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Teaching under China's Market Economy: Five Case Studies



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FOREWORD

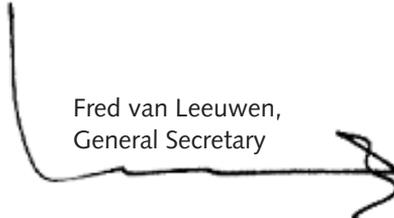
Education International 27th Executive Board, meeting in Brussels on 25–27 October 2006, endorsed a set of recommendations on EI and China, among them to undertake a study on the situation of teachers and education in selected areas of China. The overall intent of these recommendations was for EI, working closely with member organizations, to pursue the improvement of the status of teachers in China and the recognition of their human and trade union rights.

China probably runs the world's largest education system today with the total number of teachers, including higher education, part time and non-formal teachers, employed by the public authorities reaching almost 15 million, which is about 20% of the planet's teaching force.

One of the main challenges facing the Chinese education system is to ensure the availability of quality education in the country's remote, poor and ethnic minority areas. Another challenge concerns the quality of the Chinese teaching force. The country does not train enough teachers, as a result of which many primary school teachers are not qualified. Salaries are low and are often in arrears. The situation with the trade unions in general and with teacher unions in particular remains unsatisfactory, according to ILO standards.

This study has been commissioned with a view to identifying entry points for EI to build on its findings to further explore the conditions of teachers including workloads, pay, security, employment, pre-service and in-service education and training, access to professional development, union issues, and well-being.

We would like to thank the team of researchers led by Dr. Shibao Guo and including Dr. Yan Guo, Dr. Qing Li from the University of Calgary, Dr. Linyuan Guo, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada and Dr. Gulbahar Beckett, University of Cincinnati, US, who were commissioned to undertake the study, for their field work, analysis and recommendations, insightful and instrumental for the way forward.



Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary



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INTRODUCTION

China resisted the pressures of globalisation until 1978, when the late Chinese leader Deng Xiao-ping launched the 'open door' policy which shifted China gradually to a socialist market economy. The first step in Deng's reform was to liberalise the agricultural sector by introducing the household responsibility system to replace the collective commune. Measures were also taken to reform industry partly through encouraging joint ventures with foreign companies, but foreign direct investment did not take place until the mid-1990s when Deng made a trip to south China and proclaimed a bold shift toward the market economy. Since Deng's southern tour, China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalisation, industrialisation, migration, urbanisation, and privatisation – all required by economic globalisation. In particular, following China's joining the WTO in 2001 and the subsequent completion of its market opening pledges in 2006, China has formally entered the age of market economy. Indeed, over the past 30 years, China has experienced "an economic miracle" (Dutta, 2006, p. xii), and a "massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge" (Brandt & Rawski, 2008, p. 1). In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the United States in terms of gross domestic product.

It is not clear, however, whether recent economic changes have brought the same 'miracle' to education in China. It is therefore the purpose of this project to investigate changes in education under China's market economy, focusing on the teaching and living conditions of teachers. Special attention will be paid to labour rights issues and employment conditions. The overall intent of the research project is to contribute to the improvement of the status of teachers in China and the recognition of their human and trade union rights.

Five key questions guide this study:

1. What are the current social, political, and economic contexts within which teaching takes place in China?
2. As China has transformed from a socialist planned economy to a market-oriented system, how has teaching changed?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities for Chinese teachers under China's market economy?
4. What are the working conditions and professional support for teachers, including workloads, pay, job security, employment, pre-service and in-service training, access to professional development, and issues of unionization and professionalism.
5. How can we make teaching in China more equitable and socially just?

The report is organised into five parts. It begins with a review of literature related to globalisation, which provides the theoretical framework for the investigation. Next, it examines pertinent historical, social, and educational contexts within which this investigation takes place. The third focuses on research design and methodology. It then moves on to report findings of the project organised by case study. Finally, it ends with discussion and conclusion.



UNDERSTANDING GLOBALISATION AND CHINA'S MARKET ECONOMY

The genesis of contemporary globalisation can be traced to the early 1970s and the development of sophisticated information technology, economic competition from Japan, demise of the Bretton Woods Agreement, and the oil crisis (Jarvis, 2007). However, the term 'globalisation' is an essentially contested concept that incites controversy (McGrew, 2007; Robertson & White, 2007). It is not surprising then, that there is no agreed-upon definition. Attempts at definition focus on the following dimensions: speed and time, processes and flows, space, and increasing integration and interconnection (Ritzer, 2007). Careful negotiation of these aspects leads Ritzer to a definition of globalisation as "an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world's spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces" (p. 1).

According to Robertson and White (2007), globalisation occurs across four major dimensions: the economic, the social, the political, and the cultural. The globalisation process consists of a global substructure, a technological-economic core, that exercises centralized power over a superstructure represented by the world's nation-states through transnational corporations (Jarvis, 2007). While the substructure is the control of capital, Jarvis argues, the superstructure includes the state, work, culture, education, leisure, etc. The core has the power to advertise its products globally and to generate a huge market for its products. For Jarvis, the powerful core is protected by the political and military might of the United States and through the institutions over which it exercises hegemonic control (e.g., World Bank, IMF). Through political, military and institutional might the substructure exercises power over the superstructure, including the international, national, local and individual.

One of the most contentious issues in the field of globalisation studies pertains to the significance of the nation-state in the era of globalisation (Ritzer, 2007). Bruff (2005) summarises this debate in a 'three waves' analysis. The first wave literature, characterised by a state constraint perspective, maintains that the state is severely restricted in what it can do as a result of unprecedented changes caused by globalisation in the establishment of global markets, prices and production. The second wave, according to Bruff, argues that the change has not been overwhelming, and that the state's capacity to autonomously adapt to new circumstances is still considerable. The first wave is criticised by Bruff as overly structuralist, deterministic and narrowly focused, while the second wave neglects the extra-state factors that have pride of place in the social world. Bruff argues that the third wave represents an important step forward. It seeks to move beyond the empirical focus of the previous two by asking how 'globalisation' is perceived and acted upon across space and time. It problematises not just the impact of globalisation, but the term 'globalisation' itself. It posits that globalisation is deeply political,

contested, contingent and complex. It focuses on how agents interpret and act upon their circumstances. As Ritzer (2007) points out, what matter most from this perspective are those constructions and not globalisation per se. Another important message this perspective conveys is that we should not reify globalisation because it is "not a thing, not an 'it'" (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 64). Robertson and White go on to state that recognising globalisation's conceptual status and understanding the global nature of the interest in the discourse/analysis about/on globalisation are more important than viewing it as an ontological matter. It is this conception of globalisation, as a set of discourses that are consumed and reproduced as they are acted upon by particular actors in particular circumstances, that provides the theoretical framework for this investigation. In the current literature on globalisation, the neglect of the social dimension is 'rather glaring', particularly with regard to questions of social inequality, power and the global-local relationship (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 58). It is evident that globalisation from above favours open markets, free trade, deregulation and privatisation, all of which work for the benefit of wealthy nations and, moreover, the economic elite of these nations. There is evidence suggesting that we are experiencing widening gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in global society, devastating environmental problems, declining civic participation and community, and increasing mistrust and alienation among citizenries (Welch, 2001). Another aspect which deserves our attention is the implications of globalisation for education. As Welch (2001) points out, globalisation is having substantial effects on education, as manifested in the homogenisation, commodification and marketisation of education.

In the context of China, economic growth has fueled and has been fueled by forces of globalisation (Davis & Wang, 2009). As a result, China has experienced unprecedented marketisation, privatisation, corporatisation, and commodification (Mok, 2005). One area in which such changes take place is social policy and welfare developments in general and education reform in particular. Under the market economy, Mok (2005) argues, China introduced fundamental value changes by privatising and marketising social policy and social welfare, shifting China from a universal state welfare model to a market-based model. In this process, the actual financing, delivery and provision of social policy rest with the market. As such, the Chinese government has successfully off-loaded social welfare and social policy responsibilities onto society at large. According to Mok, the recent changes in social policy form a stark contrast with those of the Mao era that upheld the ideal of equality and safeguarded people's basic needs. In this process, efficiency, effectiveness and economy take priority over fairness, justice, and equality.

Education, as one of the most important social policies, is not exempt from the influence of globalisation. Under China's market economy, education is also undergoing processes of marketisation and privatisation in terms of orientation, provision, curriculum, and financing (Chan & Mok, 2001). Chan and Mok identify four features of education under China's market economy: the rise of private or non-government schools, funding from non-state sectors, increasing number of self-paying students,



and market-driven curricula. In this process, education has adopted the fee-paying principle, has reduced state provision, and has been driven by revenue-generating courses and programmes. As such, education has become a commodity and schools are run like businesses. As Chan and Mok argue, the 'user pays' principle and the rise of non-state provision in China suggests a withdrawal of the state from provision and subsidy of public education. As a consequence, "the state abandons the universal and state welfare/social policy model and a selective welfare/social policy model evolves, so that the state now becomes the last resort of social welfare/social policy provision" (Mok, 2005, p. 232).

Another significant change under China's market economy pertains to teachers' employment system. Under the planned economy, student teachers were guaranteed a job after graduation from university under the system of unified placement of all graduates (*tongyi fenpei*, 统一分配), whereby the state is responsible for allocating every graduate (Niu, 2009). With the shift to the market economy, a marketization approach was introduced in the mid-1990s which was fully implemented by 2005, known as the free contract employment system (or *jiaoshi pinren zhi*, 教师聘任制). The new system treats education as a huge market where schools are the employers and teachers are traded based on their education background and teaching experience. The system was meant to create competition under the premise that only the fittest will survive, which places teachers in vulnerable conditions. Some teachers have become precarious workers under the new category of temporary teachers (*daike laoshi*, 代课老师). Furthermore, it has created domestic brain drain and the imbalance of teachers' qualities between the poor areas and the rich areas, particularly the rural areas and urban areas (Niu, 2009).

In addition to privatisation and marketisation, another significant paradigm change is the decentralization of educational policy from a centralized governance model to local governments (Chan & Mok, 2001; Mok, 2005). In 1985, the over-centralisation of educational policy prompted the Chinese government to devolve responsibilities and decision-making power in the administration of schools affairs to local authorities. By 1995, according to Chan and Mok, decentralisation of management and financing was further stressed. More autonomy was granted for all educational institutions to decide matters about student enrollment, issues of academic credentials, and recruitment of staff members. Despite the promise of nine years of free compulsory education for all children between six and 14 years of age which is enshrined in the national education law, it has become a common practice that schools at local levels have charged student fees of different kinds. As such, the nature of Chinese state has changed (Kwong, 2004). Unlike the image of the paternalistic welfare stature providing for every need of its citizens, the different branches and different levels in government are enjoying a degree of autonomy unknown in the past. Kwong also points out that the decentralization created "incoherent and contradictory positions and practices that make governance less effective in implementing national policies" (p. 1087).

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

It is likely that China runs the largest education system in the whole world. In 2009, the country had an enrolment of 103 million elementary students in 322,094 schools, 55 million junior high school students in 57,878 schools, and 46 million senior high school students in 29,787 schools (Ministry of Education, 2010). Meanwhile, there were 29 million students studying in 2,689 universities and colleges. This system is supported by the largest teaching force in the world. The Ministry of Education reports that in 2009 China employed 5.6 million full-time elementary teachers, 3.5 million junior high school teachers, 2.4 million senior high school teachers, and 1.3 million university and college teachers. Such massive numbers suggest that understanding the experience of Chinese teachers can provide one path to understanding the situation of the planet's teaching force as a whole under globalisation.

China's school system consists of *gongban* schools (民办学校) which are supported by public funds and *minban* schools (公办学校) which are run by individuals, communities or enterprises. There are mainly four kinds of *minban* schools in China. As the name implies, *minban* schools are run by people (vs. government). It was common under the old commune system for villages to run their own schools facilities in which teachers were paid by the commune or village in form of grain or other goods rather than by the government in cash and associated benefits. *Minban* teachers are often classified as both teachers and farmers, combining teaching with farming (Murphy, 2004). This is where the term *minban* originated. Although the numbers are decreasing, this kind of *minban* schools still exists in China's rural areas. The second type is the state-owned *minban* school (国有民办) with initial support from state-owned enterprises for school facilities and eventually run privately by entrepreneurs. The state-owned *minban* has characteristics of both public and private schools. Private schools (私立学校) are the third type of *minban* which are primarily for rich families who are able to pay high tuition fees. Often bearing the same label as people-run school, this type is fundamentally different from those emerged early under Communist rule in the 50s and 60s which were set up to fill the personnel needs of communities (Kwong, 1997). As an economic response to the popular demand for education, private schools are often run as businesses. In the age of globalisation, some of these schools have adopted international curricula to help attract students who are interested in studying overseas after high school. The fourth type is often labeled as *minban* school for public good (公益民办) rather than for profit making. The first three kinds of *minban* schools are the outcome of the marketisation and privatisation of China's education system that Mok (2005) speaks of. The fourth kind is built and run entirely with private funds, but is monitored by the local government in terms of the implementation of a state-sanctioned curriculum, qualifications of teachers, and daily operation.

It is well documented that, in the past, teachers in China have had a long-honoured standing and teaching as a profession was held in high esteem. Historically teachers



were listed among the five categories of those most respected by society: the God of Heaven, the God of the Earth, the emperor, parents and teachers (天、地、君、亲、师) (Zhou, 1988). As an educator and teacher, Confucius (孔子, 551 – 479 BCE) was himself venerated as a sage by generations of Chinese people. Yet despite the long and rich heritage of education in China, the formal education of teachers is a relatively modern development that emerged only at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time the national government developed special teacher education schools. Since then a well-developed and hierarchical teacher education system has evolved (Guo, 2005). The most prestigious level of teacher education is provided by teachers' universities and colleges which offer four-year first-degree programmes that prepare students to teach in senior high schools. At the next level are junior teachers' colleges, which provide two- or three-year certificate programmes for junior high school teachers. Below these programmes are secondary teachers' schools, which offer two-year programme for those who wish to teach in elementary school or at the kindergarten level.

