the implementation outcome of educational policies. Among six of them, the Education Bureau, municipal police, municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, and municipal Centre for Real Estate as government institutions are the ‘organisational instruments’ for implementing educational enrolment policy, through a specific steering group designated by the Changsha Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government. from which private actors such as real estate agents, construction companies and private schools are excluded. Selected officials in the Education Bureau play the leading role, while police officers, administrators from the municipal Center for Real Estate and the municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau take charge of auditing different certifications that students need for admission to local public schools.

*Government Official F: Since last year [2016, we added] two requirements [for migrant students who want to study in local public schools]. First, you have to have lived in Changsha legally for at least one year. Secondly, [the time parents have had social insurance here] has to have been at least one year. These two are hard-and-fast changes [compared to previous policy]... When we required this policy last year, how did we audit [students’ admission qualifications]? For instance, [local municipal] police are responsible for checking Residence Permits, and municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau is responsible for checking social insurance (Government Official F, interview, 15/10/2017).*

To audit certificates and check the legality of migrant parents’ situations in order to decide whether migrant children are entitled to be enrolled at local public schools is complex and time-consuming for street-level officers in street-community and other involved departments. The auditing work involved in implementing local enrolment policy is not only difficult for migrant workers' families, but also a time-consuming and laborious challenge for the corresponding government departments.

*Government Official D: The main implementation department is the Education Bureau. But [the enrolment of migrant children] involves other things. For instance, [the decision about whether or not] to enrol a student is based on his/her home address, his/her property, [because] we are adopting a ‘entering nearby school’ policy. So we need to know - Where does your kid live? For example, if I was a migrant parent, I live nearby, and I want my children to go to this nearby school, how can the Education Bureau know whether you actually live here? In practice, there is a lot of checking of documents to verify their places of residence and their identities. So in this implementation process, the Education Bureau can’t finish it all by itself, it needs departments dealing with Real Estate, Real Estate Council etc […] They need to check the basis of [parents’] properties, their property ownership certificate, their house purchasing contract [or tenancy agreement], right? [If] you [were a parent who] brought a copy of your certificates and your identity certification [when you apply for your children to enrol at a public school), whether or not they are true? (the parent might bring documents that were not valid) Right? Then we need to examine [the papers], which involves the Real Estate Council checking and auditing the situation about your property. And the Police Office audit your identity card. People get together to prove [the documents are valid] including migrants’ Basic Endowment Insurance, which Human Resource and Social Security Bureau is responsible for. Would they confirm that you have already paid your Basic Endowment Insurance [[44]](#footnote-44) in this department? So [various aspects and actors involved in the implementation process] are interrelated. Right? And in the policy we require [migrant parents and migrant children] to live in the local city. It doesn’t mean that you can just purchase [or rent] a property here, if you actually live in another place. If you don’t live here, or your property hasn’t been handed over to you [then you haven’t really met the requirements for enrolment]. It has to be you really live here if your children are going to enrol in a local public school. Then this needs the street office and community commission to cooperate with us to check if you really live here, and whether it’s convenient for your children to go to the respective public school (Government Official D, interview, 20/10/2017).*

Therefore, the involvement of above mentioned six actors has influenced policy output delivery of local educational policies by making an additional hurdle for migrant parents because of the increased complexity of the enrolment procedure and the difficulty of getting a school position for their children. These difficulties are comparable to suppression policies on immigration and citizenship in the Europe and US, which create an institutionalised threshold for the inclusion and exclusion of migrants according to their social group membership (Gedalof 2007; Brubaker 2010; Rytter 2010; Schmidt 2011). In the case of Changsha, local educational policies not only created new hierarchies among migrant children on the basis of their residency and *hukou* status, but also the design of the implementation of these educational policies slowed down the enrolment of migrant children and the integration process of migrants. Even though the implementation of educational policies does not involve 39 actors like it did in the implementation of local *NTUP* in Changsha, the level of cooperation required here still raised great challenge for migrant children to have a smooth and simple enrolment process.

*Government Official D: [As a street officer or community commissioner], you would know about the residents living here. It’s all network-based management on the street in this city. They know about the people living there. They have to manage migrant people, right? When a migrant purchases a property here, it’s impossible for [the officials] not to know that there is a migrant from another province living here. Of course they’d know it. They [have participated in management/implementation of] Family Planning in the past and now [are involved with] migrants issue as well. They have requirements from local government about what to manage.*

*Interviewer: For policies like [education policy], which department or who’s involved in it?*

*Government Official D: It involves street and community […] mainly street and community [officials], the Education Bureau, and the local police. Migrant [students] are enrolled in our local schools through [providing] documents [to prove they are entitled to go to public schools in this city]. [Local police] help [migrants] with their Temporary Residence Permit* [Government Official D, 20/10/2017]*.*

From these interviews, it can be seen that in practice, it is street-level and community-level officials and workers who hold information about the actual residence of migrants, yet it is government departments at higher levels which hold power in deciding whether a migrant child has met all the respective requirements stated in local educational enrolment policies. This imbalance in information and power, and wide range of involvement of many different departments horizontally in implementing local educational policies have increased the complexity of officials’ work in related departments and placed burdens on street/community-level workers, which has created more resistance to the implementation of local educational policies.

### 9.3.2 Official Strategies Adopted to Reduce Disparities in Educational Resources

Faced with disparity in educational resources between different schools, the local government of Changsha has come up with three main solutions aimed at decreasing educational inequality: exchange teacher policy; balancing appropriate financial investments; reputation and management-sharing cooperation

First, according to a government official in the Municipal Education Bureau [*Governmental Official F, interview,* date: 15/10/2017] (detailed transcripts see section 8.4.2 in Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*), the exchange teacher policy (counterpart-support between schools) has been introduced to balance teaching resources among schools within the same district. This strategy overlaps with one of the strategies adopted by the Changsha Education Bureau for forging alliances in terms of sharing teaching resources and management methods between urban and rural schools, to cope with increasing enrolment pressure in the city (see Chapter 8, *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and City Level*). But the teachers’ cooperation in exchange teacher policy relies on the precondition that, currently, participating in such sharing staff policy can help with their career development. It means that their cooperation can stop once participating in exchange policy no longer helps with their career.

*Teacher C: There is a policy in Yuhua District, stating that teachers working in elite schools in the central city like us, need to go to work in low-performing schools for three years on exchange. And now in the whole of Changsha city, and actually, in Hunan Province, there is a hard-and-fast rule when academic titles are being conferred by schools that you need to have experience of ‘supporting education in the countryside’. So if you want to advance, you need to ‘go to the countryside’ and support education there. ‘Countryside’ in this rule means different things in different districts in Changsha. In Yuhua District, the scope of supporting education is within the second ring road of Changsha city. At least it’s within Changsha city - the scope of supporting education for schools in Kaifu District is no longer within the city* [Teacher C, interview, 16/02/2017].

Secondly, balancing appropriate financial investments by Changsha local government to local public schools is also a part of solutions to reduce educational inequality. It is important to note that the district financial situation decides financial investments in every school in the city, and relies on government leaders’ knowledge of how much should be invested in schools. When asked which level of which department was responsible for allocating the money, a government Official responded:

*The Ministry of Finance at the County level allocate this money to the Education Bureau. In Changsha, it’s allocated to district governments by the Ministry of Finance at the district level. But when they allocate the money, they do not allocate it on the basis of the number of students in our local schools, they allocate it on the basis of the number of students whose hukou is here (Government Official E, interview, 13/10/2017).*

Teacher C further explained:

*It (funding allocation) depends on the [respective] district - it depends on the district government’s support dynamics on education and its financial condition. These would be a bit different, since the financial condition of each district is different. So does the funding into schools. Funding to every school within the district is also different (Teacher C, interview, 16/02/2017).*

Meanwhile, the extra income of each school is differentiated by its location.[[45]](#footnote-45) According to a teacher in the local public school, differences in investment emerge from surplus income, decided by location of schools: schools near the main offices of government are located, companies and universities can get extra income from them, and this contributes to increasing the inequality between schools.

*Now people pay attention to balance, but even under a precondition of balance, there would still be difference. For example, some schools are located near Provincial Government offices, Qingyuan Primary School is near both the Provincial Government building and the District Government building. So it’s possible that they get more support from governments. [Schools]near government offices or some rich companies could get support. For example, for Teachers’ Day,[[46]](#footnote-46) they could invest a million yuan (around 117,647 sterling) to the school, and then [the school] can use that money to do construction work, or use it as an award for encouraging teaching research. But other schools don’t have that* (Teacher H, interview, *20/02/2017*).

Thirdly, reputation and management-sharing cooperation (called ‘mandatory administration’ and ‘counterpart support’) have been introduced between newly-built schools and old elite schools.

*Now we are gradually [balancing] quality educational resource through ‘mandatory administration’ and ‘counterpart support’. [Mandatory administration can be seen]just like the school beside this building. That’s Shuangren Secondary School. Isn’t it a new school? There was an empty land next to the Education Bureau building. Now there is a new school built on it, and it entrusts Changjun Secondary School to manage it.*

*Changjun Secondary School send a management team to accept (take over) this school, so this school can [be named after] Changjun Secondary School since opening. Isn’t Changjun Secondary School an elite school? It has great influence and reputation, right? Its management mode is very mature, so Shuangren Secondary School has a high reputation from the beginning. It’s not like, ‘I built a beautiful school, but the management of it is poor,[the management of school and teaching qualities] don’t have enough social influence’.*

*‘Counterpart support’ means [elite schools] supporting low-performance/level schools. [It is] like ‘bound development’ ... many schools bind together as a group. There are several different ways to expand new schools, develop and improve them hand in hand.* [Government Official H, interview, 20/10/2017]*.*

On the one hand, the mandatory administration has been considered by local government officials as a way to expand high-quality education resources through improving the management system and social influences of new schools. However, whether the teaching quality of those new schools is improved is yet to be verified. On the other hand, this mode could help newly-built schools gain approval by the public more quickly through borrowing reputation from old elite schools, and thereby help implement the *Entering Nearby Schools* policy.

*It’s probably like [...] you built a great school, but it can’t get approval of the society, the public doesn’t accept it. The low-level schools in the countryside, they might have good hardware facility, but their ‘soft power’ (which means social influence, management mode, and teaching quality) is weak. So ‘mandatory administration’ is to reassure students and parents. [In this way,] we expand access to good quality educational resources, we help these new schools approved of by society and the public, [and] from the start, people would consider them as good schools. So we have more and more good schools around us, we can (implement) Entering Nearby School within compulsory education stage better.* [Government Official H, interview, 20/10/2017].

However, such a method of expanding access is exclusively designed for elite schools and their newly-built branch schools, and excludes other normal public schools. The adoption of this strategy is more likely to boost the sale of school district housing near new (elite) branch schools rather than help migrant students have access to high quality educational resources in Changsha.

### 9.3.3 The Reasons Behind the Off-Record Strategy

When it comes to a situation where sharp contrasts exist between migrants’ needs for school positions and their provision - which is common in certain areas in Changsha - local governments have tended not to implement the policy strictly as a way of reducing instances of social conflict. Exceptions to the policy have not been formalised in any local ordinance issued by the Education Bureau, but they are adopted as a coping mechanism for street-level officials in the Education Bureau to avoid potential social conflict (to be discussed in Section 9.3.5). What I want to highlight here are the three main problems that underlie this informal ‘off-the-record’ strategy, which I will expand these three problems in the following analysis: the imbalance between educational needs and school places; the conflicts between the idealistic policy and problematic financial mechanism on the ground; and the imbalance in both number and quality of schools in different regions in Changsha city.

*Government Official C: It’s an implementation strictness thing. During the implementation process, when [an applicant’s] social insurance is less than one year, but they have been working in Changsha already, then you can’t push this [responsibility for the children’s education] onto the society. If there are enough school positions, we’d give it to them, trying our best to address [the problem].. Regulations are made like this, but in order to decrease social conflict, the actual implementation process is not like that. For example, if your residence permit in Changsha is less than one year, [for instance] you have only [had it for] 8 months, and if there is a spare school position, then I’d allocate it to you. But we have an order [that says] whoever purchased social insurance for the longer time, who has lived in Changsha for longer time, then they get [the place].* [Government Official C, interview, 16/10/2017].

First, there is an imbalance between educational needs and school places among different regions in Changsha city. On the one hand, certain areas (concentrations of commercial activities and traffic) have more migrant students with educational needs, yet the provision of school positions in those areas does not always match the needs for education. With policies aimed at *Eliminating large class sizes*[[47]](#footnote-47) at the compulsory education stage in Changsha, the pressure of this imbalance on the shoulders of local government intensifies. The implementation of local educational policies worsened the conflicts between local schools’ capacities and migrant children’s educational needs because the decision-makers of these ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies did not take the imbalance into account.

*Government Official C: There is a certain pressure, of course there is a problem of regional balance. Some market (areas have more migrants). For example, the Changsha Train Station, Gaoqiao Market, traffic hinge (where there is concentration of traffic), where the labour force is concentrated, education needs are intensive as well. They [migrant workers] wouldn’t send their children to schools far away, they’d want their children to go to a nearby school, and you (the district Education Bureau) need to arrange a school for them. But the number of students in a class in schools in these areas are controlled, and the number of teachers, etc. - how should we arrange them? Then there are problems. It’s a very real thing for [the Education Bureau] on district level, or schools. It gets tense. But [education resources/school positions] in some places are under less pressure. [But education resources/school positions in) the central district are very stressed.* [Government Official C, interview, 16/10/2017].

Second, the conflicts between the idealistic policy and problematic financial mechanism on the ground have added fuel to the fire of providing implementing education for migrant children That is, the district Financial Bureau is financially responsible for supporting public schools within their own district. When certain areas are required to build more schools to meet the education needs of migrants, the district government would resist implementing local educational policies (stating government should provide education to children within their jurisdiction) because it would cause greater financial pressure on their budgets.

Government Official C explains the very real problem faced when trying to implement policy.

*What should we do? [Migrant] parents want their children to study here, and they want to go to nearby schools, but, if we let them go to nearby schools, sometimes schools there are unable to accept [any more students] because [education] resources here are limited. The labour force around this area is too large for us to meet everyone’s needs. In this case, we need to make coordination, arranging those migrant children to go to other schools with relatively more school positions. Let those schools accept and enrol them. So this work needs coordination, and it would encounter some difficulties during the coordination process* [Government Official C, interview, 16/10/2017].

Third, there is an imbalance in both number and quality of schools in different regions in Changsha city and the strength of local government support for public schools varies from place to place. Sometimes there is an imbalance in both number and quality of schools even within the same district (when there are schools for children of workers and staff members). According to government officials in the Education Bureau, district Education Bureaus could arrange for (or require) respective public schools within their scope of jurisdiction to accept migrant students who do not meet the requirements stated in policies when there are sufficient school positions, or arrange for migrant children to move to another school where there are spare school positions to reduce the situation in which migrant children are unable to enrol into any local public schools at all.

## **9.4 Parents’ Perceptions of and Strategies towards the Implementation of Education Policies in Changsha**

This section aims to answer the following question: ‘What are parents’ perceptions of the implementation of local educational policies, and what strategies do migrant parents adopt in response to this implementation process?’ To answer this question, I explore how different perceptions of the implementation of local educational policies agree or contradict with each other, along with their implications of these perceptions. I explore the perceptions of local governments and migrant parents of the performance of educational policies in providing educational opportunities for migrant children, reducing educational inequality experienced by them, and the existence of migrant schools in Changsha. These are essential aspects of understanding the implementation of educational policies in Changsha. After that, I present migrant parents’ adoption of individual-oriented strategies in comparison with Xiang (2019)’s *transient migrant* to understand the relationship between migrants’ individual-oriented pattern and implementation of local educational policies in Changsha.

### 9.4.1 Different Perceptions of the Implementation of Education Policies in Changsha

The interviews with governmental officers in the Changsha Education Bureau, as a part of the local government system, the municipal Changsha Education Bureau express optimistic opinions of the effectiveness of their policy targeting the differences in educational quality experienced by different groups of students, particularly between local urban students and migrant students. Even though the Changsha Education Bureau has admitted difficulty in providing enough school positions for migrant children in certain districts, like Yu Hua District, (Figure 9-3), they feel confident that they have created an education environment that does not discriminate between or provide disparate treatment for migrant children. They feel this is not only in terms of policy-making and implementation for educational opportunity, but also in terms of education resource allocation to these two groups of students.

图片包含 文字, 地图

描述已自动生成

Figure 9-3. Changsha Five Districts

Source :<http://www.chinanon-stop.com/2012/11/changsha-five-districts.html>

As pointed out by a migrant parent who accepted interview for this research, to a certain degree, migrant parents approve of the implementation of the ‘*Entering Nearby School*’ policy, because under the protection of this policy their children would at least have a school to attend, even if not the ideal one. Before this, enrolling at children in local public schools was much more challenging parents got school positions in cities through their social ties or by paying large sponsorship fees.

*Migrant Parent F: Since last year, as long as you got a job and social insurance, your child will be entered into a local school no matter what. But this wasn’t the case for the year before last year. … [This policy] was implemented in 2016, but not in 2015, that’s the change. What do I think of the policy, is that they (she means the local enrolment policies) were implemented strictly, then relaxes before becoming strict again…Parents [used to] queue up overnight to sign their kids up for school. But no more of that since last year* (Migrant Parent F, interview, 10/02/2017)

Yet because of the *Entering Nearby School* policy, it is not easy or usual for migrant parents to get their children enrolled into public schools with relative high quality teaching and better teaching resources. According to interviews with migrant parents, schools located in their districts are usually staffed by substitute teachers who have just graduated from Education Colleges instead of the experienced teachers at elite schools, and this means the teaching quality of the local public schools is the lowest in Changsha.

*Migrant Parent F: […] and those students [who just] graduate from teachers’ college, aren’t they go to these schools first? When your (she means teacher) career is advancing, you transfer to better schools. Anyway, it’s teacher appointment [system][[48]](#footnote-48) now, right? I don’t know if those substitute teachers are within the establishment.[[49]](#footnote-49) They can get establishment through passing exams. It’s OK to teach in schools without getting establishment when they first arrive, [but] they normally leave these schools after they get into the establishment and do not stay* (Migrant Parent F, interview, 10/02/2017)

Young substitute teachers do not normally stay long in migrant-children-concentrated schools, indicating that these schools have unstable teaching resources. This is the consequence of the ‘mandatory administration’ mode adopted by the Changsha Education Bureau. Teaching in schools with high concentrations of migrant children is considered as a stepping stone in the careers of young and inexperienced teachers. Many of them leave the school after obtaining enough teaching experience and getting inside the teacher establishment.

In addition to the problem of the quality of teaching, the controversy over the existence of migrant schools (migrant student-concentrated schools) in Changsha is another example of the policy struggle targeted at reducing educational inequality and providing non-discriminatory treatment for local urban children and migrant children. In interviews, government officers in the Changsha Education Bureau have denied that there are migrant schools in Changsha, but some migrant parents say the opposite.

From my perspective, there are two possible reasons behind the Education Bureau’s denial of the existence of migrant schools. First, to a certain extent, admitting the existence of migrant schools equals admitting the unequal treatment of migrant children, as the existence of migrant schools is considered as proof of a gap between local government’s commitment to the education of the children of migrant workers and the realities of the lack of capacity in local public schools. The local governments once designated several public schools as migrant student-receiving schools, therefore they have higher than usual numbers of migrant students. School whose names contains ‘migrant school’ no longer exist, yet public schools with high concentrations of migrant children share a large part of responsibility for migrant children’s education in Changsha. Because the capacities of local public schools are limited, local governments in migrant-receiving areas find it difficult to take full responsibility for the educational rights of migrant children. The local governments need a certain number of public migrant schools to share the responsibility for migrant children’s education. This has put local governments themselves in a dilemma. In addition, there is the problem of the definition of ‘migrant school’ from the perspective of the government officials. There were migrant schools with the words ‘migrant (student)’ included in their names which only/mainly accepted migrant children. When the name of these schools changed, deleting ‘migrant (student)’, and when they were taken charge by governments and accepted not only migrant children, in the minds of the officials of the Education Bureau, they become normal schools. However, because there are certain districts in Changsha where migrants and their children are concentrated (such as Yu Hua Qu), schools in these districts naturally have more migrant students than schools in other districts where local residents/local urban students are concentrated. From the perspective of migrant parents, schools with so many migrant students (compared to other public schools which with lower portion of migrant students) are still considered migrant schools in terms of student composition.

When asked if there were any migrant schools in the Gaoqiao District, Migrant Parent F explained that:

*Migrant Parent F: Shu Mu Ling primary school has become that kind of school -a migrant school, Because local children have gone to better schools, through paying money, or purchasing properties. They went to elite schools, like Sha Zi Tang primary school, and private schools, including Jin Hai, and to Tian Hua boarding school* [Migrant Parent F, interview, 10/02/2017]

It is important to note the consistent relationship between educational segregation, socio-spatial segregation, and local educational policies attaching great importance to the school district. As long as the school system is this hybrid of state regulated and private schools, wealthy parents can buy their way into good schools, maintaining or even worsening educational segregation and inequality. This is not unique to China: for example, the Danish school system is also a mix of state regulated public and independent private schools. It has been found in recent research that in Copenhagen, even though the level of segregation between different ethnic students is declining in public schools, the level of school segregation between local students and students without Danish background in private schools is increasing, due to the growing spatial inequalities and parents’ concerns about the quality of public schools with a larger portion of students with non-Danish backgrounds (Nielsen & Anderson, 2019). In Helsinki, Finland, a systematic relationship was found between socio-spatial segregation and school district differentiation. The residential choices of families with children have shown a trend favouring socio-economically advantaged areas and avoiding poorer areas, which has resulted not only in self-reproducing segregation between rich and poor families, but in school segregation in the city (Bernelius & Vikama, 2019).

### 9.4.2 Strategies Adopted by Migrant Parents in Response to the Implementation of Educational Policy

As discussed in Chapter 6 (*Subject Position of Migrants*), there are spatial and social separations between local parents and migrant parents due to their different residential addresses and working arrangements. Nevertheless, from my observation and interviews with several migrant parents, it seems that there is no obvious sign of ‘grouping’ in migrants. This has potentially determined their personal educational strategies. They normally take individual-oriented actions/strategies, such as consulting schools and government officials/appeal/petition to cope with the challenges posed by the current education system and to defend their children's educational rights in Changsha. *Collective actions* or even substantial protests organised by migrant parents are rarely seen in Changsha, and parents in the case city rarely adopt confrontational resistance/protests.

On the one hand, the individual-oriented strategy adopted by migrant parents in Changsha resonates with Xiang’s (2019) theory about *social suspension* of migrants. Migrants in his research and in this case both tend to cope with difficulties they encountered in life as individuals instead of changing the present situation as a unified group, while putting aside their needs for normal life in a larger social sphere in suspending status (which is his key definition of *social suspension*). This phenomenon is supported by the dominant language towards migrants in current urban China, including social exclusion towards, and marginalisation of migrants in schools and society (Xiang 2019). In addition, migrant parents show little interest in ‘grouping’ corresponding with the ‘social suspension’: migrant parents have also experienced a lack of social solidarity that can be built from social interactions withother migrants.

On the other hand, findings in my research about migrant parents’ individual-oriented strategy extends *social suspension* theory (Xiang 2019) in terms of its contextualisation and condition (under what conditions do they adopt particular strategies). In his *social suspension* theory, *transient migrants* are defined as temporary migrants who are constantly moving, either because they are being forced to do so or because they are unwilling to stay in a city for a long time, passing through cities and leaving little mark on the local society where they have briefly lived. They chose to minimize socialisation and to maximise salaries and savings, while suspending their normal social life in order to accumulate money in the hope that one day they will be able to move away and change their social status. In this way, *transient migrants* have instrumentalized their ‘present moment’ by not problematising the situation they are facing and suspending ethical judgement of the problems they encounter. Hence they tend to not take action to solve these problems (Xiang, 2019). They *voluntarily* suspend their normal life until the situation becomes unbearable and then move on (Xiang 2019). Since their priorities are to maximise salaries/savings, and they are in constant movement, the lack of social solidity within the migrants group and their suspension of normal life can be understood. My case shows that under the common motivation (maximising salaries/savings), suspension of social life can be a *forced* situation instead of a voluntary choice. Because there is limited support from institutional level, marginalisation of the migrant group due to exclusion from local governments’ policies and other social groups such as local parents, dispersive address etc. (see Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants*).

In the meantime, the content of “suspension status” (not problematizing the situation they face) can be changed when other considerations (such as children’s education) comes into play. Many migrant parents who bring their children to Changsha to accept education have relatively more stable jobs and residency compared to *transient migrants* in Xiang’s case, yet migrant parents do not have an easy “back-up plan” i.e. to move to another job and other cities, like *transient migrants* do in Xiang’s case. Because they wish to give consideration towards their children’s education, frequent movement in jobs and residency is not convenient. When migrant parents end a part of ‘suspension status’ (i.e. start problematizing the situation they face, and take actions to solve it) either in petition, or appeal when encountering difficulties in getting a school position for their children in Changsha, they are forced to continue their ‘social suspension’ in terms of only taking *individual-oriented* actions as a coping strategy, due to the imposed social control has forced migrants to be “individual”.

From my observations and analysis, there are three possible reasons for this individual-oriented strategy adopted by migrant parents in Changsha: a lack of support from institutional level and civil society; collective actions and protests are highly sensitive in China, to which governments tend to respond with repression; and an absence of network among migrants

First, there is a lack of support from the institutional level or from civil society (other social actors). Migrant parents lack an official platform or channel to express their needs and difficulties. The Division of Complaints and Appeal in all government institutions has the main job of communicating and dealing with citizens’ problems and difficulties is their official platform, but it cannot help much with resolving their difficulties (which was discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. *Agenda-Setting Process*).

Second, collective actions and protests are highly sensitive in China, and governments in different levels tend to respond with repression. The imposed social control has forced migrants to act individually rather than collectively. Media coverage normally report their stories as individuals instead of as a group due to repression from 'upper-levels' (which was discussed in detail in Chapter 7. *Agenda-Setting Process*).