A number of documents examine challenges facing teacher education in China (Guo, 1996, 2005; Li, 1999; Paine, 1990). The shortage of qualified teachers has been identified as one of the ongoing challenges, particularly in rural, remote and minority areas. Another challenge pertains to public attitude toward teacher education. Some teacher education students believe that good teaching is innate, and that some teachers would never teach well even though they had received formal teacher training (Guo, 1996; Yochim, 2008). A third challenge relates to the focus of teacher education. Many researchers maintain that current teacher education programmes are narrowly designed, with rigid curriculum, excessive focus on subject training, and insufficient emphasis on teaching methodology and educational practice (Li, 1999; Paine, 1990). Furthermore, the current teacher training courses are theoretical and abstract, and teaching practica are too short to provide adequate preparation for the field (Guo, 1996, 2005). Lecturers focusing on subject teaching methodology (教学法) are often taught by those who could not teach a specialisation subject very well.

However, professional competencies are seen by many as the core of the development of quality teaching (Cochrane-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Zeichner, 2006). Such factors have led to China's teacher education programmes neglecting to educate their student teachers in actual teaching skills, with many teachers arriving in the classroom with little teaching experience (Guo, 2005). This is also reflected in the paucity of time dedicated to reflective and collaborative practices and the social foundations of education. The pre-service teacher is simply seen as an apprentice to the master teacher (Li, 1999). Zhou (2002) has called attention to the outdated system of post-secondary education built on the Soviet model and calls for more internship and new curricula, a call mirrored by Qi et al. (2004), who argue for new models based on initial post-secondary education (three or four years) followed by one year of teacher education. Paine (1990) sees the need for teaching to become less teacher-centered and more interactive. Curriculum and programme changes are not the only solution, however.

The social status of the teaching profession, once so highly thought of and respected, needs to be reclaimed through renewed professionalism (Guo & Pungur 2008; Zhou, 2002). This aspect implies not only pedagogical knowledge and skills, gained through quality initial education and continuous professional development, but also teaching and living conditions, safe work environments, security of employment as well as necessary resources, professional autonomy, and ability to exercise control over the teaching process.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Grounded in the wider conceptual and contextual framework as discussed above, this investigation set out to examine changes in education under China's market economy, focusing particularly on the teaching and living conditions of teachers. A case study approach was adopted because this methodology enables a focus on the particularity and complexity of a single case to understand an activity and its significance (Stake, 1995). Examining a particular case sheds light on something other than the case, that is, the case study was conducted so as to understand the unique conditions, challenges, and experiences of teachers in each case context for the purposes of developing indicators of the wellbeing and status of teachers. This approach was particularly useful to our current research as China is the world's largest in terms of population (1.3 billion) and the third largest in terms of geographic area after Russia and Canada. Its administrative divisions consist of 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities directly under the central government, and 2 special administrative regions. Constrained by time and resources, it is impossible to investigate all 34 administrative divisions. Hence, case study became the ideal option for approaching this study.

We purposefully selected Beijing, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Xisheng¹, and Hunan, representing Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and Central China respectively (see Figure 1). Beijing is the capital city of China and has more than 19 million people. It is important to understand the experience of teachers in the nation's political and cultural centre. Economically, Guangdong is one of the most developed provinces. It is here that Deng Xiaoping started the experiment of the market economy in the 1980s. Zhejiang is a relatively small province in eastern China in terms of both population size and geographic area, but has a strong economy. It was selected to compare with other cases. Xisheng is one of China's five autonomous regions. The high concentration of minority population and their teachers' experience provided a unique perspective. Hunan was selected to represent central China. It is a major rice-producing area in China. It is also the home province of Mao Zedong, a founder of the People's Republic of China. We believe that the five cases are well selected and the data collected provide a glimpse of changes in education and teachers' teaching and living conditions under China's market economy.

¹ Xisheng is pseudonym. The real name of the province is withheld for confidentiality purpose.

Figure 1: Map of China



The study employed literature review, document analysis, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. Literature review and document analysis focused on the social, political, and economic contexts within which recent educational changes have taken place. Since China has undertaken a number of educational reforms related to curriculum and teacher education, it is also important to have a comprehensive review of such changes. The Demographic Information Survey (see Appendix 1) was introduced to collect demographic information about the teachers regarding their age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background. It also provided information about the context of teaching in terms of the type of school, the size of classes, and the grades and subjects taught. Furthermore, it sought to understand teachers' daily activities, workload, and pay. The questionnaire was made available in both English and Chinese, but all participants chose to answer in Chinese. The questionnaire was usually handed out to the participants prior to the interviews. SPSS was used to compile and analyse the questionnaire data.

The in-depth interviews focused on teachers' lived experience of teaching under China's market economy, including their remuneration, teaching and living conditions, political and social status, and access to professional development (see Appendix 2).

In each of the five selected provinces, four to seven case studies of junior and secondary schools were conducted. The selection of schools reflected the diversity of urban and rural, public and private, and Chinese and ethnic minority schools. For each school, two to six teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews. In selecting participants, we aimed to strike a balance among people of different age, gender, ethnicity, education qualifications, years of teaching experience, and grades and subjects taught. All interviews were audio-taped and fully transcribed. Each interview lasted for about 1 hour. All university research ethical guidelines were followed strictly during the interviews. In total, 108 completed questionnaires were received from participants in 29 schools and 103 personal interviews conducted (see Table 1). For reasons of confidentiality and consistency, all schools were coded alphabetically (i.e., School A, B, C...Z). Starting from the 27th school, letters were doubled (i.e., School AA, BB and CC). The coding scheme for participants started with a letter representing the school where they taught which is also consistent with the letter which was assigned to their school, followed by a consequential number (i.e., A001, A002... CC103).

Data from the questionnaires and interviews complemented one another in significant ways in enriching our understanding of the experiences of Chinese teachers. In addition, site visits and class observation helped researchers apprehend the information received from the questionnaires and interviews. Multiple research methods and data sources of documents, questionnaires, interviews, observations and researcher reflections mean that this study adopted a triangulation approach which guaranteed the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Table 1: Data Collection

Research Site	Name of City	Number of Schools	Questionnaires	Interviews
Beijing	Beijing	6	18	18
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	4	15	13
	Wenzhou	2	13	11
Hunan	Changsha	2	6	6
	Ningxiang	2	6	6
	Xiangxi/Jishou	3	6	6
Xisheng	Xishi ²	4	22	22
Guangdong	Shenzhen	4	14	13
	Zhuhai	2	8	8
Total		29	108	103

² Xishi is pseudonym.

REPORT OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of Chinese Teachers

The Demographic Information Survey reveals the general characteristics of teachers who participated in the study. Among 108 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 68.5% were female and 31.5% were male. In this sample the proportion of women teachers is slightly higher than the national average as represented in senior high school (46.87%), junior high school (48.81%), and elementary school (57.11%) (Ministry of Education, 2009). Most participants (62%) were young, between the ages of 26 and 40 (see Figure 2). In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority (89%) were Han Chinese, the dominant group in China accounting for almost 92% of the national population (Zhou, 2003). The proportion of minority teachers (11%) in this sample reflects those at the national level, which is reported to be 6.7% for senior high school, 8.5% for junior high school, and 10.39 for elementary school (Ministry of Education, 2009). Most respondents (82%) were married and a small proportion were single (15%) or divorced (3%). As Figure 3 shows, the majority (80%) held bachelor's degrees and a small group (7%) had graduated from secondary normal schools which offer two-to three-year teacher education programmes for those who wish to teach in elementary school. Of particular interest is the significant number holding master's degrees (13%), a new phenomenon which will be worth paying attention to in the future.

Figure 2: Age

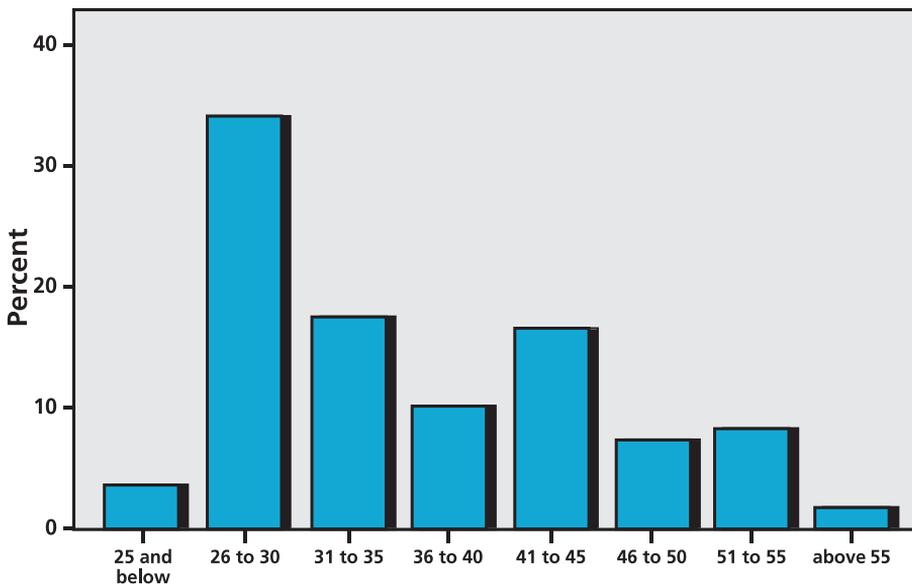
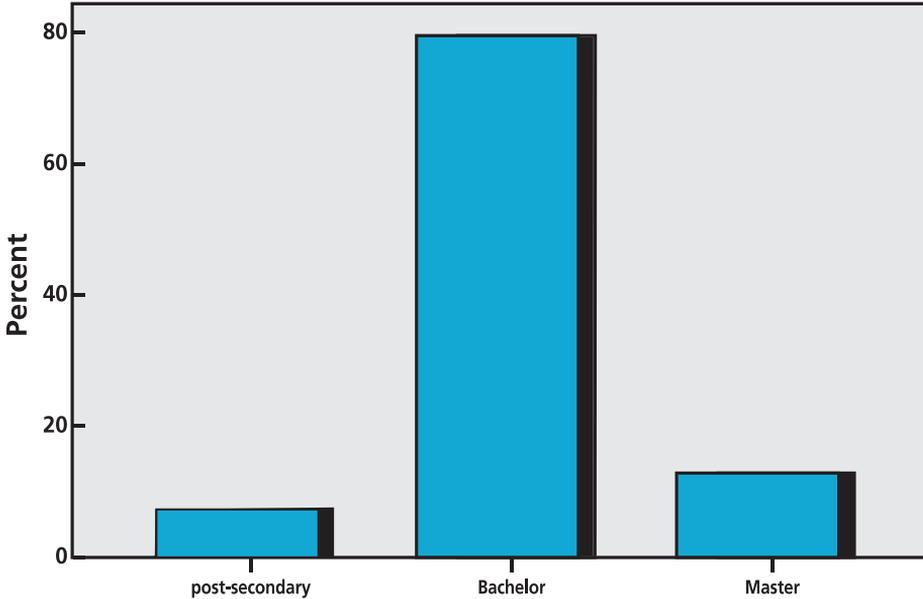


Figure 3: Level of Education

The questionnaire also surveyed respondents about their preparation as teachers and the context within which they taught. An overwhelming majority (96%) indicated that they held teacher certification. At the time of the study, almost all of them (97%) were teaching full-time. When asked about their role in the school, almost half (47%) indicated that they were subject teachers. A similar number (50.9%) reported taking on responsibilities in addition to teaching, such as homeroom teacher (29.6%), head of department (13%), and other administrative roles (8.3%). In terms of the type of school where they taught, almost one third (32.4%) taught in junior high school, more than one quarter (26.9%) taught in senior high school, and another one quarter (25.9%) taught in combined junior and senior high school (see Figure 4). This is exactly the group we targeted. We also included a small number of teachers (7.4%) from elementary school. As to the location of the school, 82% were located in urban areas and almost 18% were rural schools. Given the size of China's rural population, it is obvious that we over-sampled urban schools. With respect to the size of the school, as Figure 5 shows, a small number (16%) had less than 1000 students, almost half (48.1%) had a student population of 1000-2000, and the rest (36%) ranged between 2001 and 4000. Regarding school hours, only a small number operated for less than eight hours (4.6%) or between eight and nine hours (10.2%); the majority however were open for nine to ten hours (71.3%) or more than ten hours (13.9%) including evening classes.