Third, there is an absence of network among migrants to deal with their problems and difficulties in a more effective way. This is worth considering for future research on migrant parents' rights-protection action: in what way can migrant parents be mobilized as a group to deal with their difficulties by public media or academic analysis.

## **9.5 Discretion at the Street Level**

Having presented an overall picture of how local governments and parents in Changsha interpret their understandings of local policies and their attitudes to the implementation process in the previous section, this section aims to ascertain how *street-level public workers* translate local policies into practices in their work, and what influence their *discretion* hasbrought about in the policy outcomes in terms of reducing educational inequality. I start by discussing the relationship between *implementation* and *discretion,* to reveal why an analysis of *discretion* is indispensable in this research. I then offer an explanation for my adoption of the concept of “*discretion*” to discuss how and why street-level public workers/bureaucrats have been pushed to the frontline to deal with the complexity of conflicting interests among different actors, between policies/regulations and values in the implementation local policies in China. After that, I present the general image of street-level public workers in a literature review through borrowing Vinzant and Crothers (1998)’s theoretical framework (*leadership)* tounderstand the role of street-level public workers as *leaders*. Finally, I analyse and evaluate the legitimacy of discretionary decision-making by different actors in this study (government officials, school presidents and teachers). This section shows how the connotations of values reflected in local educational policies were changed by the street-level public workers through their discretionary decisions and practices, and why their discretion is justifiable in the implementation process.

### 9.5.1 The Relationship between Implementation and Discretion

According to Hill & Hupe (2002), there are two types of approaches to implementation processes: a ‘top-down’ approach, portraying a relatively straightforward translation from policy to action; and a ‘bottom-up’ approach stressing change and the extent to which negotiation in practice between actors on different levels closes the gap between initial policy and actual policy outcome. A third type of approach to policy implementation is an integrated model that combines the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches, in which these two traditional approaches appear in a circular policy process (Vinzant & Crothers, 1998). In my research, top-down implementation has been used as template for considering the implementation process in different contexts. It is important to note that this research focuses on an authoritarian country which adopts a centralized political system. In China’s hierarchy-based political environment, ‘top-down’ implementation has been most important. As a frequently-questioned approach to implementation (Barrett & Fudge, 1981), the central-local-street level relations in my study have shown the possibility that different actors might exercise their discretion within legal boundaries to negotiate with other actors involved in the implementation process. They tend to push the implementation process forward and backward, facilitating or impeding initial policy purposes from time to time, while still keeping the system from falling apart through their discretion. The interpretation of policies manifested in different actors’ discretion has made a complex interaction net in this authoritarian context.

In relation to education policy in China, local public schools have little autonomy in policy-formation at a regional level, but they have a certain degree of autonomy to set entrance requirements and fees for migrant children. In unforeseen circumstances, and confronted with norms that are often vague, public servants have to act. In such situations they see themselves as required to interpret public policy in a creative way but justified by reference to public values such as social justice and educational equality in China. However, the question of the appropriateness and legitimacy of their discretion cannot jump to a conclusion before a detailed analysis about discretion of actors has been made. Normally, the evaluation of appropriateness and legitimacy is based on the nature of the situation and relevant criteria including *what works, what is right, public values,* and *integrity of organisations* (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p. 51). I adopt these criteria in my analysis to assess the discretion of street-level workers and their influences on policy outcomes of this implementation case in China. As stated by Even though a policy points to a clear purposive course of actions, there is still a possibility that those purposes might be redefined during the implementation process (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

### 9.5.2 What is Discretion and Why There is Discretion?

Confronted by puzzling, complex, even dangerous circumstances, street-level public workers need to make decisions about how to deal with such situations, while they balance various influences and pressures. It is in this process that *discretion* come into play (Lipsky, 2010). Discretion can be defined as “the ability to make responsible decisions”, and “the power of free decision or latitude of choice within certain legal bounds” (Merriam-Webster 1996; cited in Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p37). ‘Discretion’ is related to the concept of ‘choice’, because it is inevitable for people who exercise discretion to make choices among different options. The individuals who are eligible to exercise discretion are given certain “freedom” to choose among existing options in decision-making, rather than being forced by a mechanical process to choose one particular option over others. However, the “freedom” they are given is constrained and the space of choice given to a decision-maker is limited by extrinsic factors. These factors are normally boundaries set by laws, “responsible” criteria, and various external variables in respective situations such as peer pressure (Vinzant & Crothers, 1998). Factors that influence the exercise of discretion are fluid and change from time to time, from case to case. The legal boundaries and criteria for a “responsible decision” that limits choice in one case does not necessarily fit all issues, as different decision-makers, agencies, groups, varying clients and communities have diverse ways and standards which define the limitations on discretion (Lipsky, 2010).

As pointed out by Lipsky (2010), there are two dimensions of ‘discretion’: including *process* (the way a particular goal is achieved); and *outcome* (what goal is pursued). Sometimes street-level public workers have to make decisions about *what* to do in their work, and they are expected to pick the “responsible” option within certain legal boundaries in particular circumstances. When they decide the content of the ‘outcome’ to be pursued, they are exercising *outcome discretion.* That particular *outcome* might be required or expected by law, official procedure, routine, and other respective factors.

When street-level public workers decide *how* to achieve an outcome, they are exercising *process discretion* in choosing one way to accomplish it. The evaluation of whether the choice street-level public workers make is appropriate or not could be made on the basis of the limitations they face and the outcome of certain choices. The discretion they exercise is a constrained choice about the outcome, the process, or sometimes both and therefore, the concept of *discretion* cannot be simply judged as good or bad. The decisive factor in evaluation of the justness of any discretionary choice lies in the context of its use.

Even though the central government has most authority and control in policy-formation at the national level, and a certain level of authority in policy-formation on the city level, it has limited influence on decision-making and policy implementation on local levels. Local governments have a certain degree of autonomy in interpreting policy from the central government, and formulate region-level policy on the basis of their particular situations. The central government has authority to command officials in local governments to implement their policies.

Due to the multiscalar nature in this hierarchical government system in China, actors involved are allowed to adopt strategies on the basis of their understanding of the nature of the policy problem, their desired solutions and other actors’ actions (March & Olsen 1989; Klijn 1996; in Hill & Hupe, 2002). As implementers, different actors sometimes practice *formulation* and *decision-making* in addition to the policy document at their hands. As Lipsky (2010) pointed out, street level public servants in local governments have a certain degree of discretion over how to interpret the policy from the local level, and adopt specific coping strategies when dealing with citizens in their daily work, especially when they confront various dilemmas (detailed introduction of dilemmas in the case city see Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design: Provincial and Local Level*). Their discretion, however, is constrained by external factors including laws, policies, regulations, and morals, and the limits are differentiated according to the particular situation in Changsha’s context.

### 9.5.3 Image of Street-level Public Workers

In modern countries, the existence and work of street-level public workers is very important. They are the ones who keep every modern governance system alive and effective. Their work is intricate and demanding, for the following three reasons: they are put in the middle of complex and ambiguous situations during work; they often confront unmanageable problems that bring heavy emotional burdens; and they are required to make decisions within a politically contentious environment (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, pp. 3-4)

First, in their daily work, street-level public workers are often confronted with situations that are ambiguous, complicated, unpleasant, and sometimes even dangerous. Unlike their superiors at higher levels, street-level workers are the ones who make decisions/choices and act on handling often tricky and conflictual situations, interacting with citizens directly. Second, the problems they face are not just various and unpredictable but can be all-round unmanageable, and street-level public servants are sometimes heavily burdened in terms of being emotionally involved in their work (Vinzant & Crothers 1998), like the street and community workers who are sent to follow ‘dangerous citizens’ (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.5, *Policy Communities and Policy Monopolies*).

Third, the environment within which they make decisions is convoluted, mutable, and almost always politically contentious. The clients they deal with could be cooperative, antagonistic, or indifferent, while they possess limited and often insufficient resources, information and time to do their work and they are not necessarily given clear instructions by their agencies about what should they do. In addition, the relevant laws they need to consider in order to address certain issues can conflict across different government levels. Apart from their personal preferences (which might not be in accordance with what clients/agencies/communities or laws want), street-level public servants often face a group of stakeholders who are influenced by their decisions and actions, who they need to consider and balance their interests in almost every decision and action they generate in their work (Vinzant & Crothers 1998). In addition, there are multiple and sometimes competing variables which can influence their choices, as they often work in complicated environment. Direct and indirect influences on street-level public workers come from the following aspects: agency/employer, courts, co-workers, law, citizen expectations, situational variables, supervisors, clients, other agencies, media, and their own personal preferences (Vinzant & Crothers 1998). These influences can conflict with each other or within themselves, which led street-level public workers make their decisions and act on them in order to resolve the conflict and take the pressure off.

### 9.5.4 Street-Level Workers as Leaders, Discretion as Leadership

As an actor who directly deals with citizens, including migrants, the street-level bureaucrat plays an important role in interpreting and implementing government policies. From my interviews for this research, street-level bureaucrats in the community consider their main task to serve residents’ needs, but they often feel forced to do so against their will, when encountering pressure from upper-level governmental institutions. This is because the system designed for citizens to convey their difficulties to local government means that street and community level workers not only have to confront citizens’ problems, but also face pressures from upper levels of government. This system not only acts as a channel between citizens and local government, but it also acts as a tool for citizens to supervise community workers. It has provoked antipathy from community level workers, and has changed power relations between citizens and workers in the community at the same time.

*Street Level Worker A: Our community (service centre) mainly serves [residents]. It is not the same as before, [they used to be] very straight and narrow, [as if they are] afraid of everything. Now, they know that they can protect themselves with legal tools. So for example, they can make complaints [to] government about you. They call the government, “[dial] 12345, talk to government if you something troubles you” (this is a slogan) They, they always call this [phone number]for anything [little thing] that happened at their home, [If] I say something that should not be said, if I say something rudely, they call this 12345 phone number, even when they can’t shit themselves! Through a phone number 12345, the local government will pressure this [complaint] down, level by level, to here at our community [centre] The community [service centre] then has to deal with this, and they [the civilians who called 12345]have to reply to government later, and there is an experience survey for them to take after we have dealt with their trouble, to say if they are satisfied or not with what we’ve done so far, giving feedback. So what I’m saying is now they (civilians) got ‘patron’ (access to government complaints procedure), then they call irresponsibly* [Street Level Worker A, interview, 21/11/2017].

Community workers have an intermediate role between local government and citizens. It is important to note that when there is conflict between the interests of citizens and governments, the community workers do not usually exercise their administrative discretion for the benefit of citizens, whether migrants or local residents in their communities. Apart from working on the inspection of local governments in terms of community appearance, sanitation situation, etc.（not areas where collective action is encouraged), they have put great effort into preventing petitioning by citizens and potential collective action (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.5, *Policy Communities and Policy Monopolies*).

### 9.5.5 Legitimacy of Discretionary Decision-Making

There are various interpretations of the fitness and usefulness of street-level public workers’ actions, which involve discussion of the decision-making process in terms of *legitimacy.* As policy deliverers, street-level public workers’ decisions and actions are always under analysis and evaluation of their legitimacy according to protocols, policies, and laws; appropriateness in the prevailing situation; and effectiveness in terms of what is asked by their own agencies and managers, and what needs to be done for their clients. When a decision leads to an ideal outcome, this decision is likely to be considered legitimate, but it has to be done without violating other regulations or criteria (Lipsky, 2010). *Legitimacy* is a political notion embedded in the relationship between workers and the institutions they work for, between workers and citizens/clients, and between workers and the governance system. Therefore, a model that addresses questions of *discretion* and *legitimacy* is suitable in analysiing the *discretion* of street-level public workers in a specific context (Vinzant & Crothers 1998).

The discretion and legitimacy of public service have been understood through six theoretical approaches, representing a range of different roles and respective responsibilities for public workers as “*bureaucrats, policy makers, power wielders, professionals, problem solvers, and/or political actors*” (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p. 54). However, I have not used this analytical framework in my research is because it fails to provide a framework for comprehending and evaluating the discretionary decisions and actions of street-level public workers, in a context constrained and influenced by organisational, political and social values (Vinzant and Crothers, 1998). The differences between these categories are listed in the Appendix 1.

Street-level public workers can exercise multiple types of power in choosing goals in the situations they face. Vinzant and Crothers (1998) understand the role of street-level public workers as *leaders*. Because of the discretionary choices they make in a potentially conflictual environment, they are effectively leading others at the same time as they are influenced by and accountable to them. In this model, *leadership* is the theoretical framework for assessing the appropriateness and usefulness of street-level public workers’ decisions and actions (Vinzant & Crothers 1998), which also points to the role of *leaders,* that I consider the most suitable for describing street-level public workers. The concept of *leadership* not only contains various behaviours, but also materialises questions of discretion, power, and legitimacy, demonstrating the significance of street-level public workers’ work and their role in a modern governance system, and encompassing consideration of values in a larger context (Vinzant & Crothers 1998). Street-level public servants are entitled and even required to exercise discretion to certain level in their work under complicated and changing circumstances, just like managers and bureaucrats at executive levels. The decisions street level workers make have essential power over or influence on their clients, the organisation and agency they work for, and their communities. Street-level public workers take situational factors, social values, norms, and legal constraints into account while making decisions about *what outcome* to pursue and *how to achieve* it in particular circumstances. Therefore, they exert influence on others and being influenced by other factors as well. As a result, the role as *leader* also implies the conditions behind the legitimacy of street-level public workers’ decisions and actions: they need to be “legitimated, on the basis of the values, norms, and preferences embodied within their arena of influence” (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p. 90). That is, the power exercised by street-level public workers can only be leadership if their decisions and actions are legitimate. The *legitimacy* therefore is at the centre of this definition of a *leader.* In the process of exerting influence, street level workers acquire responsibility for and accountability to those they influence.