Figure 4: Type of School

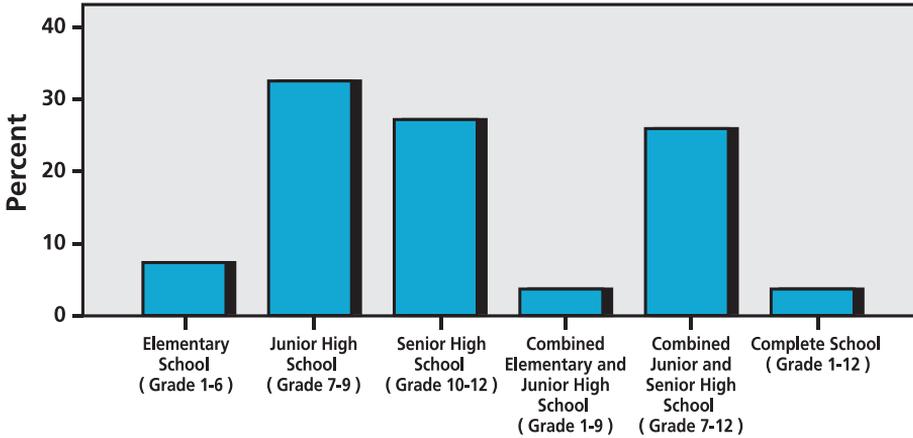
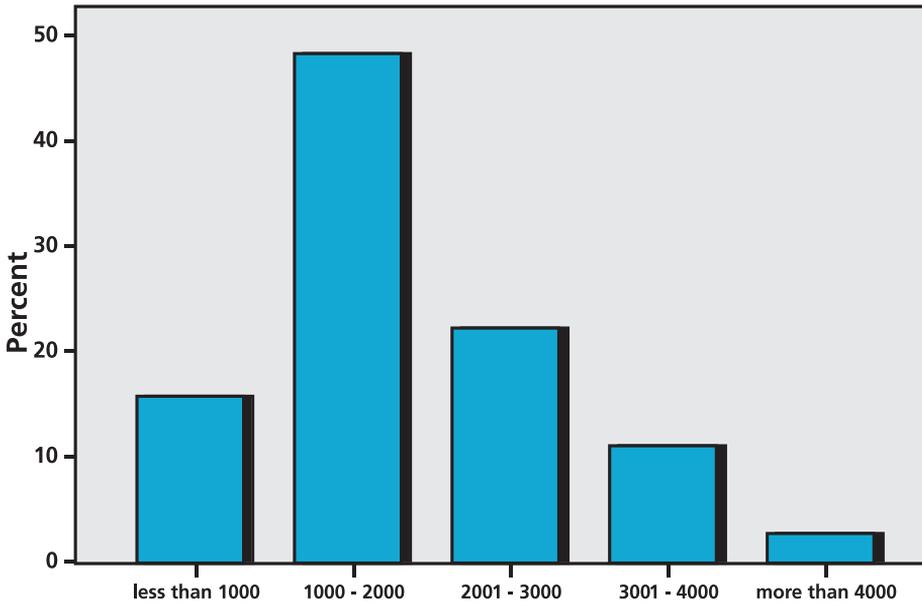


Figure 5: Size of School



This study reached out to teachers of varying experience. While some (14.8%) had taught only 1-5 years, almost half (43.5%) had taught 6-15 years. The remaining 41.7% had taught more than 16 years. There is a balance between new and experienced teachers.

Among the latter, 7.4% indicated that they had more than 30 years of experience. In terms of subject, the majority taught in three main areas – English (49.5%), Chinese (19.6%), and maths (14%); the remaining 17% covered a variety of subjects, including science, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, music, drawing, physical education, and moral education. With respect to number of groups they work with, two seem to be the norm (73.8%), but 21.5% look after more than two classes and, surprisingly, one person teaches more than 11 classes. Usually they meet every day and each teaching period lasts for about 40-45 minutes. If one teaches two groups, it is likely that she or he will take on administrative roles and perform the role of homeroom teachers with heavy pastoral duties. Class size is notoriously large in China. This study reveals that only the lucky few (5.6%) teach 20-29 students per class, a size considered normal in Europe and North America; 29% teach 30-39 students. For the remaining 65%, class size ranges from 40 to 70. Alarmingly some (3.7%) teach classes in excess of 70. When multiplied by the number of classes, the total number of students per teacher reaches more than 60 for 90% of them. It is worth noting that 45% taught more than 100 and a few of them (4.7%) taught more than 200 students (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Years of Teaching Experiences

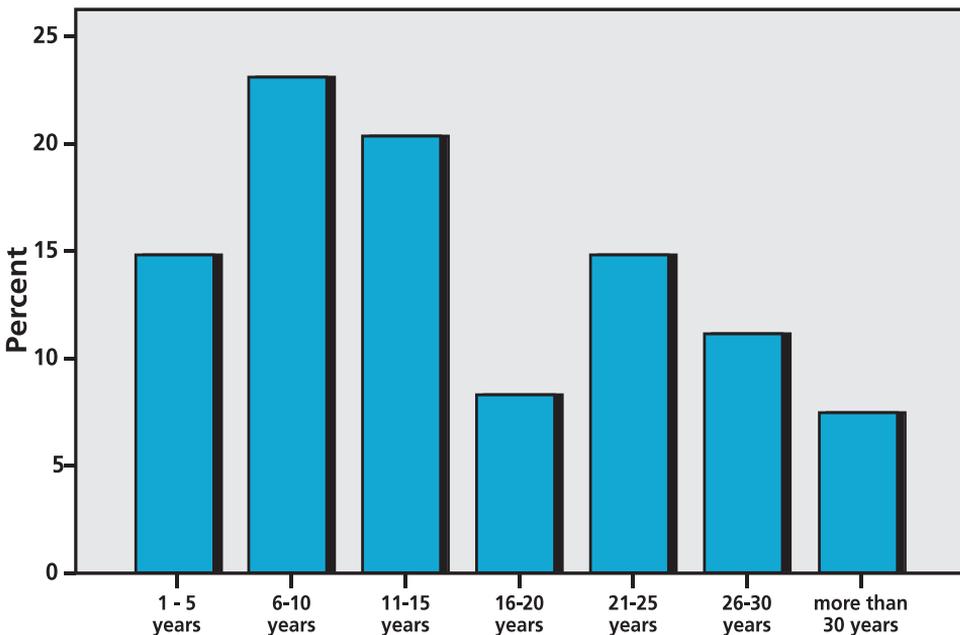
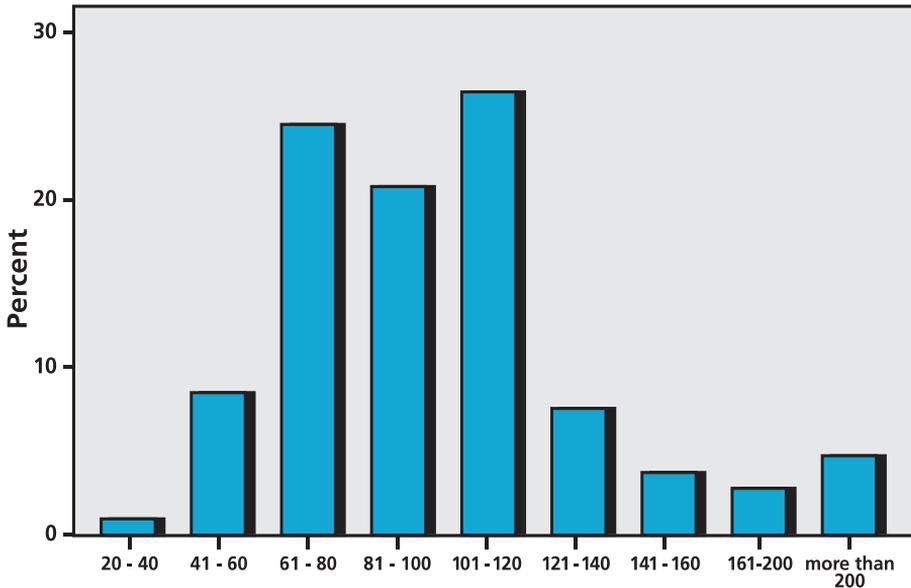


Figure 7: Total Number of Students One Teaches



The questionnaire also sought to understand teachers' workload in terms of the amount of time they spent in an average week on teaching, marking, lesson preparation, professional development, attending meetings, administration, paperwork and record-keeping, and other job-related tasks. The results demonstrate that over half (55.9%) spent more than 10 hours or 15 periods on teaching per week and 10.8% taught more than 30 hours or 45 teaching periods. This seems to be lower than the average 4.2 hours per day for elementary teachers and 3 hours for secondary teachers in OECD countries (OECD, 2010). However, it is important to remember that many Chinese teachers are assigned duties as homeroom teachers with heavy pastoral duties which are explained in the interview data. Furthermore, class size is much larger in China than most OECD countries. Students are assigned much more homework than students in OECD countries, and hence teachers spend more time marking assignment. In addition, as virtuoso teachers, they are expected to spend much more time preparing for lessons so that they can produce an outstanding performance in class (Paine, 1990). While most of them taught during regular school hours, some of them had to teach in the evenings (27.4%) or at weekends (25.5%). When asked about lesson preparation, half (50%) reported spending more than 10 hours per week preparing lessons with some (5.1%) spending more than 30 hours (equivalent to 45 teaching periods) per week. More had to spend evenings (60.8%) or weekends (36.6%) preparing lessons.

teaching and marking. Unfortunately some of them had to take work home to mark in the evenings (38.2%) or at weekends (24.5%).

In terms of professional development (PD), almost half (48.1%) indicate that they do not take part in/receive professional development. For those that do, 14.8% spend less than one hour per week on PD and one quarter (25.9%) spend 1-3 hours. While most PD activities (86.4%) take place during school hours, some take place in the evenings (10.2%) or at weekends (22%). Furthermore, the majority (77.3%) have to spend 1-3 hours per week attending meetings other than PD, or more than five hours per week on administration (46%) or paperwork and record-keeping (34%). In addition, about one quarter (23%) spend more than five hours on other job-related tasks per week. Finally, a number of teachers spent evenings and weekends on job-related tasks (see Table 3).

Table 2: Time Spent on Work-Related Tasks in an Average Week

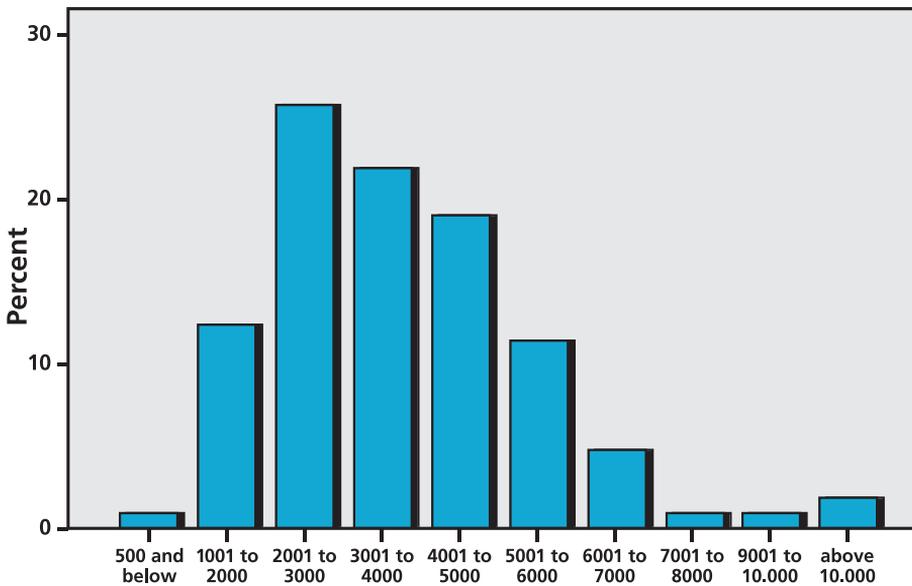
	Less than 5		5-10		11-15		16-20		21-25		26-30		More than 30	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Teaching	2	2	43	42.2	31	30.4	12	11.8	2	2	1	1	11	10.8
Lesson Prep	19	19.4	30	30.6	16	16.3	10	10.2	6	6.1	12	12.2	5	5.1
Marking	19	19.4	50	51	22	22.4	6	6.1	1	1				
Administration	20	54.1	9	24.3	4	10.8	2	5.4	2	5.4				
Paperwork	34	75.6	5	11.1	3	6.7	1	2.2	1	2.2			1	2.2
Total	94	34.1	137	31.84	76	17.32	31	7.14	12	3.34	13	6.6	17	6.03

Table 3: Working in the Evenings and at Weekends

	Evening		Weekend	
	#	%	#	%
Teaching	29	27.4	27	25.5
Lesson Prep	62	60.8	37	36.6
Marking	39	38.2	25	24.5
Professional Development	6	10.2	13	22
Meetings	10	10.1	4	4
Administration	7	17.1	5	12.2
Paperwork	21	42.9	11	22.4
Other job-related tasks	10	25.6	10	25.6

The last question focuses on teachers' monthly income. We provided seven categories for teachers to choose from, ranging from 500 yuan to more than 10,000 yuan. As Figure 8 demonstrates, the largest group (25.7%) earned 2,001-3,000 yuan, followed by 21.9% who made 3,001-4,000 yuan. It is also worth noting that 13.4% still earned less than 2,000 yuan (219 EUR or 309 USD). It seems that teachers' salaries have improved significantly than previously reported. It is not clear, however, whether their quality of life has improved.

Figure 8: Monthly Income



CASE STUDY ONE – BEIJING

■ Context

Beijing (also known as Peking), located on the North China Plain in the north-central part of the country, is the capital of the People's Republic of China. Beijing municipality has a total area of about 16,808 square kilometers and the terrain is roughly 38% flat and 62% mountainous. The city is divided into a city centre, near suburbs, outer suburbs and counties. Consisting of fourteen districts and two counties, Beijing has a population of 19.61 million permanent residents, seven million of whom constitute a “floating” population of migrant workers from across China who have moved to Beijing in the past decade (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Beijing has become the tenth largest city in the world and the second largest in China.

As the near-continuous political and cultural center of China for nearly 800 years, Beijing has a rich and fascinating history. Its long history as an aristocratic, imperial “center of the world”, not to mention its more recent past as a site of revolution, foreign occupation, and civil war, makes it a rich and fascinating environment. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, Beijing was transformed again under post-Mao economic liberalization and modernization as the city cast off its image as an austere Communist capital and became a bustling commercial and tourist center and home to a thriving market economy.