Like public administrators, street-level public workers are also expected to be responsible, wise, and down-to-earth as stewards, conservators, decision-makers, and service-deliverers to fulfil a functional and legitimate role in governance system in a specific context. To translate the expected roles into legitimate decisions and actions, street-level public workers exercise a special type of *street-level leadership* (Vinzant & Crothers1998). The core of this concept is that the relationship between *street-level leaders* and their followers/clients is two-way: workers *lead* their followers/clients, and are also *influenced by* and *accountable to* their followers/clients (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, pp. 89). In this framework, developed by Vinzant & Crothers (1998) to analyze the appropriateness of workers’ choices, there are four models representing different types of leadership exercised by street-level public workers in practice, depending on the circumstances and the types of choices workers are called upon to make. The evaluation of their decisions and actions as policy deliverers is also embedded in these four models: *administrative procedure,* involving no substantial or limited discretion; *situational leadership,* involving choices about process; *transformational leadership,* requiring decisions about outcomes;and *transformational and situational leadership,* demanding choices about processes and outcomes (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, pp. 98-136).

*Administrative procedure* describes situations that consist of “administrative rules, supervisory standards, the law, and the like have adequately anticipated the relevant issues at play... and have prescribed routinized procedures” (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p. 98)*,* in which public workers do not have much room to make discretionary or act on them as *leaders. Situational leadership* is normally adopted in a situation in which purposes and outcomes of a decision/action are to a certain extent, pre-established, while the discretionary choices about the methods to reach the objectives are left to street-level public workers acting as *situational leaders* in this model. *Transformational leadership* is exercised when street-level public workers are expected to make choices and act on them to “elevate the goals, attitudes, and values of the participants in a given situation” (Vinzant & Crothers 1998, p. 112) in ways that are not necessarily in line with their immediate interests and needs, yet can be justified when referring to wider social values in the context.

The *transformational and situational leadership* is adopted in situations when street-level public workers are required to make decisions and actions on *what* should be done and *how* to achieve the objectives. In transformational and situational leadership, no matter what decisions are made by street-level public workers, there are a range of values and norms to refer to, and the legitimacy of workers’ actions would be questioned if they violated respective values or criteria. Accordingly, the nature of the circumstances and the wider context in which the case is embedded need to be examined in order to evaluate whether or not a street-level public worker’s decisions and actions are seen as legitimate (Vinzant & Crothers 1998). From the perspective of Lipsky (2010, p. 25), an understanding of the working conditions, perceived priorities of work, and the limitation that street-level workers confront need to be established first in order to conduct a thorough analysis of policy implementation.

In the case of the provision of education in Changsha, teachers, school presidents, and especially government officials in the Education Bureau at a district level, are acting as street-level leaders who exercise differing amounts and kinds of discretion in their work, willingly or unwillingly, depending on the specific situation they confront. I introduce and analyse different types of street-level leaders in my research along with the evaluation of their decision and actions in terms of legitimacy, appropriateness and effectiveness. Officers in street offices and community commissions (combined as one actor here as they work very closely together and it is hard to distinguish between their responsibilities), street-level government officials in the district Education Bureau, the municipal police, municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, in the municipal Centre for Real Estate, school presidents, and teachers all play their role as street-level public workers in the policy-delivery process. Yet my fieldwork has shown that except for government officials in the district Education Bureau, school presidents and teachers, the other workers are mostly doing paper work with little discretion about decisions on *process* or *outcomes.* So I concentrate on analysis of three actors who exercise much more discretion to influence their clients’ well-being. I map their relationships and interactions in the following figure (9-4):

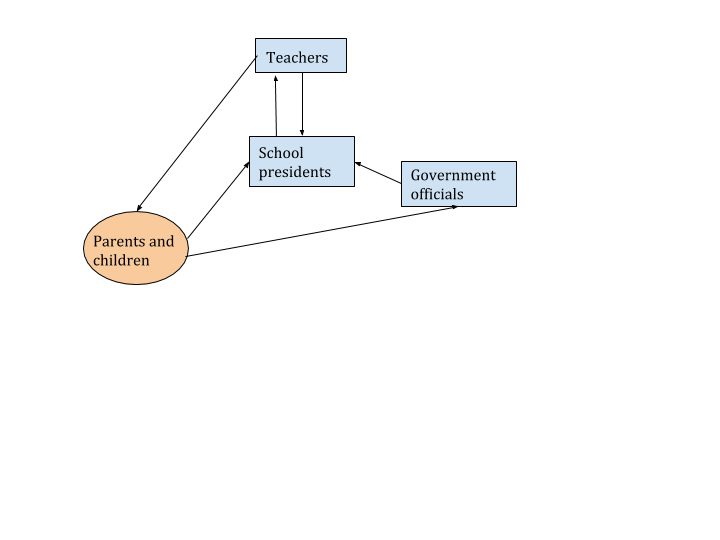


Figure 9-4. Relationship among main street-level workers exercising discretion in their work and their clients (Author, 2017)

9.5.5.1 Government Officials in District Education Bureau

According to officials working in the municipal Education Bureau, people who visit the Bureau normally come for three types of reasons: to ask about (local educational) policies; to report situations such as encountering resistance to enrolling their children by the school; or being rejected by schools due to the lack of school places; or not being satisfied with the school arranged by the government; and public tip-offs reporting illegal activities related to education issues. It is a more complicated situation in the district Education Bureau. For example, governmental officials in Changsha’s District Education Bureau often deal with migrant parents who try to get a school position in the local public school for their children. Yet migrant parents are not the only client group they need to serve or to cope with. Their every decision and action is actually also an answer to the expectations and needs of local public schools, local parents, the district Education Bureaus and higher levels, co-workers in other government departments, and the community they serve. Their official duties include making education policy and regulations at the district level; arranging the enrolment in local public schools for children who meet enrolment requirements within their jurisdiction according to the *Entering Nearby School* policy; and managing capital flow to local public schools within the district, among other duties. Those officials assigned to the department who are responsible for students’ enrolment often need to make contact with parents, schools, other government departments, communities at the same time during their work. Here is the ordinary situation they often confront.

Financial investment in public schools depends upon economic development of each district government, which means local government on a district level is responsible for paying the tuition fee for every child who attends a local public school within their own jurisdiction. Some districts contain more migrant children because there are more migrant workers concentrated there due to the job opportunities they offer, such as Yuhua District. It could be a great financial burden on the shoulders of those local district government districts where migrant children are concentrated, which means financial pressure always needs to be considered when government officials in the district Education Bureau deal with enrolment of migrant students. However, there are always some migrant parents who come to Changsha who apply for a school position for their children without meeting the requirements stated in local enrolment policy. For example, many migrant parents have not purchased social insurance at least 6 months in advance before making an enrolment application, which is required in the stated enrolment policy in Changsha. If their children cannot get enrolled at a local public school, and there is no one at home who can take care of or educate the children while the parents are at work, then those children would either be sent back to their hometown, thereby separating from their parents, or quit school. Moreover, when there are too many migrant children rejected by local public schools, there is a potential for social conflict.

Government officials in the district Education Bureaus need to make the decision whether or not to arrange respective local public schools to accept those migrant children. They need to balance the interests of local public schools, the agency they work for, other local government departments, migrant children/family, and the larger community to make the decision. Local public schools in Changsha normally have very limited school positions left after accepting local students and migrant students who fit the requirements. In addition,my interviews with teachers and several school presidents have shown that local public schools prefer to accept local urban children because enrolling more migrant children normally means greater workloads and lower score ranking for them because migrant students are considered less desirable in terms of behavioural and learning habits. Confronting the conflict between interests and needs, when it comes to a situation where a sharp contrast exists between migrants’ needs for school position and its actual provision, , many street-level leaders chose to ask particular local public schools to accept migrant children who have not met the entrance requirements. This decision means they choose not to implement the enrolment policy strictly as a strategy to reduce potential social conflicts. After making this decision, they take action by arranging for respective public schools to accept the migrant children, calling school presidents and convincing them to accept the migrant children using their authority as a government official in the Education Bureau (they can be seen as “boss” of managers of public schools), under the precondition that there are spare school positions in respective schools. Even though these decisions and actions are obviously not in accordance with the agency’s policies and rules, they can always be defended and eventually accepted by all actors involved eventually.

From my perspective, these kinds of decisions have shown that government officials in the district Education Bureaus as street-level leaders in the community are not convinced by the commitment made by their agency's policy, which says that it creates “a fair mechanism through enrolment priority order”. On the contrary, their discretion has shown that they choose to meet the needs of migrant parents/children over the interests of public schools and their own agency. This decision could also show that the current social value emphasizing educational equality prevailed over their needs to adhere to the agency’s policies.

After making the decision to bend the rules to help more migrant children enrol at local schools, they achieve their goal through a series of strategies including co-ordinating the allocation of students to local public schools, making adjustments to the number of classes in respective schools, etc. In doing this, they are exercising *situational leadership* and *transformational leadership* in their work dealing with migrant parents and children (Vinzant & Crother 1998). Their discretion in decision-making and action can be legitimated by interests and values in larger context, i.e. for the greater good of the local community and the society. They attempt to help migrants settle down in the city, and try to avoid potential social conflicts caused by difficulties in accessing educational opportunities in the city that could affect the larger community. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate for them to apply standards of service in response to migrants’ personal situations. They enjoy considerable discretion and use it in legitimate way that refuses computerized public service rules and rigid application of standards.

The relationship demonstrated between them as street-level leaders and the agency they work for has two primary characteristics, emphasizing a relationship with intrinsic conflicts in objectives and orientations. First, the role of street-level leaders in the district Education Bureaus is associated with client-processing goals and orientations directed toward maximizing their own autonomy. Second, it is a relationship of mutual dependence. Because the authority given to this type of street-level leader comes from the district Education Bureau they work for, and they are limited by the law applied by this agency, while the same time, the agency needs their discretion to deal with clients (migrant parents and children) to keep the system running. These street-level workers are not outsiders who impose a bureaucracy’s abstract ideals on the community, migrants or schools. They have positioned themselves as members of this community who play an important role in governance by balancing community values, legal and organizational constraints, and a variety of other factors in a manner that can be legitimated relative to a particular situation.

9.5.5.2 School Presidents as Street-Level Leaders

The Presidents of public schools form a link between street-level *leaders* (district Education Bureau officials and teachers) and *clients* (parents and children). School Presidents are positioned at the intersection in this interrelation, as shown in figure 9-4. They have to keep many conflicting needs in mind while they work. As public school presidents in Changsha, they do not necessarily bear responsibilities to teach students. Yet they have to take local policies, parents’ needs, teachers’ responses, suggestions (sometimes requirements) from the Education Bureau, actual capacities of the school, and the school's reputation and development into account when making decisions. They exercise ‘conditional’ *transformational leadership* in this case, as they are the ones making outcome-oriented decisions about whether or not accept migrant students who do not meet the requirements and who are referred by local street-level government officials under certain conditions. Once the decision has been made, they do not have direct influence on how teachers teach students.

That is, School Presidents do not have complete discretion in rejecting those migrant students who do not meet requirements, and at the same time, they do not always cooperate with local government officials (or surrender their decisions to pressures from local officials) over the issue of taking migrant students. They exercise their discretion in outcome-oriented decisions under consideration of two conditions: whether they are pressured by local officials, and whether their school capacity allows taking more migrant students who do not meet requirements. In interviews for this research, several school presidents felt that accepting migrant students is not a desirable choice. It increases teachers’ workload and pressures to educate migrant children. Teachers are not only the Presidents’ subordinates, but also their co-workers. Their pressure and withdrawal from work (the pressure of extra workload on staff could cause them to leave or showing a negative attitude in work) would inevitably cause problems in terms of school management. The choice of taking migrant children also involves the way a school’s performance and teaching quality are evaluated. Rather than assessing the extent of progress students have made (a ‘value added’ measure of the school’s impact), schools are assessed by average score in examinations and accomplishments of students, which values high-achieving students. It makes schools more likely to choose local urban students with a better educational background for the sake of the reputation of the school. Presidents tend to choose from categories of students with the help of local educational policies that have classified student families’ financial and *hukou* status. However, if there is still capacity for a school to expand classes to take in more students, many school Presidents would choose to accept them under the coordination of street level government officials. In their consideration, even though refusing to accept migrant students (who do not meet enrolment requirements) is in accordance with local educational policies and schools’ regulations, it would bring the risk of causing sharp social conflicts between migrants and schools, hence disrupting routine practices, let alone when there is intervention of street-level government officials.

9.5.5.3 Teachers’ Discretionary Choices in Local Public Schools

Teachers are another type of street-level leader, although they do not enjoy much discretion in making administrative decisions about whether or not accept migrant children into the school they work for. When migrant children come to them it is because these children are already students in the school, and therefore are a part of the responsibility and routine work of teachers. They have no right to reject straightforwardly migrant children who enroll to the school as their students, because it runs counter to their role as teachers. Their work duty includes teaching and management of the class they are responsible for in the school. Their discretionary choice is manifested not in decision-making, but in the ‘process’ that follows afterwards. They influence the ‘effectiveness’ of the decision made by the school and by government officials in the district Education Bureau to accept specific migrant children into the school by manipulating the quality of education, intensity of care given to, and attitude towards, migrant parents and students. This might have some influence on migrant students’ academic improvement, their social life in school, their perception of school life, and their integration into the school/city, and can even influence these processes for the whole migrant family. Teachers exercise *situational leadership* in their work, but the legitimacy of their leadership would become evident later in the students’ lives, and left to uncover in future research. Before going straightforward to the evaluation of their work, I’d like to discuss their work conditions first, which is an essential factor that influenced their actions.

According to Lipsky (2010), there are two main dimensions of resources that affect street-level workers’ ability to do their work: the ratio of workers to targeted clients; and time. In my study, branches of elite schools had to recruit many substitute teachers and open recruitment teachers (who were not necessarily have academic background in teaching), while most teachers in the original elite schools are more qualified (who were pedagogical students, graduated from Normal University which trains students to become teachers). According to interviews with teachers, there is a severe shortage of teachers in the city. The ratio of students to teachers is so high that teachers have very intensive workloads in respect to their responsibilities. Several teachers mentioned directly in the interviews that they just cannot fulfil their mandated responsibilities under such workloads. The increase in numbers of migrant students is perceived as an added burden by teachers in local public schools, and the time teachers can spend on each student is extremely limited. They have had to give part of their teaching responsibilities to parents through arranging homework for children that requires parents’ help and supervision.

The lack of support from the school is another important factor that affects teachers’ work. There is neither extra help coming from schools to teachers, nor financial compensation/incentives given to teachers. At the same time, teachers face considerable pressure when it comes to score ranking (the students’ performance are ranked) in the school and between different schools. They also face a certain degree of stress because they feel they are under scrutiny by Education Bureau (which was discussed in Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants*).

Student numbers in every class in a public local primary school in Changsha are around 50 (ideally). The fact that there is one teacher for every 50 students in every class means that teachers need to spend a lot of energy and attention to managing the discipline of students, which could be better spent on teaching the class. Almost every teacher needs to wear a microphone to give a class because of the large number of students otherwise students cannot hear them clearly in a large classroom. Many of the teachers interviewed pointed to the increase in their workloads due to migrant parents and migrant students, mainly because migrant students have poorer basic knowledge compared to local urban students due to the disparity of teaching quality between rural schools and urban schools and the teachers need to spend more time and effort on teaching them (which was discussed in detail in Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants*).

With increased workloads because of the increasing numbers of migrant students in local public schools, teachers do not think they have received corresponding salaries compared to what they give to the job. From their perspective, their salaries are mismatched with their workload and sacrifice. Not only do they need to spend more time and effort in improving migrant students’ poorer basic knowledge, but they also need to teach migrant parents, use their spare time to help take care of migrant students in trusteeship organisations and communicate with parents after work at night (as discussed in Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants)*. The increased workloads not only exploit the time and energies of teachers that should be given to their own families, but also simply exceeds the capability of teachers to perform high quality teaching.

*Teacher K: So as a teacher in primary school or secondary school, the job is toilsome, and the income is small. But the job is so important. It’s indeed not easy. If you want to do this job earnestly, do it properly, [the salary] you get is really not a match with you give, or it cannot be measured by money. Like us, after we go home, still parents contact us, communicate with us, right? That’s normal at 9, 10pm. Some parents who spend all their time to do business, they might not have enough time to manage their children, or don’t have time at all. So they leave their children to the school, to teachers. That’s what I was talking about when I said our job is with small income, especially teachers in the inland [of China]. You need money. As a teacher, on the one hand, we need to devote our energies to our work; on the other hand, a lot of teachers don’t have time and patience anymore to tutor and supervise their own children* [Teacher K, interview, 25/02/2017].

This has not only become an important source of complaints by teachers, leading to teachers’ negative attitude to migrant parents and migrant children, but also meaning that it is difficult for teachers to give migrant students the level of education and care they need because teachers do not have enough support or resources.

In the local public schools, teachers have confronted difficulties in improving migrant students’ behavioural habits and studying habits. Outside school, teachers have invested their personal time to communicating with parents about their children’s performance; teaching those parents (normally migrant parents) who do not have much experience in giving proper home education to children; and helping taking care of students (normally migrant students) whose parents cannot stay at home and take care of them in organized interest clubs or activities. These activities help migrant children enrolled in local public schools to have a better chance of catching up with local urban children in terms of school performance. Yet teachers and the resources provided to teachers are chronically insufficient given the tasks teachers are required to carry out. Therefore, schools become reluctant to take migrant students - especially those who do not meet enrolment requirements. Meanwhile, it is very challenging for teachers to properly divide their time, attention, and energies to cover all students in their classes while giving high quality lessons. It is nearly impossible to carry out teaching tasks without parents undertaking some teaching and checking responsibility at home.

When teachers’ workloads are beyond their capability, they have developed certain coping strategies. The strategy adopted by teachers involves a common phenomenon in street-level public workers’ work – “*differentiation among clients”* (Lipsky 2010, p. 108). It often emerges when workers prefer certain clients over others. The common reason behind various forms of differentiation is that workers find greater satisfaction in collaborating with certain clients than with others, and they have the opportunity to realize their preferences in actions. Sometimes certain clients just stimulate sympathy or hostility from street-level public workers (Lipsky 2010). In my study, teachers favour urban local students over migrant students. It is reasonable to speculate from interviews with teachers (see Chapter 6, *Subject Positions of Migrants*) that their view of migrant children’s “poor behavioural habits”, no matter if this is just a prejudice rather than truth, plays an important role in evoking teachers’ underlying reluctance to devote time to interacting with them. As pointed out by Lipsky (2010), forms of prejudice are often not easy to detect, covered by seeming equal treatment, and therefore more troublesome to remove. Meanwhile, general social evaluations of the image of certain clients also influence street-level workers’ decisions, if there is no powerful opposite incentives. For example, in Chapter 7, *Agenda-setting process*, I showed how the image of migrant children in the public’s mind is strongly associated with the negative image of migrant workers. In addition, it is common for street-level workers to take actions on the basis of consideration about whether the job is worth doing, especially when there is no clear standards stating to what extent should he/she intervene in the situation at hand (Lipsky 2010).

The teachers I interviewed in Changsha are confronting a similar situation in that there is no end point to the time and energy they could devote to their work with students, not to mention the insufficient resources and excessive workloads. Therefore, in order to address the dilemma between anticipated unlimited dedication and actually limited dedication, they can either choose among students who are considered as worthy of teachers’ time, or redefine the task to reduce their workloads in order to ensure equal treatment of group of students. During interviews with migrant parent groups, complaints about schools and teachers often emerged around three main topics: not enough school positions in local public schools; low teaching quality of school; and teachers leaving too much work for parents to do with children after school.

These strategies teachers practiced partially result from their personal limitations. Yet more importantly, they are also connected with the structure of teachers’ jobs. Teachers in my case, as pointed out by Lipsky (2010, pp. 110-111), tend to “find opportunities for rewards” in students’ school performance or grades during teaching process. It means they would tend to invest more time and energy to students with better school performance (for example, urban local students). When success with students is unguaranteed, and unlimited devotion to students is unrealizable, they would tend to withdraw because of the nature of their work (Lipsky 2010). It is important to note that this strategy is approved of by their leaders/managers in schools. My research shows that managing workloads is the biggest reason why teachers ‘redefine’ their task. It helps them cope with the unclarity in their work (about the level of intervention they should give during work), and pressure of their work (Lipsky 2010, p. 115). They rationalize the ‘splitting homework’ strategy as their own conception of their service, not only because there are limitations in their work, but also because it reduces the gap between their theoretical goal and their actual capability.

## **9.6 Summary**

This chapter has revealed how implementation processes at the local level conflict with the goal of the national policy; how street-level implementation conflicts with the local policies; and how this shifting on the street-level (through helping migrant children to access to school places in the city as much as possible) then aligned local policies with the expectation of the original national policy (in terms of reducing educational inequality), while helping the survival of the system through avoiding sharp social conflict. National and regional governments have devolved unrealistic and idealistic policies to local government without considering local government capacity or giving sufficient support and resources. Because the local government in Changsha is not well equipped to implement these policies through normal bureaucratic processes, they need to adopt strategies to deal with the difficulties in practice - each of which each has disadvantages – in order to achieve the goal set by the national policy.

In the first two sections of this Chapter, I focused on exploring the responses and strategies adopted by the Changsha government in implementing local policies, including city-level *NTUP* and educational policies. These two sections are closely connected, because the intentions of educational policies are in line with city-level NTUP, and therefore the implementation of local educational policies affects the implementation of local *NTUP* in terms of enhancing integration of migrants in the city. In these two sections, I find out that the shift of focus in the implementation process from reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children to offloading pressure through the *Cost Sharing Mechanism* that raises the problem of many hands, is because the local government faces great pressure from idealistic national and local policies, while the assignment of responsibilities in the policy-formation stage is unclear, along with little support from central government. The third section in this chapter focused on revealing different perceptions and strategies of parent groups in response to the implementation of local educational policies in Changsha. It was found that parents agree with local government officials’ perceptions of the outcomes of some of the educational policies (such as *Entering Nearby Schools*) in terms of providing educational opportunities for migrant children; yet they disagree about the outcomes of local educational policies in terms of reducing educational inequality because of the existence of migrant student-concentrated schools, and considerable disparity in teacher quality among public schools in the city.

The individual-oriented strategy adopted by migrant parents was analysed, pointing to the need for further research into how to mobilise migrants to deal with their difficulties more effectively as a group. In the last section, the analysis of the policy implementation process was taken to the ‘micro-level’ (compared to earlier analysis on city level and national level), in order to examine the ways street-level public workers translate local policies into practice, along with the influence their discretion has policy outcomes in terms of reducing educational inequality. In this section, I find that the coping mechanisms street-level workers developed at the frontline do not necessarily cater to their organisations’ interests and policies, especially when they do not share the common interest/value that policy represents, or when the commitment to that policy is less than their consideration of public values in the wider community. I argue that after these street–level workers have made their decisions and had taken action dealing with their clients - i.e. migrant parents or migrant children - the ‘outcomes’ resulting from their discretion are actually essential to their system’s survival. Their discretion in bending the rules has become a key element of implementation that keeps the system running, and prevents it from falling into sharp social conflicts between the educational needs of migrant children and the limited resources provided for them.

# **CHAPTER TEN - CONCLUSION**

## **10.1 Introduction**

The subject of my thesis is educational inequality in China and the government’s efforts to remedy this. In this thesis, I draw four main conclusions regarding the nature of the policy process and the relation between central and local government in addressing this issue. They are: 1) the media is a powerful force in framing the issue and agenda-setting in China; 2) the implementation gap comes from the multiscalar nature of the governance system and the complex policy process; 3) administrative discretion and street-level bureaucracy play an ambivalent role in the policy implementation process; 4) the privatisation of public systems creates inevitable inequality in urban China. These are the major findings of this thesis. In the remainder of this chapter I will describe them in more detail.

## **10.2 Media’s Strong Role in Framing Social Issue**

The empirical findings in Chapter 7 (Agenda-Setting Process) and Chapter 4 (Social and Political Change in China) support this conclusion. Specifically, through examining different actors’ roles, and particularly that of the media, in the issue-framing discourse and agenda-setting process in Chapter 7 (Agenda-Setting Process), I found that, when the media as an actor outside the government system supported the reconstruction of the image of migrant workers portrayed by the state narrative (especially before 2002), it also challenged the discourse on the problem of migrant children’s education that had previously been dominated by the state party. Through exploring the reasons behind the existence of migrant schools in cities, and investigating the government’s policy measures concerning migrant children, the media challenged the official discourse that marked the poor academic performance of migrant children as an intergenerational problem of the educational quality of the migrants, rather than the consequences of long-term systematic deprivation of migrant children’s educational rights. In Chapter 4 (Social and Political Change in China), through examining how the Chinese state has been characterised as authoritarian, and how it responds to public pressure, I found that even in an authoritarian country like China, there is still space for organising public pressure against the state and government. The finding in Chapter 7 (Agenda-Setting Process) further develops issues raised in Chapter 4 (Social and Political Change in China) since it exemplified how spaces for voices different from the official account (and even those critical towards policies of local government in the issue of education provision for migrant children) are opened up by a specific role played by the media. My analysis in these two chapters therefore support the conclusion that the discourse boundaries around education issues can be, and have been, changed by the media industry in China. The media has not only provoked attention and support from the public for equal educational rights of migrant children, but also developed as a force of public supervision, examining how local governments assume the responsibility of providing education to migrant children.

## **10.3 Reasons behind Implementation Gap**

Faced with increasing educational inequality resulting in great challenges in integration for migrants in urban China, the Party have provided the national *NTUP* as its response. Despite the powerful position of the central government, the policy showed considerable implementation gaps. There are various reasons for that.