Since its opening up to the outside world in 1978, the economy in Beijing has maintained a remarkably steady and fast growth. In recent years, the city has maintained rapid economic growth despite the impact of the global financial crisis and several natural disasters of national significance. According to the latest statistics (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2011), Beijing's gross domestic product (GDP) reached 1.38 trillion yuan (209 billion USD) in 2010, up 10.2% year on year. Beijing's per capita GDP exceeded 10,000 USD in 2010, surpassing the country's per capita GDP \$7,518 (International Monetary Fund, 2011).

As the nation's capital, Beijing has achieved transformative social development in many areas under its fast growing market economy. Beijing is the nation's largest science and technology research hub, with 7,110 research institutes and over 3,830,000 scientific and technical personnel (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Its municipal socialized medical and health system covers residents in all districts and counties. With the successful hosting of 2008 Olympics, the city's infrastructure and cultural development has also reached a new level.



The transformative social development of Beijing has been driven by its strong economic and political conditions. While Beijing enjoyed rapid economic and social development in past decades, greater social discontent and conflicts have also become increasingly prominent in all sectors, including housing, traffic, education, health care and social security. Population growth and economic development have combined to increase demand for many basic resources and lead to conflicts between development goals and environmental protection. For instance, Beijing's land resources are quite limited in comparison to its population. In the past decade many impoverished rural dwellers have flocked to the country's capital, a movement that has resulted in a construction boom in Beijing, and as competition for resources. Economic disparity between rich and poor Beijing residents is among the greatest in the nation and the world. Pressing social issues include corruption, growing incidence of HIV infection, large-scale underdevelopment, and environmental degradation all relate to rapid economic growth. Jia Qinglin, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), recently called for more research on major economic and social issues so as to promote increased social harmony and stability in Beijing (People's Daily, 2010).

Taken together the above-mentioned factors suggest that Beijing, like many parts of China, has entered a critical stage in its history and faces significant opportunities as well as formidable challenges. The most difficult challenge will be to combine strong market-oriented growth with the maintenance of social stability.

As elsewhere in China, the educational system in Beijing comprises six years of universal elementary education and three years of junior secondary education. In addition, both the government and a number of private groups operate nurseries and kindergartens for younger children to make it easier for their parents to work. In total, there are 3,219 schools and 1,690 nurseries and kindergartens in Beijing with 3.02 million students and 233,181 teachers (Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, 2011). In addition, Beijing has 375,000 school-aged migrant children, among which 228,000 are currently attending public schools. Table 4 shows the most recent statistics regarding school categories, registered students, and staff.

Beijing, like all other educational jurisdictions in China, adopts a dual-track schooling system combining Key Schools (also called Model Schools) and Regular Schools. Key urban schools in Beijing employ teachers with high qualifications, have the best facilities and resources in the city, and admit elite students who have passed the very competitive school entrance exam which establishes a rating of excellent academic performance. Above 99% percent of graduates from these key high schools will continue on to higher education in China or overseas.

Table 4: Education Statistics of Beijing

	Category of School	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers & Staff	Number of Students
Public	Secondary	779	89,203	727,741
	Elementary	1,104	60,038	653,255
	Reformatory	6	344	764
	Special education	21	1,201	7,981
	Nurseries and Kindergarten	1,245	37,227	276,994
Private	Secondary Schools	94	5,016	43,386
	Elementary schools	21	2,295	32,686
	Nurseries and Kindergarten	445	13,566	83,730
	Vocational & training	1,194	24,291	1,191,672

Source: *Beijing Municipal Commission of Education (2011)*

Regular schools make up the largest sector of the public education system in Beijing. Students whose exam results make them ineligible for admission to key senior high schools are normally enrolled in this type of school based on the area of their residency. Because graduates' university acceptance rates in these regular high schools are much lower than those in key high schools, students from the regular schools often seek extra academic preparation to be successful in the National Higher Education Entrance Exam. This prompts their families to enroll them in after-school academic programmes. "Gaokao Buxixuexiao" (高考补习学校), literally means 'school for preparation of university entrance examination' is a type of private training organisation which offers after-school classes with a focus on disciplined preparation for university entrance exam. These schools typically hire those retired teachers most-experienced in preparing students for university entrance exams. They are normally paid much higher salary than those who are currently working in the public school system. These teachers are typically retired from Key schools of the metropolitan areas of Beijing and bring strong educational backgrounds, qualifications, and upper socioeconomic status to the Prep Schools.

■ Review of Education Reform in China

Education throughout China, including Beijing, has gone through several rounds of reform since the early 1980s. Beijing was the first municipality to implement large-scale educational reform following *The Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outline* released by Ministry of Education. After a few years of pilot implementation in 21 elementary schools, all elementary and secondary schools in Beijing began implementing the new national curriculum in September 2005. In March 2011, the Beijing municipal



government released *the Outline of Beijing's Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*, which sets the tone for Beijing's educational reform over the coming decade.

Teachers in Beijing, like teachers in other parts of China, are living through the dramatic nation-wide New Curriculum Reform (NCR). Education change theorist Fullan (1991, 2003, 2006) hold that the status quo is difficult to change if the designated change agents – overwhelmingly teachers - do not perceive themselves as having any stake in the process: 'Educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it's as simple and as complex as that' (Fullan, 1991, p.117).

Guo (2010) investigated rural Chinese teachers' lived experiences in the nation-wide basic education curriculum reform, reporting that the New Curriculum Reform (NCR) in China has had tremendous impact on teachers' work and lives. In a nut shell, teachers in rural areas lack high-quality professional development opportunities and resources. They experience tremendous pressure, ambivalence, constraints, as well as other psychological and pedagogical struggles in the process of new curriculum implementation. To many teachers, the curriculum change meant a new professional development process, including forming new understandings of curriculum, rethinking the purposes of education, and developing new strategies to enhance pedagogical relationships and instructional efficiency.

Teachers in urban areas also face considerable challenges in the massive curriculum change. Since the new curriculum was implemented in all schools, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission has used several strategies to assist teachers in their transition to the new philosophy and pedagogy advocated by the new curriculum. These strategies include:

- Providing professional development workshops and opportunities for teachers to understand the policy, background, rationales, and objectives of the new curriculum.
- Strengthening professional development on the use of new textbooks developed based on the new curriculum standards.
- Providing participatory professional development workshops to teachers and increasing opportunities for teachers to conduct professional conversation and discussion.
- Developing special programmes to support teachers in rural areas, particularly in subjects such as elementary English and science.
- Equipping schools with more advanced educational technology and providing training to teachers.
- Involving teachers in research projects to facilitate their professional development.
- Strengthening teacher educators' capacity in training other teachers on the new curriculum.

This new curriculum puts substantial pressure on teachers to move away from the traditional transmission-oriented curriculum to a student-centered, activity-oriented curriculum that requires a very different educational philosophy and pedagogic skills. Many teachers are likely to be unprepared for this move away from lecture-based instruction.

Although generally successful, the educational challenge presented by the particular needs of Beijing's large migrant population has yet to be addressed by reform efforts. In recent years, Beijing's educators began grappling with how to provide migrant children equal access to quality education. Quality education for migrant children has become a focused issue of educational debate and concern at all levels of government. Despite the fact that significant changes have been proposed for Beijing's education, the new 10-year education plan failed to address the pressing issue of allowing children of migrant families to take the high school entrance and university entrance exams in Beijing. As a result, the current educational system in Beijing remains unfair and inequitable for the children of migrant families.

In sum, the innovations recently imposed on Chinese schools, although appropriate for educating citizens for the 21st Century, are likely pushing Beijing teachers to change their philosophy and practices in a high pressure system while other structural elements of educational institutions have remained unchanged. The purpose of the Beijing case study is to investigate the lives of teachers in Beijing as they respond to these new demands and conditions.

■ Sampling of Research Participants

In order to develop a balanced view from teachers working in different educational, economic, and social environments, 18 teachers from 6 urban and rural schools in Beijing were invited to participate in this study. These 18 participants were from a combination of Beijing's Key urban schools, Regular urban and rural schools, and Exam Prep schools. Seventeen teachers work in public schools and one works in a private school. Thirteen female teachers and 5 male teachers were recruited in this case study in order to reflect the general gender composition of the teaching force in Beijing. Eleven of these teacher participants have Bachelor's degrees and 7 have Master's degrees. One teacher is a PhD candidate in the third year of a doctoral programme. The percentage of teachers with graduate degrees in this study indicated that teachers in Beijing hold a much higher level of teacher qualification than teachers in other regions of China. Teacher participants' ages range from 25-65. All were certified teachers, among them 17 are full-time and one is part-time. Table 5 shows teacher participants' demographic information.

Table 5: Teacher Participants' Information

School	Teacher	Gender	Age	Education Range	Years of	District Teaching	Location	School	Grade	Subjects
A	A 001	Female	36-40	Bachelor	15	Fengtai	Urban	Public	7-9	Music
	A 002	Female	41-45	Bachelor	23	Fengtai	Urban	Public	7-9	Biology
	A003	Male	31-35	Master	3	Fengtai	Urban	Public	7-9	Physics
	A004	Female	31-35	Bachelor	10	Fengtai	Urban	Public	7	Chinese
	A005	Female	36-40	Bachelor	22	Fengtai	Urban	Public	9	Chinese
	A006	Female	41-45	Master	23	Fengtai	Urban	Public	9	English
B	B007	Female	< 25	Master	1	Dongcheng	Urban	Public	10	Chinese
C	C008	Female	36-40	Master, PhD candidate	14	Shunyi	Rural	Public	12	Chinese
D	D009	Male	> 55	Bachelor	46	Haidian	Urban	Private	12	Math
E	E010	Female	41-45	Master	20	Daxing	Urban	Public	7-9	English
F	F011	Male	26-30	Master	2	Xicheng	Urban	Public	8-9	Physics
	F012	Male	31-35	Master	6	Xicheng	Urban	Public	12	Chinese
	F013	Female	41-45	Master	20	Xicheng	Urban	Public	11	English
	F014	Female	36-40	Bachelor	14	Xicheng	Urban	Public	10	English
	F015	Female	26-30	Bachelor	7	Xicheng	Urban	Public	10	English
	F016	Female	31-35	Bachelor	12	Xicheng	Urban	Public	Gifted class	English
	F017	Female	36-40	Bachelor	15	Xicheng	Urban	Public	11	English
	F018	Male	> 55	Bachelor	38	Xicheng	Urban	Private	11	English

■ Teachers' Working Conditions

This study investigated the working conditions of teachers including descriptions of their workload, class size, availability of teaching and learning resources, professional development opportunities, job security, and job satisfaction. Data were collected through a Demographic Information Survey and a one-hour semi-structured interview.

Teaching and Working Hours

A teacher's working time includes all working hours specified in conditions of service as set by government contract. Working hours are calculated to include the statutory hours devoted to actual teaching as well as the statutory hours for teaching related

activities such as administrative responsibilities, lesson preparation, assignments marking, in-service professional development, staff meetings, student support and extra-curricular activities. Therefore, according to Chinese labour law, the standard working time for a teacher is 40 hours per week. In theory, the standard work week runs from Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, but in reality, overtime is the norm and most school districts set their own school hours. The official school working hours vary based on each school district's policy. In general schools start between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning and finish between 4 and 5:30 o'clock in the afternoon. The lunch break is from 45 minutes to 2 hours.

Teachers in this study reported that, although the official working hours for Chinese teachers, similar to employees in other public service sectors, are expected to be 8 hours per day and 5 days a work (40 hours a week), they worked more and sometimes a great deal more than that. Seventy-two percent of teachers in this study reported working more than 40 hours per week (Table 6). Only two teacher participants reported working less than 25 hours a week. One of these low reports was due to the teacher receiving a reduced workload to pursue her doctoral studies. Another teacher reporting low hours is a retired teacher who chose to work 12 hours per week in the private Exam Prep school.

Table 6: Number of Working Hours Per Week

Periods of Per Week	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Less than 25 hours	2	11%
25 – 40 hours	3	17%
More than 40 hours	13	72%

Student-teacher Ratio and Class Size

Class size in Chinese schools is a measure of the average number of students in a teacher's classroom during a school period and represents an important indicator of the working conditions of teachers, as well as the learning conditions of students. All teachers interviewed were of the opinion that smaller class size is desirable because it allows students to receive individual attention from their teachers. Class size also mattered greatly to these teachers in terms of their ability to organise and conduct the student-centered learning activities required by the new national curriculum. Based on the questionnaire, these teachers reported an average class size of 38. In general, the classes at the junior high school level are smaller than those in senior high schools. Eighty-three percent of teachers interviewed teach two groups while 17% work with 6-8 groups.



Education Environment and Resources

All teachers in this study indicated that the school infrastructure, teaching facilities and resources have been greatly improved since they entered the teaching profession. During the interviews, 94% of teacher participants clearly indicated that they were satisfied with schools' facilities and the educational resources available to them. When asked about her observations on the changes in teaching facilities and resources during her 15-year teaching career, teacher participant A001 said:

"There have been dramatic changes in school facilities and environment. I am satisfied with these changes. My music classroom is equipped with computer, overhead projector, piano, key-board piano, percussion instrumental, DVD players, stereo player, music composing and editing software and equipment, and all sorts of wall decorations on music. I have all what I need for music education. Some of them I haven't learned how to use. Students also leave their own musical instruments in the classroom".

Three teacher participants from key urban schools claimed that their schools had the best facilities and resources in Beijing, or in the country. These schools have beautifully landscaped campuses, artistically designed teaching buildings and classrooms, the most advanced educational equipment and information technologies, digital school libraries, and well developed recreational facilities such as in-door gyms, out-door sport fields, tennis courts, swimming pools etc. Some of the facilities are even more advanced than many post-secondary institutions in the country or overseas. They also expressed great satisfaction with the research and teaching resources available in the school libraries.

In-service Professional Development Opportunities

All teacher participants stated that the new curriculum meant higher standards of professionalism and that they needed to continuously enhance their professionalism to make transformative changes in all aspects of their teaching. To achieve the learning objectives prescribed by the new national curriculum, all teachers in Beijing are required to attend a certain number of professional development workshops and seminar sessions to learn about the new curriculum before actually implementing it in classrooms. Teacher participants in this study were offered such opportunities to assist them in their transition to student-centered teaching philosophy and practices. Some of them have also been sponsored by their schools to attend professional development workshops and seminars overseas in order to improve their own educational practices. When asked about professional development opportunities, teacher participant B007 said:

"Our school encourages teachers to learn new things and to participate in various professional learning activities. For instance, school supports teachers to go to Hawaii in United States for professional development every year. During winter and summer vacations, school will organise trips for teachers to visit schools in other cities and countries for professional exchanges. I just came back from South Korea. [Such trips] also helped teachers relax after a year's hard work".

While appreciating professional development opportunities, some teachers also complained about the extra hours they had to put in to participate in such activities. Teacher A002 said:

"I attended weekly training sessions at school and participated in PD sessions organised by school district once every two weeks. We are also required to observe colleagues' teaching regularly and to help each other improve teaching through debriefing sessions. Sometimes we also go to public lessons organised by Beijing municipal educational commission and it was really eye-opening learning experiences. All of these [activities] increased our working hours greatly".

Employment Conditions and Job Security

The teaching profession in China used to be called the "iron rice bowl" (tie fan wan 铁饭碗), a Chinese term for an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits. This heritage of the planned economy has since diminished and in 2001 job security for teachers in Beijing was rescinded. All teacher participants in this study were under employment contracts with schools based on the Labour Contract Law, which covers all employees in China. The law requires that employment contracts must be put in writing within one month of employment commencing, and gives clear recourse to employees whose rights have been violated. It covers areas such as severance pay, probationary periods, lay-offs, non-compete clauses and collective bargaining.

Though teachers do not have tenure status in schools anymore, most of them felt their jobs were very secure. Teacher A005 explained:

"In reality there are only very few teachers who have lost their jobs. Most of those who were terminated found teaching positions in other districts and schools. Some just change from one school to another. Sometimes, schools have to find ways to keep those well qualified teachers as they don't want them to go to private schools. Private schools usually pay higher salary than public schools".

Due to the decline of local student enrollment in some districts, many schools have been consolidated under a strategy adopted by Beijing Municipal Educational



Commission to integrate the city's education resources. Teachers who have experienced the merging process felt more pressure and job insecurity than those who did not have such experiences. Teacher A002 explained:

"After our schools were merged, I felt more pressure because some of the new teachers in my subject have better qualifications and professional training. Maybe someday I will have to find another job. Who knows?!"

The job qualifications required by many schools in Beijing include Beijing hukou (permanent household registration), a Bachelor or higher degree, teacher certification (which can be acquired through passing a test offered by local education authority), and preferred age range (e.g. female under 40, male under 45). Teacher candidates with Beijing hukou are preferred by schools because they will likely have no difficulties finding housing. A teacher candidate without Beijing resident status is normally required to have a Master's degree to get a teaching job in Beijing. Once they get a teaching job, the first challenge they will face is to find affordable housing/accommodation. In fact, Beijing *hukou* excludes many eligible teacher candidates from finding teaching jobs in Beijing. It is also very difficult for teachers from other cities in China to move to and teach in Beijing due to their residency status, gender, and age.

Another factor contributing to teacher job insecurity is felt as competition from the increasing number of graduate students with higher educational qualifications and professional capacities who are entering the teaching force. Some of the teachers interviewed indicated they are afraid that one day they might lose their jobs because new graduates adapt more quickly and easily to the demands of the new curriculum and longer work hours.

Job Satisfaction

A recent research on Chinese high school teachers' job satisfaction (Chen, 2010) in China indicates that a total of 83% of Chinese school teachers regard teaching as one of the best occupations currently available. In terms of demographic characteristics, Chinese female teachers are more satisfied, middle-aged teachers are least satisfied, and younger teachers tend to be more satisfied than all of their counterparts.

The data in this study concurs with the above-indicated research results. As the capital city, Beijing offers more alternate career paths to current and potential teachers. Most teachers interviewed in this study were satisfied with Beijing's greater economic and social resources. Those who taught in key schools with better economic resources and professional advancement opportunities reported they are more satisfied. Some teachers emphasized that their job satisfaction came from the democratic leadership and collaborative organisational culture in the schools. In this study, male teachers were

clearly less satisfied about their profession as they felt much greater financial pressures of supporting a family than did the female teachers.

Sixty percent of teacher participants indicated that they did not feel a great sense of job satisfaction because of the pressures from long working hours, high housing prices in Beijing, inconvenient transportation from work to school, and low salary. Thirty-three percent of teachers who earn more than 5000 yuan a month (approximately 735 USD) showed much higher job satisfaction than the rest of the participants.

Some teachers, however, felt unhappy about their jobs because they felt the teaching profession was devalued by society. Teacher C008 commented:

“ In market economy, money has become the only criteria to judge a person's value and success, especially in a large city like Beijing. Students don't respect teachers any more as they are more likely to earn more, even if they don't go to university. I think teachers are more respected in rural areas”.

In addition to salary, the working environment and school culture were also important factors influencing the levels of teachers' job satisfaction. Teacher participant B007 from a key school emphasized that the 'soft environment' at his school is an important factor in his job satisfaction:

“There is an atmosphere of humanism in my school. Firstly, [this atmosphere] is shown in its landscaping, sanitation and cleanness, and artistic displays of students and teachers' works. Secondly, our school cares about students and teachers. The school has a democratic culture. Teachers feel trusted to do their best at work. ... I heard many other schools have a very strict mechanism to manage and evaluate teachers' work. As far as I know, such kind of mechanism can't help schools achieve their goals and many teachers are very resistant”.

■ Teachers' Living Conditions

Data we collected in this study indicated that teachers' living standards in Beijing had improved greatly during the past decades. However, a large percentage of teacher participants expressed that they were not satisfied with their living conditions because of the tremendous financial pressures they experienced in daily living cost and housing in Beijing. Three key issues dominating teachers' concerns were identified in this study: salaries, housing, and transportation.

Salaries

Since 2010, a performance-based salary system was implemented in all schools in China, including Beijing. According to the new system, teacher's salary consists of basic

wages, seniority pay, performance-based bonus pay and allowances for administrative responsibilities. Basic wage and seniority pay comes from government funding and is based on a combination of years of post-secondary education and years of experiences. The amount of performance-based bonus pay is decided by schools based on teachers' instructional hours, administrative responsibilities, and the evaluation of their work. Basic salary contributes 70% and merit pay 30% to a teacher's salary. Salaries have risen by more than 20 times in the last 20 years, yet remain a major concern for teachers. Table 7 shows the salary range of teacher participants in this study.

Table 7: Information on Salaries of Teacher Participants

Salary Range	Number of Teachers	Percentage	School Type
¥ 2,001-3,000	3	17%	Public
¥ 3,001-4,000	7	39%	Public
¥ 4,001-5,000	2	11%	Public
¥ 5,001-6,000	2	11%	Public
¥ 6,001-7,000	2	11%	Public
¥ 7,001-8,000	1	5.5%	Public
¥ 8,001-9,000	0	0%	Public
¥ 9,00-10,000	0	0%	Public
Above ¥10,000	1	5.5%	Private

This table indicates that 56% of teacher participants earned less than 4,000 yuan (Approximate 600 USD) each month. All teachers working in public schools, regardless of gender, age, or years of teaching experiences, stated that their salaries are not compatible with their education and work and inadequate for them to live a decent life in Beijing. As seen earlier, teachers felt that the decreasing social status of teaching profession corresponds to their low salaries. Only one teacher working in the private University Prep School clearly indicated that he was satisfied with his salary.

During the interviews, most teachers in this study commented that the average increase of their salaries lagged far behind other professions requiring similar educational qualifications and could not keep up with the current inflation in China. Teacher A003 commented on his salary:

"My salary is increased 100 yuan or 200 yuan each year, but food and housing prices rise much faster. The increase of salary can't catch up with the inflation and the soaring real estate. So I feel my income is getting less and less".

A full forty percent of teachers indicated unbearable financial pressure to establish a comfortable standard of living in Beijing. To pay their rents or mortgage as well as the daily living costs, some of them had to take on extra jobs, such as tutoring students in the evenings or weekends, to meet their financial needs. Quite a number of female teachers indicated that they were lucky because their spouses were not teachers and able to earn better income to support the family.

Housing

Before China transformed its socialist economy into a market economy, housing was a fundamental welfare benefit for urban residents, of which the majority is working class. Most cases, the *danwei* (单位 or work unit) as representative of the state (or the collective), including the public-owned enterprises, institutions and government offices, directly took charge of public housing development, distribution and management for its employees. With the transition to the market economy, the socialistic public housing system in China was ended in 1998 through housing marketisation and privatisation. The market-oriented housing system had many negative impacts as housing problems became merely an economic issue for the government. Affordable housing (for mid and low income families) and low-rent housing (for the lowest income group), were not sufficiently developed because they were not attractive to the pro-growth local government. This has prompted serious social and economic problems, particularly in big cities like Beijing.

According to the Beijing Municipal Statistics Bureau (2011), the city's average annual income in 2010 was 58,140 yuan (8,550 USD) and the average housing price is 35,000 yuan (5,150 USD) per square meter. These statistics preface the most common pressure raised by all teachers in the study: the price of housing in Beijing. For many of them, especially young teachers, Beijing is not a capital city of fashion, romance and fantasy, but one of pressure, struggle and poverty. When asked about housing situation in Beijing, Teacher F012 said:

"I have been renting a very small apartment since I started teaching two years ago. The monthly rent is 2000 yuan, however, my monthly salary is only 3000 yuan. I have always felt great financial pressure. Sometimes the pressure comes from the frequent moving from one apartment to another because the terms of lease varies".

Speaking about living conditions in Beijing, teacher F015 said:

"In terms of living conditions, the biggest issue is housing. My income is on the average level in Beijing, but the housing pressure is still unbearable. So you can imagine those whose income is lower. I am not complaining about the government; however, this has become a serious social problem. It has great negative impact on people's lives".



Housing situations are better for teachers who are Beijing locals. They are more likely to have apartment or accommodation in the city and can afford a car for transportation. The financial pressure on Beijing's permanent residents is lower than those who are originally not from Beijing.

Transportation and Commuting

Another major problem factoring into teachers' living conditions is transportation in the city. Twenty years ago there were no private cars in Beijing; today there are 4 million, with an additional 1,000 cars on the roads every day. Traffic congestion in Beijing today is 5 hours on average, which has become a pressing problem caused by rapid economic development and insufficient transportation regulation. A new study reported that Beijing tops 50 major cities in China in commuting times - 52 minutes on average (Beijing Today, 2010). Most teacher participants commented that they found it a struggle to commute to school daily. Teacher F014 said:

"Beijing is too big. Every day I spent three hours on the road to school. I left home at 6 in the morning and most times couldn't find time to have breakfast...[teaching] is very hard work, plus the pay is not good. I didn't continue the contract with the school by the end of this term. I am planning to go to another school... That school is close to where I live".

■ Teachers' Lived Experiences in Curriculum Reform

One objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the New Curriculum Reform on teachers in Beijing through understanding their lived experiences in the change process. Themes that emerged from the interview data indicated similarities and differences between urban and rural teachers' experiences with the massive curriculum reform.

Teachers' Attitudes towards the New Curriculum

Most teacher participants in this study were very enthusiastic about and supportive of the new curriculum as they embraced the shift from teacher/content-centered education to student-centered education. For some teachers, the new curriculum became a catalyst for the development of their professional identities and career interests. Talking about his thoughts towards the new curriculum, Teacher E010 commented:

"Our school started the new curriculum implementation in 2007. I always believed that the goal of Language Arts is to develop students' thinking, but not knowledge memorisation. The new curriculum confirmed my teaching beliefs. This made me very excited and more interested in teaching".

Teacher E010, who relocated to Beijing from another province in China, did not find implementing the new curriculum too challenging as such philosophy and pedagogy was reflected in her educational practices in the past. She said:

“ Personally speaking, I don't think the rationale of the new curriculum comes from nowhere. It is consistent with the education in the past. I have taught for more than 10 years before implementing the new curriculum and it is not likely for me to make dramatic changes in teaching. However, teaching is always contextual and our pedagogy should reflect the local contexts’.

A couple of teachers indicated that curriculum change brought greater professional competition and job insecurity as there were new demands in all aspects of their professional lives, including degree upgrading, new ways of understanding and approaching curriculum, fostering new pedagogical relationships with students, and developing new pedagogic skills and practices. Though they were not resistant to the new curriculum, they admitted that they felt tremendous pressure while living through the change process

Professional Development Opportunities and Resources

Teachers in Beijing received various professional development opportunities from the beginning stage of the curriculum change and most of them had almost 10 years' experience in implementation as of the time they participated in this study. Professional development opportunities and resources reported by teachers in this study included participatory training workshops offered by District School Board and universities, training workshops by curriculum developers, school-based Teaching and Research Activities, and local/national/international study tours. These opportunities and resources were viewed by teacher participants as the medium for the fostering of changes in their attitudes and pedagogy in curriculum implementation.

Some young teachers in this study stated that they were introduced to the new educational philosophy, new curriculum content, and learner-centered pedagogy in their undergraduate and graduate programmes before becoming teachers. Pre-service learning at universities had exposed them to the new curriculum before they entered into the turbulent world of teaching.

Some teachers did not find professional development workshops on the new curriculum very helpful as most were lecture-orientated. A few teachers longed for opportunities to observe how teachers in other countries make connections between curriculum and teaching and what student-centered pedagogy looks like in classrooms in different educational contexts.