One reason is the complexity of the policy system in China. This results from the multiscalar nature of the government system in China, with layer upon layer of government. In this hierarchical system, actors primarily act defensively, because they do not want to get into trouble with the next higher level of government, and have the possibility to devolve responsibility of the problem to a lower level. These are safer strategies of action than taking the initiative. Therefore, nobody except the ones at the lowest level (street-level) are willing to face the problem proactively.

The second reason for the implementation gap is that, similar to Western democracies, lower levels of government in China are given permission and autonomy by the central government to interpret policies from upper level governments. For example, in Chapter 8 (*Policy Formulation and Policy Design*), when I compared the policy texts at different levels, I found that there is goal-shifting and responsibility-shifting during the policy formulation process in the case city. In Chapter 9 (*Policy Implementation*), when I looked further into the implementation strategies that local governments have come up with to deal with the difficulties in practice, I found that local government had shifted the focus of local *NTUP* and educational policies from reducing educational inequality to offloading pressure for local government and public schools during the implementation process. The goal-shifting and responsibility-transferring in both formulation and implementation process have made the policy goal of local *NTUP* and educational policies in Changsha deviate considerably from the original goal of the national *NTUP*. However, policy discretion at lower levels is not only given. The complexity of government system also creates the opportunity for local governments to interpret and implement local policies according to their own needs, constraints and interpretation of the situation at hand. For example, lack of adequate funding required local governments to cut down on providing schools for migrant children. Such a shift has resulted in increasing levels of inequality and conflict in education provision between local urban groups and migrants, and they are the opposite of what the national *NTUP* aimed for, therefore leading to implementation gaps.

A third reason for the implementation gap comes from the policy-making style of China (which is part of the empirical findings of Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design*). The central government in China has an idealistic policy making style, in which it is inclined to propose large-scale systematic and institutional reforms, while the implementers of their policies (i.e. local governments) have not got sufficient institutional and financial support. Local governments are not equipped to deliver expected policy outcomes in such policy-making style. Under the circumstance that the state has devolved unrealistic and idealistic policies on local governments without considering their capacity, or giving them sufficient support and resources, local governments have coped with the overwhelming pressure by adopting strategies that sacrifice the potential and outcomes of policy (such as the *Cost Sharing Mechanism*, creating online admission system, and ‘shunting’ students).

On the one hand, not giving sufficient support to local government is the manifestation of the state’s defensiveness on reducing educational inequality issue. The state transfers its own responsibilities to lower level governments, and lets local governments pay the heavy price of reform and public service-provision. Such policy making style has forced lower governments and local schools to rely on cutting-corners when chasing up the educational needs of migrant children and requirements from upper level policies. On the other hand, through exact these strategies, local governments and local public schools show their defensiveness against the unrealistic devolution of the state. In this process of shifting responsibilities onto each other, the state and local governments have pushed the policy outcome further away from the original policy expectations, creating implementation gaps through buck-passing of responsibility in education provision.

The final reason for an implementation gap is the involvement of an exceedingly wide range of actors. For example, in Chapter 9 (*Policy Implementation*), I found that the coping strategies adopted by local governments and the steering group to implement local *NTUP*  involves 39 departments. This raises another issue: the problem of many hands. The complexity of cooperation has made successful implementation hard, and produced ambiguous responsibility-distribution in the steering group, in which no one can be held accountable. This problem has added another layer of complexity to the already very complex policy system, becoming one of the factors contributing to implementation gap, and the reasons behind the overall non-satisfactory policy outcomes in terms of reducing educational inequality. The pressing situation presented in Chapter 8 (*Policy Formulation and Policy Design*) in which local policy formulation and design cannot address educational inequality problem has laid a foundation for understanding the necessity of *administrative discretion* at street level in the implementation process, which relates to my next conclusion.

## **10.4 The Ambivalent Role of Administrative Discretion**

Administrative discretion and street-level bureaucracy play an ambivalent role in the implementation process in China. On the one hand, without street-level bureaucrats engaging in discretion, the system would collapse. On the other hand, some of the street-level bureaucrats are not in favour of migrants, and their discretion contributed to the increase of educational inequality. Therefore, the utility of administrative discretion in China often fall into a very ambivalent process, in which the system cannot operate without it, yet it also create unexpected problems.

For instance, in Chapter 9 (*Policy Implementation*), I found that the coping mechanisms street-level public workers developed at frontline do not necessarily cater to their organisations’ interests and policies. This is particularly the case when they do not share a common interest/value that policy represents, or when their commitment to that policy (such as local *NTUP* and enrolment ranking in local educational policies) cannot prevail over their consideration of public values (such as educational equality) in a larger community. However, their intermediary role between local governments and citizens has not always been used to interpret policies to protect the rights of disadvantaged groups (migrant parents and migrant children in my case), especially when there is conflict among the needs of their clients (migrants), the interests of their co-workers (local public schools), and the interests of their own agencies (local government). Specifically, when part of street-level public workers (officials in District Education Bureau in my case) are bending the rules to deliver their services in respect of the expectation of the original policy (i.e. provide school places to migrant children as much as the capacity of local school allows, and help with migrants to settle down in the city), some street-level public workers (street-level community workers, teachers, and school presidents in my case) are using their discretion to protect the interests of their own or represented agencies. Their discretion has led to an increase of educational inequality experienced by migrant children, which is the opposite of what the national *NTUP* aims for. At the same time, I also found that the ‘outcome’ resulting from the discretion of part of street-level public workers (those who try to help migrants) is actually essential to the system’s survival. This is because their discretion in bending the rules has become a key implementation element that keeps the system running, and prevents it from falling apart due to sharp social conflicts among the discriminatory/prejudiced institutional arrangements that harm core social value (equality), educational needs of migrant children, and the limited resources provided to them.

## **10.5 Penetration of Privatisation Creates Unavoidable Inequality**

My last conclusion is: privatisation is the primary driver of inequality in China. The moment a system becomes privatised, inequality increases, and little can be done to reverse the damage without giving up the privatisation of the public system. Because under the influences of privatisation, people with more wealth, power, and resources will buy their way into the centre of the privatised system, while those without money and power are left standing on the sidelines. Once a public good (such as education) can be turned into a privatised good, inequality come into being. Therefore, as long as the state of China is unwilling to turn education into a real public good, there will always be inequality penetrating into the educational system and other fields of society. Yet it would be nearly impossible for China to socialise the education system, because China is one of the most privatised systems in the world who actually benefit a lot from privatisation of its public service system, which presents an interesting paradox with its ruling ideology.

For example, in Chapter 3 (*An Anatomy of the Education System in China*), I examined the roots of educational inequality by introducing the basic components of the education system and the enrolment requirement in China. To put it simply, I found that educational inequality is the outcome of the interplay between *hukou* system and the *financialisation* of the school system in China. Because financialisation (as manifested in local educational policies that bind students’ residency to an enrolment requirement) and private actors (such as real estate developers, who cooperate with schools in building school district housing and creating Education Group) have partially taken charge of the education system in Changsha city through the dual system (public and private) of the education ‘market’, educational resources have gone beyond a basic social service that could be delivered/distributed by local government equally. Education hereafter has become a financialised “product” that parents acquire through competition of other related resources (*hukou* status and accommodation status).

Another finding in Chapter 6 (*Subject Position of Migrants*) also supports this conclusion. I found that migrants are embattled by difficult situation in life, prejudice and misunderstanding from teachers, discrimination from local parents, and discriminatory local policies in the battle for education provision. In this situation, urban local parents skillfully monopolised better educational resources for their children through intervening in their children’s school choice with money and other resources, and excluded migrant children in schools with high teaching quality through pressuring local public schools to segregate migrant children from urban children in the school environment. Such intervention from local urban parents are actively reproducing continuing geographical separation and social separation between local urban groups and migrants.

## **10.6 Answers to Research Questions**

The thesis has three research questions:

1. what conflicting goals exist in the process of interpreting and implementing policy by different actors involved at multiple scales of government and in the private sector?
2. How do different organisations and actors in different sectors and different scales of government act in interdependence with each other in the policy networks?
3. What outcomes have resulted from the implementation of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms improving access of migrant children to compulsory education?

Now we can answer these questions:

Regarding Question 1, there are three sets of conflicting goals in my case. First are the goals of the central government in China: boosting integration of migrants and reducing educational inequality experienced by migrant children, which are expressed through the national *NTUP,* discussed in Chapter 5. *Policy Context*. These are in conflict with the goal of local governments: dealing with pressure from upper level while dodging responsibility for educational provision, expressed in local *NTUP,* discussed in Chapter 8. *Policy Formulation and Policy Design*.

Second, the educational interests of migrant children are in conflict with those of the local students, due to the limited educational resources and opportunities in the city. But it is the educational interests of migrant children that have been suppressed by the privatisation of the education system in China, while local urban children from wealthy local families are at the top of the education provision ladder, with school places becoming a by-product of a local-based *hukou* and accommodation in the right catchment area (discussed in Chapter 3. *An Anatomy of the Education System in China*). In this set of conflicting goals, local urban parents have a better chance of securing high quality educational resources for their children, while migrants are alienated from local parents and local urban students.

Third, through depicting prejudice and discrimination experienced by migrants from several aspects (in Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrants*), I witnessed conflicting goals and interests between migrants and teachers. In this set of conflicting goals, migrants want better educational resources for their children in local public schools in the city (increased workload of teachers), and school teachers want students with better school performance and parents who can share education responsibility with them (under the circumstances that there is limited support provided to teachers).

Turning to Question 2, by examining the way policy contexts (around three main elements that related to enrolment process: education, *hukou* system, and housing) interrelate with each other, I found that the central government intends to resolve educational inequality problem through carrying out a series of reforms in these public systems through national *NTUP.* This involves cooperation between government actors and social actors, and collaboration of governments on the national, provincial, and city levels in an idealistic way to boost urbanisation in China (discussed in Chapter 5. *Policy Context*). To be specific, there are eight actors involved in policy formulation process, and 39 departments involved in policy implementation of the local *NTUP* in Changsha as the case-study city.

In formulating the local *NTUP,* the eight actors are in a multi-dimensional interdependent relationship with each other, in which they enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and rely on others’ resources and cooperation. Analysing such an interdependent relationship, it is clear that local government has been dodging responsibilities and focusing on coping with pressures from central government, through developing strategies such as the *Cost-Sharing Mechanism.*

In implementing the local *NTUP* and local educational policies, most actors are grasping the limited opportunity to cope with the overwhelming pressure devolved on to them from national level policy (except street-level actors). However, not all of their coping strategies have helped to reduce the educational inequality experienced by migrant children. A fine-grained analysis of the formulation and implementation of *NTUP* in both central level and local level reveals that under the surface, local government officials have found ways to undermine and eventually undo ambitious policies aiming at reducing educational inequality. Similar to what happened in the policy formulation process, local governments in Changsha have made full use of their autonomy in implementing local policies according to their own condition, interests, and limitations (for example, adoption of *Cost-Sharing Mechanism*). On the one hand, such autonomy enjoyed by local government has increased the flexibility of the *NTUP* in its implementation process, and make it more practical and feasible on local level. On the other hand, it also increased the possibility for local government to pass the buck of educational responsibilities for migrant children to lower levels of government. To close the gaps between national and local policies in terms of reducing educational inequality, discretionary engagement is exercised by street-level public workers in the city.

In addition, analysis of the media’s role in the agenda-setting process is also an important part of understanding about ‘interdependence’ of involved actors in my case. Particularly, the media as a non-government actor has inserted its voices and power into the discourse about the educational problem of migrant children through an issue-framing process (discussed in Chapter 7. *Agenda-setting process*). It turns out that the media in China has shaped and challenged the discourse of migrant workers related issue and migrant children’s education problem that were previously dominated by official account. The media in China has pressured the government to react to the discourse in taking policy measures that reduce educational inequality. Even though the governments’ policies are *not* depend onthe media reports, the media's influence on issue-framing and on the perception of the public is a factor that governments cannot afford to overlook if they are to maintain their legitimacy and social stability. Therefore, the analysis of the media’s role in agenda-setting process helps interpret the position of migrant workers and migrant children in the dominant narrative; supplement the understanding about the embattled and marginalised position taken by migrants in the battle of education (which is discussed in Chapter 6. *Subject Position of Migrant Groups*); and review even challenges governments’ arrangements and policies towards migrants (especially migrant children) under the moral discussion of social inequality.

Finally, Question 3 asked about the outcomes of the implementation of *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* in terms improving access of migrant children to compulsory education. It would be inaccurate to conclude that the implementation of *NTUP* and related educational policies have effectively reduced educational inequality experienced by migrant children in urban China. This is partially because the tremendous level of reforms in various public systems on such a large-scale required too much cooperation and reconciliation of conflicts among a wide range of actors to succeed. More importantly, the proposed reforms and policies have shown no interest in breaking the privatisation of the education system completely. Therefore, the remaining prestige of educational inequality still has space to grow in China. Last but not the least, devolving an idealistic policy goal to local governments without thorough consideration of the capacity of local governments and local schools, unclear distribution of responsibilities, insufficient support and investment, lack of evaluation standards, unaddressed significant disparity in teaching quality and educational resources among schools, have all played their parts in leading to an unsuccessful outcome in terms of reducing educational inequality in this case.