Positive Changes in Teachers' Educational Practices

Most teacher participants reported experiencing positive changes during the curriculum change process. Though the level and depth of change differed greatly from one teacher to the next, all teachers reported changes in the following areas

- Development of new understandings of teaching and learning
- New understandings of curriculum and lesson planning
- Forming a different view on pedagogic relationships with students
- Development of more student-centered teaching philosophy and pedagogic skills
- Better integration of information technology into teaching and learning
- Forming attitude of life-long learning and professional growth

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Curriculum Reform

Participants reported facing common challenges in curriculum change. The following themes were identified from the data.

1. Forming new teaching identity

Identity change has been identified as the most difficult challenge for teachers during this dramatic curriculum change (Guo, 2010; Wang, 2006). In China, a society characterised by its strong collective social culture and long history, identity has always been defined as collective rather than individual. Teachers' need to maintain a collective identity cannot be ignored and devalued, as it reflects cultural and social traditions. However, it is equally important to recognise that the emphasis of collective teaching identity comes at the cost of suppressing teachers' individual needs, wants, and desires. This reality causes intolerable contradictions between expectations placed on teachers and their teaching autonomy in the process of curriculum change.

2. Greater professional pressures

A couple of teachers in this study indicated that they felt very insecure about their employment status in schools. Most teacher participants in this study were stressed about lengthy working hours and heavy workload, much of this due to required professional development courses/workshops. Increased job competition in schools and reduced personal time at home caused much greater professional and personal pressures on teachers, especially for those with younger children.

3. Complexities in "unlearning" and learning process

Most teacher participants in this study have had more than 10 years' teaching experience before the curriculum change. They indicated that their capabilities, experiences, and pedagogic wisdom accumulated through prior educational practices are

disconnected with what is advocated by the new curriculum. Many felt that they had to “unlearn” prior knowledge and skills in order to learn new educational philosophies and skills. While dealing with the conflicts between new roles established by the new curriculum and their identities rooted deeply in traditions, they are exploring meaningful ways to maintain their self-esteem in new professional identities and practices. The complexities of the unlearning-relearning process have brought much uncertainty and ambiguity to teachers lives.

4. Extended working hours

Most teacher participants indicated that they need systematic and consistent support to increase their capacity to teach and learn in a new way. However, the current educational system and structure does not fulfill these needs. Teacher F013 commented thus:

“We spent lots of time on meetings and administrative tasks at school. As a ban zhu ren (home classroom teacher), I spend one third of my working time on administrative tasks, such as recess supervision, classroom cleaning etc. I am too busy to have any time and energy in learning new things about the new national curriculum. If these situations don't change, I believe this curriculum reform will not go further. Many teachers have reached the extreme of pressures. I feel really sad whenever I read news about teachers' psychological health. It's not about money; it's about a human' well-being.”

Another teacher commented that

| *“for me teaching is a 24-hour job. I thought about teaching even in my dreams”.*

She explained that such a working style did not spring from her passion for teaching, but, rather, is due to long working hours and unending teaching and administrative demands”.

Such comments indicate that enthusiasm and initiative in change is depressed by a controlling school system and administration. Sadness and desperation about the teaching profession are clear signals that problems should not be neglected in the process of curriculum reform. During interview sessions, it is clear that many teachers were experiencing tremendous pressures from heavy workload, long working hours, examinations, students' safety issues, and the national entrance exam.

5. Exam-based evaluation system as barriers to education change

All teachers indicated that lack of change in exam-based evaluation system was the biggest barrier to a shift toward student-centered teaching and learning. The subject of the impact of exam-based evaluation system on teachers' personal and professional lives was brought up by every teacher participant in this study. Some teachers commented:



"Teacher evaluation is related to school evaluation. Schools are evaluated based on students' grades too. Thus in turn teachers are mainly evaluated based on their students' exam scores. Why should teachers change if they are not evaluated based on their practice? How can change happen if we have to strictly follow bureaucratic requirements? Teachers are under extreme pressures from the top and they surely pass the pressure to their students. This is very obvious". (Teacher A003)

"There is no just evaluation mechanism. This is not only reflected in education, but in other circles of the society. All the decisions in the school are made by the few leaders. This is a terrible thing". (Teacher A006)

"I think the new curriculum is just a document copied from those developed in other countries. If you don't change the national university entrance system, new curriculum implementation is like walking on the old road with new shoes". (Teacher F017)

■ Effectiveness of Teacher's Unions

In many countries, teachers' unions have been active in work to improve teachers' working and living conditions. Teachers were asked about their views on the Teachers' Union (TU). The majority were not aware of the roles and responsibilities of TU. When asked what they know about the Teachers' Union, all teachers mentioned that TU is responsible for organising social events, such as birthday parties, holiday celebrations, sports meets, movies etc. When asked the roles and function of Teachers' union in their schools, teacher participants said:

"The Chair of the Teachers' Union is very nice. He is one of the school leaders. They work very hard and regularly organise some social and sports activities. Sometimes they organise new year's celebration and tours for teachers. ...they could communicate with school leaders if teachers are not satisfied with their salary or working environment, but can't make any decision, or negotiation". (Teacher F011)

"I don't usually ask for support from teacher's union on issues related to my job as they don't take care of such things. I either remain silent or sometimes go directly to school administration for resolution. Teachers' Union is under the school's leadership and follows the schools direction. They don't play a very important role in fighting for teachers' rights and welfare. But I do enjoy participating in the activities they organized". (Teacher A005)

"We teachers have no place where we can take our concerns. I know some of my rights and responsibilities through Teachers' Law. But we are always reminded our responsibilities but rarely informed our rights as teachers (Teacher F012). Teacher union is a very boring [organisation], they just organise some social and sports events". (Teacher C008)

"There is no way to express my thoughts if I am not satisfied with my salary or working environments. We can't be on strike as teachers in other countries". (Teacher F018)

"I don't think teachers' rights are protected, even there is a Teachers' Law. Most teachers work more than 40 hours a week. To improve students' exam scores, they have to teach on weekends and in holidays. Even I don't want to go, I have to. There's no choice". (Teacher D009)



CASE STUDY TWO – ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

Located in Eastern China, Zhejiang Province is among the most economically advanced provinces. According to the 6th National Census of China, there are approximately 54 million people in Zhejiang Province (National Statistics Bureau of China, 2011). Two focus cities were chosen: Hangzhou and Wenzhou. As the capital and also the largest city of Zhejiang, Hangzhou is a core city of the Yangtze River Delta, only 180 kilometers (110 miles) southwest of Shanghai. As of 2010, its administrative division had a registered population of 8.7 million people. Hangzhou's economy has rapidly developed since its opening up in 1992. In 2009, its GDP reached 509.9 billion yuan, ranking it second among all provincial capitals after Guangzhou (Hangzhou Municipal Government Work Report, 2010). In the last eight years, its GDP has tripled, increasing from 156.8 billion yuan in 2001 to 509.9 billion yuan in 2009; its GDP per capita has increased from 3,025 USD to 10,968 USD (Wikipedia, n.d.). Moreover, Hangzhou is famous for its natural beauty and traditional Chinese gardens, particularly those of West Lake. In addition, Hangzhou was chosen because its education system has produced numerous famous writers, scientists and scholars in the last century.

Wenzhou is a prefecture-level city in southeastern Zhejiang. The area under its jurisdiction, which includes two satellite cities and six counties, had a population of 9.1 million as of 2010, with 1.4 million living in the city proper (Zhejiang News, 2011). As a leading player in the economic reform, Wenzhou was the first city in China to set up individual and private enterprises as well as a shareholding cooperative economy in 1978. For that reason, Wenzhou became known as the birthplace of China's private economy. From 1978 through 2009, Wenzhou's GDP increased from 1.32 billion yuan to 252.8 billion yuan. In 2009, the per capita disposable income of its urban residents increased from 422.6 yuan in 1981 to 28,021 yuan in 2009, ranking it third amongst Chinese cities (Wikipedia, n.d.). In 2010, Wenzhou's housing prices are among the highest in China, ranging from ¥30,000 yuan to ¥50,000 yuan per square meter. In 1993, Wenzhou spearheaded marketisation and privatisation of education, permitting *minban* schools to collect tuition, allowing parents to pay school choice fees, and letting *minban* schools hire their own teachers and set up their own standards for teacher salaries (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010). As a result, *minban* schools mushroomed, reaching 1,748 in 2009, with 41,300 (27.3%) students registered. This means one in four students attended a *minban* school (Wenzhou Education Bureau, 2010). This is one major reason why Wenzhou was chosen. It is also an interesting case to compare with Hangzhou.

Table 8: Selection of Hangzhou and Wenzhou Schools

Name	Location	Grade	Year of Est.	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School G	Hangzhou Urban	Senior High (Grade 10-12)	1994	2,028	145	Public	Free
School H	Hangzhou Old downtown	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1904	600	73	Public	Free
School I	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1995	1,020	95	State-owned <i>minban</i>	11,000 yuan per year
School J	Hangzhou Urban	Junior High (Grade 7-9)	1984	1,700	161	Public	Free
School K	Wenzhou Urban	Combined Junior and Senior High (Grade 7-12)	1971	2,800	241	Public	Free (one program charged 60,000 yuan per year)
School L	Wenzhou Suburb	Combined Elementary and Junior High (K-9)	2008	720: elementary; 360: junior high	80	Private <i>minban</i>	7,000 yuan per year

With the permission of the local education authority, we visited four schools in Hangzhou. Founded in 1904, School G is one of the key senior high schools in Zhejiang Province. The school recruited the top 10% of students in terms of academic performance. Almost all its graduates were successfully admitted into university, 60% of whom went to top universities such as Beijing University and Qinghua University. Its students had won the gold medal of the International Olympic Competition in Biology, the gold medal of the International Olympic Competition in Informatics, and the first prize of English speech competition in Zhejiang Province. The school had established international collaborations with Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and the US. School H in Hangzhou is a public junior high school. The school is known for its small English class sizes of about 30 students per class compared to over 50 students in other schools in the city. The school is a sister school with a junior high school in Indiana. This year, four to six English teachers in their district will be selected to be trained in the United States. School I is a state-owned *minban* school. 46 alumni were selected as academicians in China and other countries.



Thus, the school is known as “the cradle of academicians.” In July 2002, School I was officially placed under the jurisdiction of Hangzhou Education Bureau. The school is known for its uniqueness in reading, fostering critical thinking and students’ independence. School J is known for its beautiful environment and was awarded a “green school” designation by the province. The school is known for its small class sizes by Chinese standards, with each class comprising 34 students. Twenty-eight percent of graduates went on to key senior high schools and more than 50% went on to reputable senior high schools. It is one of the top three public junior high schools in Hangzhou.

We visited two schools in Wenzhou with the approval of the local education authority. School K is known for its Sino-Australia High School Course Joint Programme. The programme started in partnership with a college in Australia in 2009. The programme uses Victoria curricula and Chinese teachers teach these curricula in English. The programme admits students from all over the city. Admission is gained through the school’s own admission examination that comes before the city-wide senior high school entrance examinations; based on their written scores in four subjects of Chinese, English, science and mathematics’ and performances of oral interviews of English proficiency tested by both English teachers in the school and ESL teachers in the Australian college. If they pass “school assessed coursework” (SACs) and “school assessed tasks” (SATs), students are awarded a Victorian Certificate of Education which allows admission to some universities in Australia. At the same time, they can also be awarded a Senior High School Certificate in China. School L is a *minban* foreign language school in Wenzhou. The school was established through the investment of an entrepreneur and is jointly managed by the entrepreneur and educational professionals under the jurisdiction of Wenzhou Education Bureau. The entrepreneur hired a principal, who in turn has the right to hire teachers. The employment of teachers and the choice of textbooks are approved by the Bureau. Teachers are offered salaries of 108,000 yuan to 250,000 yuan per year. As a result, the school attracts the best teachers who graduated from prestigious universities such as Shanghai International Studies University, Beijing Normal University, and Fudan University. The school is located in a town popular amongst overseas Chinese in Zhejiang Province. In that town, most young people migrated to countries such as France and Italy to do business and have sent their children back to live with their grandparents. The school recruits students from all over the city, most of whom come from this town. Students stay in residence from Monday to Friday beginning in Grade 1. There are 4 students in each dormitory with a washroom, a closet, an air-conditioner, and a balcony. Two staff members assist in the daily life of students in each class of about 20 students. The salary of these staff salary is about 60,000 yuan per year. The school is known for its high quality English education. Students have 5 classes of English each week beginning in Grade 1, where other schools in the city which begin English instruction in Grade 3. They also have one English class taught by a native-English speaking teacher. Each year students go to a summer camp in either the UK or Australia.

Data for the Zhejiang case study were collected by both quantitative and qualitative methods. In May 2010, we visited four schools in Hangzhou, including one public senior high school, two public junior high schools, and one *minban* junior high school. We conducted 15 questionnaires and 13 interviews. In December 2010, we visited two schools in Wenzhou, including one public senior high school and one *minban* junior high school. We conducted 13 questionnaires and 11 interviews. In total, we collected 28 questionnaires and conducted 24 interviews for the Zhejiang case study. Each interview lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. The focus of the Zhejiang case is mainly on the impact of the market economy on English teachers.