## **10.7 Theoretical Contribution and Limitation**

One of the aims of this thesis is to confront my data with insights from the policy science. However, I want to do more than merely borrow applications from policy theory. I aim to go beyond describing educational inequality-reducing policy. For example, I borrowed *policy community* or *policy monopoly* theory as tools to interpret competition and excluding process, to bring about important insights in behaviours of local officials to close down opportunities for complaint in China (see Chapter 7 *Agenda-setting Process*). In the same chapter, I drew on *discourse analysis* to analyse issue-framing trajectory involved in agenda-setting process, revealing a special role played by the media in shaping public opinion and policy narratives in China. This implies that when researchers study agenda-setting and policy formulation in China, one should not overlook the influence of the media as a powerful social actor even in an authoritarian country, which is applicable not only in education policy field, but also in other areas of policy.

In Chapter 8, I borrowed theories around *policy formulation*, *policy design* and *policy instruments* to present how local government deal with challenges not only from central government’s policy devolvement, but also with the considerable complexity involved in multiscalar governance system, which policy makers and implementers in all fields of public policy may encounter in China. In Chapter 9 (*Policy Implementation*), I borrowed theories of *policy implementation,* *administrative discretion* and *legitimacy* to analyse accommodating strategies of street-level public workers in front of conflicting goals and policy devolvement. Beyond that, I have attempted as much as I can to take a practical stance in my analysis, to analyse implementation process from the perspective of the street-level public workers, who are responsible for interpreting policy into practice in the city. The importance attached to efforts in examining the conditions, constraints, and discretion faced by lower level actors in policy implementation study can help researchers to understand the dilemmas faced by policy implementers, who are expected to deliver expected policy goals under the constraints of practical situation and pressure, which is a universal characteristics to other policy fields. Meanwhile, as Wagenaar (2017: 260) put it, “the key actors in policy field are not only, or even exclusively, politicians or officials but ordinary people and opinion makers”. In other words, merely focusing on cooperation and interaction among different government departments and among different levels in forms of bureaucratic procedure is not sufficient to understand the efforts made in policy implementation for a particular issue. In addition, the researcher must take into account the influence from the reaction and behaviours of ordinary people that are brought to bear on the policy outcomes. No matter whether their reactions/discretion can be legitimated, the meanings that ordinary people (such as teachers, school presidents, local parents, community workers in my case) attach to their decisions and actions (such as reproducing exclusion and marginalisation of migrants), can shed a deep influence on the implementation gap. The analysis conducted to answer the first research question implies a theorisation of conflicting goals in public policy that, when conflicting goals are inherent or inevitable in a policy implementation process, setting realistic goals and disassembling it into phased sub-goals, building strong incentives and clear responsibility assignments into the policy design to counterbalance the overall goal-shifting and responsibility-transferring (Ju and Ji, 2004), as well as providing sufficient support to implementers in implementation process, are all indispensable preconditions to be met in order to diminish the possibility of deviation from policy goals and gaps in implementation between policy expectations and policy outcomes.

Meanwhile, the implications of the policy process in this case for the understanding of multiscalar governance in China is that, unlike what one might imagine in an authoritarian country, under the tight control of a repressive regime, there is still considerable flexibility and plenty of space left for local governments and street-level bureaucrats to formulate, interpret, and implement policies with autonomy and discretion within a top-down administrative system in China. This multiscalar nature of the governance system in China has made exercising autonomy and discretion to sacrifice the potential of policy (for their own interests) possible for local governments and street-level public workers.

In addition, there are three implications for understanding policy implementation in China and beyond. First, to address ingrained and sinuous social problems (such as educational inequality) through policy measures, efforts should be applied to break down the source of the problem, while related reforms and changes are carried out pragmatically with reasonable support provided to the involved actors, instead of focusing on the extensiveness of the reform, and mobilising an overwhelmingly complicated system to give a light dusting to related systems. Second, the ‘problem of many hands’ (Thompson, 1980) is a crucial and common reason for unsatisfactory policy outcomes and unsuccessful policy implementation whether in democratic political systems in Western contexts or in authoritarian contexts like China. Thirdly, when street level public workers are put in the middle of the matrix of competing interests and values, while exercising their discretion in a way that balances legal constraints, larger community values, and preferences of ‘clients’ instead of imposing bureaucratic standard procedures, they become not only the implementers of policies for governments, but also shapers and protectors of the system.

Empirically, my research completes the gap of research into educational inequality in a policy implementation study based in a second-tier city in China. My research pays attention to the need to understand how intervention from both the governmental and private sectors in the policy process interact with each other, and then influence the perceived educational inequality experienced by migrant children in urban China. It also highlights the importance of investigating how different actors’ roles vary throughout the agenda-setting process, policy formulation process, and implementation process. Therefore, my research provides an example of key dynamics of how local governments and street-level public workers move between strict implementation (of policies from the upper level) and discretionary interpretation in local and street level in urban China.

Theoretically, while most migration studies and urban theories have focused on migration and integration process of migrants in mega cities, which are considered classics or archetypal (Veblen 1899; Harvey, 1989a and b; Soja, 1989; Benjamin, 1999), there is little attention given to the situation ‘on the ground’ in second-tier and even third-tier cities. It is important to note that even though cities like Changsha are considered secondary in urban graduation system in urban China, it does not mean that the intervention and practices emerging from the migration and integration process in those cities are of secondary importance (Jayne, 2018). My research addresses the neglect in the literature about urban practices in small cities, supplements the urban theory that relies on urban practices in typical cities (Amin and Graham, 1997; Bell and Jayne, 2009; Robinson, 2006), and challenges the doctrines that considers urban studies in second and third-tier cities to be less significant (Bell and Jayne, 2006, 2009; Jayne et al. 2011; Jayne, 2013).

Meanwhile, while Western scholars tend to consider that urbanization-related research in China is far more different to similar with urban studies in Anglo-American contexts in terms of its political, economic, social, cultural and spatial practices (Pow, 2011; Jayne, 2018), my research challenges the exceptionalist orthodoxies of urban studies, and changes the image of China as an authoritarian country with little space for manoeuvre in the political and policy system. However, how one breaks the political marginalisation and social isolation of migrant workers in the society, creating powerful channels and platforms as a listener to their voices; how one evokes or mobilises migrant groups to become more politically active, empowering them with more political strength and sensitivity; and how one organises them into supportive networks in order to ask for their rights in a more effective way, to settle down in a broader community are issues that are relatively under-researched, which hence remains as challenges and questions for future researchers to answer.

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# **APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX 1. List of laws, policies, and government documents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Role of public workers** | **Basic definition** | **Characteristics** |
| Bureaucrats (bureaucratic models) | Workers who are “responsible for the efficient and politically neutral execution of the public will, as defined by elected officials” | In this model, “actions were undertaken in accordance with principles and rules established by elected and other accountable officials” (Vinzant and Crothers, 1998, p 55), therefore workers as *bureaucrats* do not face questions about their *legitimacy*. |
| Implementers and Policy Makers (public policy models) | Workers as “a part of a seamless, interactive whole”, who use adaptation and discretion in the implementation process | This model is weak in its ability to recognize the inevitability of discretion, and not being able to provide guidance for evaluation of its legitimacy. Hence it is only partially accountable for discretion and *legitimacy* of workers’ decisions and actions |
| The Power Wielder (models based on the concept of *power*) | Workers whose “choice making can be characterized by the use of more or less coercive power or force to achieve some desired end” | This model lacks guidance to evaluate workers’ *legitimacy* and discretion, because the concept of *power* and *coercion* in the centre of this model is in conflict with the context that public workers work in (which is constrained by laws, moral standards, and public values etc) |
| The Professional (models which emphasize *professionalism*) | Workers who “exercise discretion within the norms and values of their profession” | “Professional values are asserted to hold the legitimating principles that ensure democratic control over worker discretion” |
| The Problem Solver (problem-solving models) | Workers who systematically analyse the hidden problem first, in order to develop strategies and solve it, instead of only handling incidents | It is a proactive model “provides no standards by which worker actions can be described or evaluated when they are responding to unanticipated situations” |
| The Political Actor (political models) | Workers who “retain the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in participating with clients in formulating and implementing public policy... [and] consciously embody social equity and other ‘democratic’ and ‘constitutional’ values” | This model is weak in its This model is weak in accountability and fail to provide guidance in terms of *legitimacy* and *responsibility* to evaluate workers’ decisions and actions when it comes to competing values. |

Different Roles and Respective Responsibilities for Public Workers (Author, 2019)

Source: Vinzant and Crothers (1998, pp 54-65)

**APPENDIX 2. List of laws, policies, and government documents**

1953 First Five-Year Plan on Developing National Economy of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国发展国民经济的第一个’五年’计划)

1958 Household Registration Act 1958 (中华人民共和国户口登记条例).

1958 The People’s Republic of China Household Registration Ordinance 1958 (中华人民共和国户口登记条例)

1996 Primary School Management Procedures（小学管理规程）

1998 Suggestions for the Ministry Of Public Security on Solving Several Prominent Problems during the Current Hukou Management (国务院批转公安部关于解决当前户口管理工作中几个突出问题意见的通知))

1998 Temporary Measures for Floating Children or Adolescents in Schooling (流动少年儿童就学暂行办法).

2001 The Decision on the Foundation Education Reform and Development of State Council(国务院关于基础教育改革与发展的决定)

2003 General Office Of The State Council: Notice On The Administration And Service For The Employment Of Migrant Workers In Cities (国务院办公厅关于做好农民进城务工就业管理和服务工作的通知).

2003 Notice of the General Office of the State Council on Improving Employment Management and Service for Farmers Entering Cities (国务院办公厅关于做好农民进城务工就业管理和服务工作的通知).

2003 The Suggestions on Further Work on Education of Migrant Children (关于进一步做好进城务工就业农民子女义务教育工作的意见)

2004 Private Education Promotion Law (中华人民共和国民办教育促进法).

2005 The Notification of the State Council on Deepening the Reform of Rural Compulsory Education Funds Safeguard Mechanism (国务院关于深化农村义务教育经费保障机制改革的通知).

2006 Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国义务教育法).

2006 Several Opinions of the State Council on Solving the Problem Of Agricultural Workers (国务院关于解决农名工问题的若干意见).

2007 Outline of 11th Five-Year Plan on National Education Development (国家教育事业发展“十一五”规划纲要)

2008 Investigation Report on Education Condition of Migration Children (进城务工农民随迁子女教育状况调研报告).

2008 Notice of The General Office of the State Council on Better Caring Current Migrant Workers (国务院办公厅关于切实做好当前农民工工作的通知)

2010 National Medium and Long-Term Plan for Education Reform and Development from 2010-2020(国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要2010-2020年)

2010 Regulation for Commercial House Leasing (商品房屋租赁管理办法).

2012 Hotspot and Countermeasures: Financial Report on 2010-2011 (热点与对策：2010-2011年度财政研究报告)

2012 Tabulation on the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China (Book I, Book II, Book III) (中国2010年人口普查资料，上中下册).

2014 The State Council’s Opinions on Further Improving Services for Migrant Workers (国务院关于进一步做好为农民工服务工作的意见).

2014 Annual Survey of Migrant Workers in 2014 (2014年全国农民工监测调查报告).

2014 New-Type Urbanization Plan from 2014-2020 (国家新型城镇化规划2014-2020年)

2014 The State Council’s Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration system (国务院关于进一步推进户籍制度改革的意见).

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**APPENDIX 3. Interview Topics**

**Topics for governmental officials at city level:**

1. The process of making policy-related decisions under the local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan* was first promulgated and implemented;
2. Experiences/stories when their local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*;
3. Reactions received from non-governmental groups including public/private/migrant schools, migrant workers/local urban residents, real estate developers, scholars and social media when implementing the local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*;
4. Experiences of dealing with local government at county level, public/private/migrant schools, local residents, migrant workers/parents, non-governmental organizations, social media etc;
5. Financial appropriation and support from upper levels government, if relevant;
6. The process of transferring policies and decisions made to street level civil servants.

**Topics for governmental officials at district level:**

1. The process of making policy-related decisions under the local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*;
2. Experiences/stories when was first promulgated and implemented their local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*;
3. Reactions received from non-governmental groups including public/private/migrant schools, migrant workers/local urban residents, real estate developers, scholars, and social media when implementing local *New-Type Urbanisation Plan*;
4. Experiences of dealing with local government in city-level, public/private/migrant schools, local residents, migrant workers, real estate developers, employers of migrant workers, social media etc.
5. The process of transferring policies and decision made to street-level civil servants

**Topics for employers of migrant workers:**

1. Constitution of their company, location;
2. Jobs provided to migrant and local employees and their average salaries;
3. Accommodation provided to employees, if any;
4. Enjoyed social services that were bounded with jobs they provided to their employees;
5. Experience of dealing with governments and migrant workers if they had any.

**Topics for school teachers/presidents in public/private schools:**

1. Student constitution in their class;
2. Enrolment standards set for local urban students and migrant students;
3. Experience/stories when dealing with migrant parents and local urban parents when there were migrant students in their class;
4. Financial appropriation and support from local government in terms of accepting migrant students, if any;
5. Relationship/cooperation with schools with a high concentration of migrant, if any.

**Topics for school teachers/presidents in migrant schools:**

1. Enrolment standards set for students;
2. Student constitution;
3. Experience/stories of dealing with local governments, street level civil servants, migrant parents, local residents and social media, if any;
4. Financial appropriation and support from governments and other non-governmental organizations, if any;
5. History and operation situation of their schools;
6. Sources, qualification, and salaries of teachers in their schools.

**Topics for migrant parents:**

1. Basic information (job, family, salaries etc.);
2. Accommodation situation and living environment;
3. Migration history and *hukou* status;
4. Social services they have enjoyed, social ties, and social activities, if they have participated in any;
5. Education situation of their children and the stories of getting their children into schools if they have succeeded;
6. Experiences of dealing with government officials, street level civil servants, teachers in public/private/migrant schools, social media, non-governmental organizations, if any.

**Topics for local urban parents:**

1. Basic information (job, family, salaries etc.);
2. Education situation of their children and stories of getting their children into schools;
3. Accommodation situation and living environment;
4. Social services they have enjoyed, social ties, and social activities, if any;
5. Experience of dealing with migrant workers/parents, government officials, street-level civil servants, if any.

**Topics for street level civil servants:**

1. Scope of work, responsibilities;
2. Participation in decision-making/policy-making, if any;
3. Experiences/stories of implementing policies from local government;
4. Experiences/stories of dealing with public/private/migrant schools, local urban residents, migrant workers, real estate developers, non-governmental organizations and social media etc., if any.

**APPENDIX 5.**

**The 35 departments listed in the *Notice on the Adjustment of Establishment of the Leading Group for the New Urbanisation Work in Changsha***

1. Municipal Civilization Office.
2. The National Development and Reform Commission (on city level)
3. Municipal Commission of Economy and Information Technology
4. Municipal Education Bureau
5. Municipal Science and Technology Bureau
6. The Municipal Construction Committee
7. Municipal Ministry of Public Security
8. Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau
9. Municipal Finance Bureau
10. Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau
11. Municipal Land and Resource Bureau
12. Municipal Road Transport Bureau
13. Municipal Agricultural Committee
14. Municipal Water Supply Bureau
15. Municipal Forestry Bureau
16. Municipal Bureau of Commerce
17. Municipal Department of Culture
18. Radio, Film, TV, Press and Publication
19. National Health and Family Planning Commission (on city level)
20. Municipal Urban Management Bureau
21. Municipal Planning Bureau
22. Municipal Environmental Protection Agency
23. Municipal Statistics Bureau
24. Municipal Tourism Administration
25. Municipal Food Bureau
26. Municipal State Administration of Work Safety
27. Municipal Food and Drug Administration
28. Municipal Industrial and Commercial Bureau
29. Municipal Quality and Technology Supervision Bureau
30. Municipal Intellectual Property Office
31. Municipal Financial Office
32. Municipal Bureau of Parks and Woods
33. Municipal Office of the Leading Coordination Committee of the Two-Type Social Construction Reform Pilot Area
34. Municipal City Reform Office
35. Municipal Housing Security Bureau

1. I mean scales of government. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is it is an extra fee required for students whose *hukou* are not registered within the same administrative district as the schools to which they apply. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Elite schools help their new branch schools to develop by sending administrative staff and sometimes teachers as well to those branch schools. Meanwhile, branch schools can use the recognisable school name of the original elite schools to attract more student source. Branch schools borrow reputation from elite schools, and elite schools benefit from financial income increased by branch schools. They become a group to achieve bound development, sharing common interests in terms of reputation and finance under this institutional arrangement, which is the reason why they are called education group. In Changsha, there are six main education groups, with each group has one famous elite school leading them. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The first key moment is the global recoil against civil society at the beginning of 21st century, which led to concerns and following investigation on NGOs; the second incident relates to the earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008, in which the party responded to collective action with double-dealing attitudes: contribution in emergency situation from volunteers and civil organisations were encouraged, while backlashing against collective actions that criticised poor quality of school buildings (which indicated corruption of local government officials); the third incident that shaped civil society’s development trajectory was the Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008, in which the state intensified surveillance on the internet and media in order to avoid campaigns about and attention to Tibet issues (Howell 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For example, citizens who criticized the poor quality of school buildings as a factor responsible for the collapse of schools in the Sichuan earthquake (in 2008) have been given trouble by local security insitutions; human rights lawyers and parents who had sought compensation and criticized the involvement of the state in the Sanlu milk powder contamination scandal (in 2008) were given trouble by the governments (Howell 2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. That is, processing and manufacturing industries, and non-material production industries such as transportation, communication, catering, finance, education, and the public service. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. That is, migrants usually move to cities with their families - children, spouse and parents. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘World Factory’ normally means large-scale production and manufacturing for industrial products for the world market. China was first mentioned as a ‘world factory’ in a White Paper issued in 2001 by the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Accessing social welfare, public services, political rights as citizens are what a change of hukou status can bring about. Yet obtaining equal public services (such as educational rights for their children) as urban citizens, change of social status, lifestyle, democratic rights are additional to a change in hukou status, requiring more systematic transformation and policies that are more inclined to their interests to achieve. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. That is, any other industries except agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and agricultural products processing industry and fishery industry. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. That is, those whose lives depend on non-farm productivity/activities, and their dependents. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A purchaser of commercial housing can get subsidies from the local government when he/she purchase certain designated housing. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Housing Fund is a type of social welfare for housing in China, which is partially paid by government agencies, state-owned enterprises, urban collective-owned enterprises, foreign-invested enterprises, urban private owned enterprises, other enterprises and institutions in cities and towns, private non-enterprise units, and social organisations, partially paid by employees themselves, to a special type of bank account. Employees can withdraw it only for purchasing/building/renting housing purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Mortgage loans can be granted with lower interest rates with real property as security. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. It includes rural labourers who have started working in cities (other than their hometown) since 2009 for at least 6 months, and who were born after 1980 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The movement of labour in the agricultural production sector to non-agricultural production sectors. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This normally means grandparents take the role of parents, who should be looking after their own children. The education that should be delivered by parents is delivered by grandparents. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The indemnificatory housing in the table represents the properties given to citizens as indemnification, normally because their original properties were levied by local governments. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. It is the official way to allocate primary students to middle school at random through a microcomputer system to ensure the randomness and fairness of the process. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. When referring to ‘civilised manners’, the teacher means the overall impression including status of appearance (clean or dirty), polite manner, linguistic politeness, and civilised behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. These trusteeship organisations are private organisations, and parents need to pay for their services if they choose to send their children to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘Grade students’ here is not a formal process that has been done in western education system like Finland, which refers to examination of students’ behaviour in various ways including pedagogical examinations, term and year reports, and School Leaving Certificate (Simola, 2014); In my case, this refers to an informal way of evaluating students in common sense, which is often off the record. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Unlike the way usually been used in talk therapy, refers to a situation in which the patient resist therapy process directly or indirectly, or avoid coming close to topics that are most needed to face (Fournier 2018; Guilbeaut 2019); ‘resistance psychology’ here means a contradicting reaction of teachers when they face differences in cultural habits between them and migrants group, and increased workload or difficulties in educating process brought by migrant students and migrant parents. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This is not a term to be used in formal documents or in an official procedure. ‘School resource’ here refers to teachers’ general impression of student groups in terms of their overall learning ability and other qualities such as learning attitude and habits. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Students’ behaviour is graded as Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory, and Inadequate in the system. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The 3rd edition was published in 1923 in Finland, including a collection of report forms stating students’ assessment by term and year. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. It means “this combination of prevention and repression entails the archiving of risky individuals and their selection for ‘early intervention’ ”. (Schinkel 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. According to a study from the Education Policy Institute, students from more affluent families and neighborhoods had better chance to secure school positions in their first choice of secondary school through school appeals system compared with students from poorer families in England (Weale, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. When most local governments estimate the cost for *citizenisation* of migrant workers in China, they overlook the public service economies of scale. The cost for *citizenisation* of migrant workers is not simply equal to the total cost of public services divided by the number of residents with local urban *hukou.*  For example, when providing public goods and public services including public health, basic education, municipal construction in the process of *citizenisation* of migrant workers, there is no need to increase the number of schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure in proportion because above-mentioned fields have strong economies of scale (Lu 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The land used to build the school could have been used as a commercial building or commercial housing, which can provide greater economic benefits than building a campus. This part of the commercial economic value is abandoned because of the construction of the campus. In the government’s report, the opportunity cost of this part of the land is taken into account in the calculation of the cost of citizenization of migrant population. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. It refers to the total transaction amount of the land transfer. The land management authority at all levels of government transfers the *land use right* to the *land user*. The land users pay the full price to use the land according to regulations. Since land belongs to the state in China, the land transfer fee has become the main source of extra-budgetary income for local governments. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. As an official newspaper of the central committee of the Communist Party in China, *The People's Daily* is central to the propaganda system and national journalism, representing the perspectives of the leaders of the CCP and the attitude of mainstream media in China. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Workers and peasants have supreme status according to the ideology claimed by CCP, because these two groups are considered as two pillars of the revolution in communist ideology with Chinese characteristics. They constitute the main class foundation of the revolutionary and socialist construction movement. Meanwhile, at the legal level, the state has established the “Alliance of Workers and Peasants” as the basis of the legitimacy of state power in the Constitution (Huang 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. President Hu Jingtao became the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2002. He proposed “building a harmonious socialist society” in his tenure as the core concept and the strategic task for China. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. It was called “Sun Zhigang Event”. The law enforcement agency of the government had detained a migrant worker, Sun Zhigang, and caused him to be killed in the shelter, which stirred up a hot debate around rights of citizens and the repatriation regulations for migrant workers. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. They emerge from a national education development plan passed on 5th May 2009, which outlined the current education problem and possible resolutions for addressing educational inequality experienced by migrant students. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. By ‘*citizenisation’,* the government means transforming the identity of migrants from ‘rural/migrant status’ to the identity of permanent citizens (Central Government Portal 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Promoting deep integration of informatization and industrialization, benign interaction between industrialization and urbanization, urbanization and agricultural modernization, and promoting urban development and industrial support, employment transfer and population agglomeration (Central Government Portal 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. According to five official financial reports in Changsha Government Public Budget Column, there was 3.621 billion RMB spent on education in Changsha in 2014, 4.088 billion RMB in 2015, 4.199 billion RMB in 2016, 4.733 billion RMB in 2017, 5.771 billion RMB in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Unpublished internal government document, *Major Projects in 2016 (2016年重大项目）*  [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. In some schools, migrant students without local *hukou* are required to pay an extra fee to get enrolled. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Definition of agricultural migration population was explained in detail in Chapter 4. Policy Context on National Level. I mentioned this concept here to emphasize that the providing education service to migrant children is an important part of ‘cost’ in this mechanism in Changsha, because migrant children are included in the agricultural migrant population by definition. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Only 35 departments are specifically listed in the *Notice on the Adjustment of Establishment of the Leading Group for the New Urbanisation Work in Changsha.* See Appendix 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The Basic Endowment Insurance is a social insurance system that is mandatorily established and implemented by the state in accordance with laws and regulations. Under this system, all employers and workers must pay pension insurance premiums. After the workers reach the retirement age set by the state, or withdraw from their job for other reasons, the social insurance agencies pay pensions according to law to guarantee a basic living. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. It is a type of income that is not from government appropriation to public schools. The source of such income can be private enterprises/universities/local governments (near or related to respective schools). For example, some enterprises/universities/local governments cooperate with respective local public primary and secondary schools, to allow the children of employees/teachers/officials in those enterprises/universities/local governments to enrol in the respective primary and secondary schools. The enterprises/universities/local governments pay a certain amount of money as extra income to those schools every year. Examples are the primary/middle school attached to the Central South ; the primary / middle school attached to the National University of Defence Technology and the primary/ middle school attached to the National University of Defense Technology. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. On 21st January 1985, the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People’s Congress made the 10th September of each year as the Teacher’s Day to thank teacher’s contribution. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. According to the Changsha City Special Plan for Eliminating Large Classes of Primary and Secondary Schools (2017-2020), from 2017 onwards, the number of students per class in primary and middle schools in the city will be controlled in primary schools 50 and 55 middle schools respectively. In the future, the number of students per class should not be increased. The policy aimed to eliminate the phenomenon of oversized/large classes in primary and middles schools by 2018, and in high schools by 2019. By 2021, the problem of large classes should be completely eliminated (Sina 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The teacher appointment system is a system in which schools or the education administrative departments to employ teachers with teacher qualification or teaching experience for the corresponding teacher position. This is a kind of employment system that sets the basic personnel relationship between the public institution and the employee in the form of a contract. The traditional employment system of a public institution (like public schools) is that once an employee is assigned to the institution he/she work for, he or she will become an employee of that institution for life. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Teachers in the establishment are official staffs of the institution. Teachers who are not the establishment system are temporary employees or contract workers. As a staff member of in a public institution (such as public school), the teacher enjoys the work treatment same as it is in public institution after entering the job. However, the ‘contract workers’ in teachers generally refer to temporary personnel, usually called substitute teachers. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)