■ Influence of the Market Economy on English Education

Commercialisation of Education

Commercialisation of education in China is a result of the educational reform of the last two decades, which presents as mushrooming private schools at different levels. One type of private school is the *minban* school, which are set up and managed as collaborations between entrepreneurs, businessmen and educational professionals. One principal explained that in Zhejiang there are two types of *minban* schools: private *minban* and state-owned *minban*. Private *minban* schools are invested and managed by individual entrepreneurs whereas state-owned *minban* schools are invested and managed by state-owned enterprises. On the one hand, he was not concerned to provide a return on the investment because his school was a state-owned *minban*. He further explained the local government supported state-owned *minban* schools because the government used these *minban* schools to attract successful corporations to invest in local areas, thus increasing local GDP. On the other hand, this principal was concerned that his school might close down anytime, so he spent much of his time on recruiting excellent students in the city. He said: "I don't get paid if I don't have enough students" (I025). He mentioned that under China's market economy, education has undergone marketisation in terms of student recruitment. This observation is consistent with those of other studies (Chan & Mok, 2001). China requires compulsory/voluntary education of 9 years, which is free to all students. However, each student in School I pays about eleven thousand yuan per year. In 2010, there were about one thousand and twenty students in his school, generating over one million yuan. The administrative level of *minban* schools requires running the institute like a profit generating enterprise. As a result, the principal commented: "In Hangzhou it is a trend that wealthy families send their children to *minban* schools whereas poor families send their children to *gongban* schools. This widens the gap between the rich and the poor. It also leads to increasing disparity in the allocation of educational resources between schools" (I025). This was supported by other participants. One teacher said: "Education equity is yet to be realised in China. For example, in our district the education quality in *gongban* schools is not so good, so some parents send their children to our *minban* school. *Gongban* schools are free, but we charge twelve thousand per year" (I029).



Competition for Student Recruitment

One teacher noted that *minban* schools were able to use high salaries to attract high-quality teachers and recruit good students whereas *gongban* schools were disadvantaged. He called it a “war of student recruitment” between *gongban* and *minban* schools. He stated:

“It is now a war of student recruitment. Every school wants to recruit good students. I have a colleague who is also an educational researcher and his daughter is going to Grade 9 this year. I told him, ‘you can send her to our school for free. If she goes to a minban school, the tuition will be ten or twenty thousand yuan per year.” (H021)

He questioned the assumption that a *minban* school is superior to a public school. He elaborated that *“There is no such thing as the best school. There are only schools that are best for your children”* (H021). He emphasised that it is important for parents to understand their children and choose the programmes and schools that are appropriate to their children.

Importance of English

One of the influences of the market economy that participants noticed is the important role and status of English in China. One teacher said:

“Since the economic reform and China’s opening-up, the whole society, including ordinary people, the government and professionals in English teaching, have regarded English as a very important tool”. (H021)

This teacher recognised the significant role of English in China, which has been well documented in the literature (Feng, 2011; Gil & Adamson, 2011; Jiang, 2003). His view of English as “a very important tool” reflected the assumptions of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, in press; Wee, 2008). Other teachers realized their own responsibilities with respect to the increasing importance of English. Another teacher commented:

“I think nowadays education is becoming more and more global, so is economy. Therefore, English will become more and more important. We as teachers have more responsibilities to motivate students to learn English”. (L037)

On the other hand, the participants questioned the role of English as a gatekeeper. One teacher said:

“English ability is a requirement to apply for graduate schools. You can’t get in if you don’t do well in English exams. I don’t agree with that”. (H021)

He explained that competence in English should not be used to judge a person’s talent and value. This is consistent with a growing resistance among Chinese people:

At present, people who cannot speak English are considered second-class talents; people who cannot write in English are third-class talents; and those who know nothing about English are not talents at all. (*People's Daily Online*, 2003)

As a result, this teacher proposed that English as a prerequisite for admission to graduate schools be removed. He went further to question the hegemony of English in the world (Guo & Beckett, 2007). He stated:

"I also think in another way. When foreigners come to China, why should we speak English to them? Why can't we just speak Chinese to them? I used to walk on the streets in the United States and people didn't speak Chinese to me. Instead, I had to speak English to them". (H021)

This participant raised a critical question about the coercive relationship of power between English language and Chinese language. He asked why English-speaking people assume they can travel in the world and expect others to communicate in English, thus questioning global dominance of English (Phillipson, 2008).

Some Students Speak Better English than Chinese

In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson asserts that 'globally, what we are experiencing is that English is both replacing other languages and displacing them' (1992, p. 27). Phillipson's insights are particularly relevant to China, where the increasing predominance of English works to devalue Chinese languages. Xu Jialu, a well-known Chinese linguist, notices that the learning of English is valued more in China than Mandarin Chinese, mostly because English skills are better appreciated in the job market (Xu, 2007). The higher market value placed on English is leading to the neglect of Chinese languages, and a research report by the General Administration of Press and Publications shows proof of this. According to Xu, mistakes can be found in nearly all the Chinese dictionaries on the market, not to mention other books. He states that nowadays, even most well-educated Chinese cannot write or speak the Chinese language correctly.

A teacher in our study reported that many junior high school students often write inaccurate Chinese characters in their Chinese essays and some students speak better English than Chinese. He explained that parents sent their children to English classes after school hours, took them to 'English corners' (designated areas in parks and city squares where one can go to practice speaking English), paid their trips to participate in English speech contests, or employed tutors to help them with English, but not with Chinese (K034).

To address this concern, Xu calls for the general public's attention to Chinese language learning because the Chinese language and characters are the hallmarks of the Chinese people, which we support.



Influence of American Popular Culture

The global dominance of the English language has been exploited as a tool of colonisation (Pennycook, 1998) and neocolonialism. The central premise of linguistic imperialism is that the spread of English represents a culturally imperialistic project, which necessarily imparts English language culture to its second or foreign language learners (Melchers & Shaw, 2003). Currently, most English textbooks and readings in China, from junior high school to senior high school, either originate in the Anglo countries or represent Anglocentric culture in the name of authenticity. As a result, many Chinese students know more about the Anglo culture than Chinese culture. For example, a teacher said:

"I let my students in Grade 7 watch The Simpsons, which I have downloaded from the Internet. I use that to replace a reading period in the library because they rarely read English books in the library, so it is a waste of time. I think it is better for them to watch The Simpsons in the classroom. Secondly, our reading lesson only has 40 minutes, and one episode in Simpson is 20 minutes, so the length is good." (L041)

The teacher chose *The Simpsons* for the convenience. Both the teacher and her students uncritically accepted American popular culture. In our conversations, we found that the students were familiar with American celebrities such as Tiger Woods, Shirley Temple, and American living styles from their textbook *Go for it!*, compiled by the People's Education Press and Thompson Learning. Some young Chinese students seem to internalize the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture and the inferiority of their own culture (Orton, 2009; Xu, 2004). We observed students who happily chanted Christmas carols in English surrounded by beautiful Christmas decorations, but did not know anything about the history of the Silk Road when asked. Some students proudly told us they preferred MacDonal'd hamburgers and KFC chicken to Chinese food and their parents often rewarded them with these Western meals if they did well in their exams. The idealized West in authentic English reading materials needs to be challenged. There is a need to develop English reading materials that reflect Chinese culture. It is therefore important to produce localized curricula.

Education Inequity

Many participants identified tremendous inequities in the current education system. Most students in China progress from elementary to junior to senior high schools contained within their areas of residence. However, rich students' parents are able to pay for admission and costs of better senior high schools outside these areas. Usually these schools charge a fee called school choice fee (择校费). A teacher commented:

"School choice fee reflects education inequity. Rich people can send their children to good schools whereas children from poor families can only stay in poor rural schools. That's inequity. School choice is not based on students' merit but on money". (K032)

In addition to school choice, participants commented on the unequal allocation of education resources. Another teacher stated:

"I think it is impossible to achieve education equity because there is an unequal allocation of education resources, such as teachers and school facilities. There is a huge disparity between rural and urban areas. There is also a disparity among different schools. It is impossible to achieve absolute equity. We can only achieve relative equity". (K035)

This teacher continued to say that some key middle and secondary schools in urban cities have better resources and the most qualified teachers, with bachelors' or masters' degrees with English majors. These schools can afford to invite English-native speakers as their teachers. For example, the principal in School G in Hangzhou proudly introduced: *"We have 20 English teachers, including two foreign teachers, for 36 classes in total. It's about one English teacher for two classes."*

In some rural areas, many schools could afford one English teacher. One teacher stated:

"Some villages employ a 'travelling teacher' (走教老师). That means one English teacher is employed by a school in a village, but she is responsible to teach different English classes in several villages because there are not enough English teachers in rural areas." (L039)

Another reason for increased the rural and urban disparity was the transfer of qualified English teachers from rural to urban schools. For example, a teacher taught high school English in a small county in Zhejiang Province for twenty-two years. Originally she obtained a college diploma in English, then after teaching for twelve-year, she obtained a bachelor's degree in English from Zhejiang Normal University. She was promoted from level 3 to level 2, then to level 1 and later to "high level"(高级), the highest level in senior high schools³. She was considered one of the best English teachers in the county. In 2002 when she saw a nationwide recruitment notice for high level English teachers in Wenzhou City, she applied for the position and was hired right away. She needed to transfer her household registration system from her former county to Wenzhou in order to enjoy benefits. Her former county refused to transfer her household registration because there were few high level English teachers there. Her case attracted the attention of the County Party Secretary, the highest level of administration in the local area. The Party Secretary gave orders not to transfer her household registration. He also had a heated argument with the Director of the Education Bureau in Wenzhou City on the phone. The teacher went ahead to teach in Wenzhou anyway. The teacher's household

³ There are five levels of teachers, level 3 (三级教师), level 2 (二级教师), level 1 (一级教师), high level (高级教师), and master teacher (特级教师). See page 70 for more details. The English translation for "master teacher" is not consistent. Some other English terms are "superfine teacher", "advanced teacher", "head teacher", etc.



registration was not transferred to Wenzhou until two years later when the Party Secretary moved to another county. The teacher said that there were two reasons why she moved to Wenzhou:

"My mother, who comes from Wenzhou, wants to return to Wenzhou after her retirement. If I move to Wenzhou, she can go to live with me. Another reason is the high salary. I used to earn about two thousand yuan a month. Now I can earn four thousand five hundred yuan a month". (K032)

The teacher continued to say that there were fourteen other teachers who were recruited at the same time as her. Most of these teachers came from rural areas in Inner Mongolia, Jiangsu Province, Hubei Province, etc. All were high level teachers. As one of the most economically advanced cities, Wenzhou, with double the salary standard, attracted many talented English teachers from the rural areas in different parts of the country. This disadvantaged rural schools. In sum, the market economy has widened disparities between rural and urban schools.

■ Impact of the Market Economy on English Teachers

Workload and Working Conditions

The participants reported they were always under huge work pressure. A teacher reported that everyday from Monday to Friday she was at school at 7:30 am until 5:30 pm. This was how she described a typical day:

"Usually we start at 7:30 am. We have a morning self-study period at 7:40 am when I lead an English reading lesson sometimes or they read aloud by themselves. After that, I teach for two class periods. Then I mark students' homework and prepare for lessons. At noon, I provide feedback on homework to some students and help them correct their homework. If all is done, I will spend the afternoon marking homework or preparing for lessons. I have to mark 60 pieces of homework. When I'm at school, all I do is work and I don't have much time taking a rest". (H022)

At noon, usually both teachers and students take a nap on their desk. Many teachers in our study used their nap time to help those students who fell behind. The teacher explained that when she found some students who did poorly in their homework, she spent her nap time providing tutorial to those students and made sure they correct their homework. All the teachers in the study, both *gongban* and *minban* teachers, did the same thing. Another teacher said: "If I find serious problems with some homework, I go to the classrooms at noon to look for the students. There are some empty desks and chairs near the classroom door where I help them correct their homework.

I do not have time for a nap" (H023). On the one hand, noon tutorial added to teachers' workload. On the other hand, it demonstrated the teachers' dedication and commitment to their work. This was not part of required teaching duties, but all the teachers in the study did it voluntarily to offer extra support to their students. Another teacher spoke passionately: "Teaching is a noble call. We never give up one single student from Grade 7 to Grade 9. We try to help every student improve" (I029). In addition, another teacher reported that she usually spends one hour in the evening preparing for lessons, and one hour or two hours on the weekend doing tasks that she did not have time to do during the weekend days, such as creating an English test for all the Grade 9 students in her school (H022). Furthermore, she spends one hour and a half every day on her homeroom responsibilities, which include moral education, monitoring student behaviour, and providing counselling to students if needed (H022). Monitoring student behaviour included supervising the morning self-study period, recess, lunch time, and classroom cleaning such as sweeping the classroom floor, wiping the windows, dusting the desks and erasing the blackboard. Furthermore, as part of responsibilities of a homeroom teacher, she visits all her students' families, in her case, 30 families, before the start of the school year. As a result, many teachers reported they often felt tired. Some teachers needed to work on the weekend. Another teacher said:

"I have to teach two classes on Sunday. I often feel tired and just sleep on Saturday. In other schools, teachers in Grade 12 teach on the weekend, but in our school, teachers in Grade 10 and Grade 11 teach on Sunday. I feel a bit unjust in this respect". (K033)

The teacher continued to say that as a result, he had little time for his family. When his child wanted to play with him, he was often exhausted. He spent most of his time teaching his students, but did not have time to help his own child with his study.

In all the six schools we visited, we noticed that each classroom is equipped with a multimedia projector. All the English teachers are able to use the projectors to show their powerpoint slides or movies. They also use the multimedia projectors to show students' exam papers along with the teachers' corrections. They have access to the Internet in their classrooms or in their offices. Most of the teachers in our study are provided with a desktop or laptop computer in their offices. They share an office with six to ten people. Each teacher has his/her own desk and sometimes they have two desks facing to each other. Most of the desks are piled with students' assignments or textbooks. There are also resource books, old English novels and reading materials.

Living Conditions

In Wenzhou, housing is very expensive, even more than in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Many teachers in our study could not afford housing, so they rented small apartments. A teacher reported:



"It is very difficult for teachers to live a decent life with regular salary in Wenzhou because of the market economy. Wenzhou's housing price is thirty thousand yuan per square meter. If I want to buy an apartment of one hundred square meters, which is not very big, including two bedrooms, one kitchen, and one sitting room, it will cost me over three million yuan. In other words, if I save every penny of my salary, it will take me almost thirty years to buy such an apartment". (K034)

This teacher feels ashamed that at age of thirty-five, he had to ask his parents for help with the down-payment. Some *minban* teachers live in apartments provided by their schools. For example, another participant, a high level teacher reported:

"My wife and I are living in the school. The school gives us two separate rooms. The rooms are designed for students, so there is no kitchen. The washroom is big, so we cook in the washroom". (L042)

Other participants' living conditions are even worse. One teacher rents an apartment of less than 40 square meters in Hangzhou. She shares a bathroom and kitchen with six other families on the same floor. She pays 1,700 yuan of her 4,000 yuan salary in rent (I029). Another teacher, on the other hand, is lucky to own her own apartment in Hangzhou, but her apartment is very small:

"I have three people in my family. We live in an apartment of about 60 square meters. We have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and one bathroom. Each room is small". (I028)

Compared to teachers in advanced market societies, teachers in both Hangzhou and Wenzhou live in poor conditions.

Teachers' Salaries

When asked about the impact of market economy on teachers, a teacher responded that one of the impacts is that her salary has been increased:

"Since 2010, my salary has been increased from 2,000 yuan to about 3,000 yuan per month. It is enough for my ordinary living". (H022)

Teachers' salary varies according to number of years of teaching experience and promotion. Another teacher, who has been teaching for more than 30 years and is a high level teacher, said:

"My salary is 4,500 yuan per month. I don't feel I have a lot of money, but generally speaking, I feel pretty good. It is enough, but it is not enough to buy a house in Wenzhou". (K032)

Teachers' salaries are also influenced by educational background. For example, a teacher, who obtained a master's degree from the UK, said:

"My salary is about 7,000 yuan per month. The housing price in Wenzhou is so high that I cannot buy a house. My parents bought me a house a long time ago". (K033)

Since *minban* schools can set their own standards for teachers' salaries, some in Wenzhou pay high salaries to attract the best teachers. For example, a teacher in School L, graduated from Shanghai International Studies University (considered the second best university in foreign language studies after Beijing International Studies University) reported a salary of about 9,000 yuan per month, partially due to her holding a master's degree from a famous university (L041). In the same school, another teacher said:

"My salary is 15,000 yuan per month plus a few thousand yuan at the end of each semester and a bonus at the end of the year. In China salary like this is at a middle-upper level. I feel pretty good about it". (L042)

This teacher continued to say that because he is a "master teacher" (特级教师) at the national level and a vice-dean of the Teaching and Research Department in an Education Bureau in one of the counties in Zhejiang, he was hired by School F to lead professional development for all the teachers in his school. For most teachers, despite the increase of salaries, the quality of life has worsened because of the high price of housing and living.

Welfare

Generally speaking, China's educational system consists of *gongban* schools and *minban* schools. *Gongban* schools are financially supported by government budgets and administrated by educational authorities. *Minban* schools are set up and managed as collaborations between entrepreneurs, businessmen and educational professionals. Teachers in *gongban* schools enjoy various types of welfare benefits, including pension, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, work injury insurance, maternity insurance, and "housing accumulation funds." Zong & McKee (n.d.) explain the housing accumulation fund:

"The housing accumulation fund refers to long-term housing funds deposited by the entities and their employees, owned by the employee herself. It is exclusively for purchase or building houses, rebuilding or overhauling houses for self-dwelling and shall not be misappropriated for any other purposes".

Employers and employees are required to contribute the following amounts respectively based on the employee's basic salary:

Table 9: Employee Entitlements

	Employers	Employees
Pension	20%	8%
Medical Insurance	10%	basic salary multiplied by 2% +3 yuan
Unemployment Insurance	1.5%	0.5%
Work Injury Insurance	0.5%	0.5%
Maternity Insurance	0.8%	0.8%
Housing Accumulation Fund	12%	12%

On the other hand, there is a lack of guaranteed insurance for *minban* teachers. A teacher explained that she used to enjoy all the welfare benefits as a *gongban* teacher in her former school in her hometown. But she has lost these benefits as a *minban* teacher since moving to a privately-run migrant school in Hangzhou:

"I have to pay for pension, housing accumulation fund and other insurances. My former school wouldn't pay for that. I have to pay the full amounts by myself. So I have to spend about one thousand yuan on this every month". (I029)

In addition, this teacher reported that it is difficult for a *minban* teacher like her to achieve *gongban* status in Hangzhou. She explained that policy in Hangzhou requires people to take teacher certification exams in order to become *gongban* teachers, despite the fact that they have teacher certificates from elsewhere. Before she could take the exams, she needed a quota first. Her current school did not have any quota because it was a *minban* school. She said her opportunity to take the exams was denied, not to mention to transfer into *gongban* status. It was a typical catch-22 situation.

Another *minban* teacher reported that there was no maternity leave in her school:

"No matter you get married or give birth, you plan well to do it during the holidays. For example, I gave birth in the summer and I rested for about two months. I went back to teach right after the summer holiday". (I026)

Job Security

Compared to *gongban* teachers, English teachers in *minban* schools have a strong sense of job insecurity, exemplified in the following comment by a teacher:

"We don't know how long our school will survive. The policy often changes and our school might be closing soon. We don't have any benefits. When the school closes down, perhaps we would receive a pension for a few years or some lump-sum compensation. The teachers are thinking 'should I keep teaching here or should I get another job somewhere else?' They certainly have a strong sense of insecurity". (I026)

Similarly, another teacher did not have *gongban* status. Upon graduating from Guangzhou Normal University as an English major and passing the Test for English Majors 8 (TEM-8), she was hired by the school right after her graduation. She said there were two types of teachers in her school: *gongban* status and *minban* status. She said:

"I am under great pressure since I don't have gongban status. Gongban status means job security. If this school closes down, teachers with gongban status will probably be transferred to other schools, but I have to find another job by myself". (I027)

This teacher was concerned with the possibility of becoming unemployed. This concern was always in the back of her mind.

Pressure

• Pressure of Exams

Most participants in the study reported that they feel extreme pressure from administrator and parents. One factor behind this pressure is the need to prepare students for exams. A teacher reported: "Scores become the focus. Teachers begin to prepare students for exams, rather than fostering their communication skills. Students in Grade 7 start to do exercises to prepare for the exams in Grade 9" (I026). The exams at the end of Grade 9, known as *zhongkao* (中考), determine whether a student can go to a key senior high school, which in turn determines whether a student can go to a university. Another teacher called *zhongkao* "a traffic wand" (指挥棒). She said:

"I would like to teach English in my own way, but I can't because my teaching is evaluated by zhongkao, a traffic wand. I hope I could teach less grammar in class, creating a comfortable environment in the class, so my students would be more interested in learning English. If I focus on conversations, they cannot pass the exams; if I teach them grammar, you might pass the exams. I feel that my teaching is constrained". (I027)

Similarly, teachers in senior high schools start to prepare their students for university entrance exams in Grade 10, as illustrated in the following comments:



"In Grade 10, we gave students many exercises to do in order to prepare them for the exams at the end of Grade 12. If they don't practice from Grade 10, they won't have enough time to do that in Grade 12. They need to practice how to write exams". (K035)

Another teacher explained the number of students who are admitted by Qinghua University or Beijing University is used by upper level governments as important indicators to assess the administrative performance of local officials. This driving force for competing for positions in the top universities in the country penetrates junior high schools. She stated:

"There is an annual task on how many students must go to Qinghua University and Beijing University. If you fail to accomplish the task, then everyone is criticized, from the major responsible for education, to the director of the education bureau, to principals, to teachers, and to students. That's how the pressure passes to us". (I026)

This teacher questioned common sense attitudes toward the central role of exams in both teachers' and students' experiences. The impact of the tests on the secondary education system, as Cheng and Qi (2006) maintain, is underscored by the fact that the "mean scores of students are employed widely to evaluate teaching, schools, and even education departments on various levels" (p. 63). The teacher argued that a systemic change is needed:

"I think the whole society and the education system need to change" (I026).

Parental pressure is another factor. The teacher said all her students' parents pushed them to get into key senior high schools, the top three key schools in order to get into university, whether they were capable or not. She continued:

"Some parents think their children are here (at her school) for the top three key secondary schools. If their children end up in vocational schools, it would be unacceptable to them... The parents, the whole society, all care so much about a person's position in the society. It's all about status, and that causes the problem". (I026)

The teacher attributed parental pressure for their children to go to university to the knowledge economy, the employment market as a whole, and the norm of using educational qualifications to judge the value of people. She said, "for example, if you go to the job market, the employers want to know what degree you have and from which university you graduate. That's cause for what's happening now" (I026). She explained that "this kind of direct and indirect pressure is placed on the teachers. If you don't teach well, you let the students and their parents down" (I026).

Pressure of Standardizing English Teaching Methods

More pressure still comes from teaching evaluations. All the participants in our study reported that their administrators and education experts use the same criteria to evaluate their English teaching. Communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) were recommended to English teachers in the new English Curriculum Standards (ECS) by the Chinese Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2003). Unlike traditional teaching methods that focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary, these teaching approaches stress process-oriented, experiential and cooperative language learning to build students' communicative competence, particularly their oral skills. Cheng (2011) maintains that "in China officially 'recommended' things are often interpreted as 'mandatory'." All the schools we visited used CLT and TBLT to evaluate English teachers. The participants expressed their dissatisfaction towards this evaluation method, exemplified in the following comment by a teacher:

"We have to implement task-based learning. Actually the new teaching method is effective, but it should not be used to evaluate every single lesson. It can be useful for some lessons, not for others. However, when some experts or administrators came to observe my teaching, they used these methods to evaluate my teaching". (I026)

The teachers reported that they are willing to try CLT and TBLT in their teaching, but are concerned with the one size fits all approach. Another teacher stated:

"No single teaching method would work for all the students. Different methods should be integrated. No matter how excellent task-based learning is, there is no one size fits all". (h024)

He continued to articulate how in his own teaching, he added Chinese characteristics to the TBLT. He said it was difficult to design a task similar to that in the real world. He had to do various exercises to prepare his students for the TBLT, for example, exercises to build his students' vocabularies, which he called tasks. Another teacher, on the other hand, mentioned the challenges of implementing CLT:

"I think I should mention one more thing about the communicative approach of teaching methodology. We have fifty-four students in each class and only forty minutes in a period. Many communicative activities are impossible. There is no time, there are many students and the classroom is small, so you cannot stand up and move around to change the groups. So it would be very difficult to implement communicative activities". (G019)



Some teachers felt that such standardization in teaching methods deprived their freedom to teach creatively, reflected in the following comment:

"I believe there is no one right way to teach...I want to spend time on experimenting different methods to engage students and to stimulate their interest in learning English. Now every teacher in our school has to use CLT and TBLT. I feel my teaching is constrained". (I026)

Pressure of Promotion

Promotion procedures added more pressure for participants. In China, teachers in junior high schools can be assigned to four different ranks: level 3 (like Intern), level 2, level 1 and high level. All teachers begin as interns in their first year, regardless of educational background, and can apply immediately for level 2 in the second year. Teachers that graduated from a normal college can apply for level 1 after 3 years and high level after 7 years. Those graduating from universities can apply for level 1 after one year and for high level after 5 years (Park & Hannum, 2001). A participant explained that it is not difficult for teachers who graduate from universities to apply for level 2, but it is more difficult to apply for level 1. He said "not everyone who has met the requirements can apply for level 1 because the number of positions available at level 1 is based on the quotas set by the district" (H024). As a result, teachers compete for promotion into a limited number of slots.

The participants reported that teachers need to publish in order to be promoted to the high level. As part of eligibility for promotion, they need to publish two articles and two articles have to win the prizes at the municipal level. The quality of the articles is questionable:

"It is unlikely for us to write articles of high quality because most of our articles are based on the reflection of our teaching experience. Usually this type of article is not very long, but they ask us to write an article at 3000 to 5000 words, which is challenging for us. This places great pressure on teachers, which is not necessary". (G020)

Another change that the participants noticed was the demand for higher educational qualifications. Among the 15 teachers who taught senior high English in the Sino-Australia High School Course Joint Programme in School K, 7 teachers had a master's degree. A teacher said that at the age of 46, he is under great pressure to upgrade:

"The educational qualifications for teachers are getting higher and higher. Nowadays, most junior high teachers have a bachelor's degree and many senior high teachers have a master's degree. Many teachers in our school are pursuing graduate studies. I'm quite old now and I don't feel like being a student anymore". (H024)

Instead of pursuing graduate studies, this teacher participated in the professional development organized by the district. He said the student enrolment in his school became lower because *minban* schools recruited many good students, he felt he had to continue to learn in order to secure his job.

Change of Teachers' Status

Many participants reflected on the change of the status of teaching profession. For example, a teacher stated:

"Teachers used to be at the sacred social status in the Chinese society and were highly respected by the parents, but now some parents in minban would think 'I pay you, you have to serve me'". (I026)

This example clearly illustrated that teaching is constructed as commodity (Kutoba, in press) in the market economy. The teacher was concerned that teachers were used to being considered as people's soul engineers, but now have a low social status because some parents believed they could purchase teachers' services. Another reason is that some English teachers offer tutorials to make money outside of the schools:

"Teachers are no longer highly respected by parents because many English teachers offer tutorials to students after school hours. Sometimes the money they make from tutorials is more than their salary". (J030)

Due the low status of teachers, tremendous pressure from exams and standardization of teaching methods, some participants reported failure to find satisfaction in their work. One participant reflected that she used to enjoy teaching at the earlier stage of her career, i.e., before the 1990s, because there was no competition of exam scores among schools. She said:

"I taught not because I had to prepare my students for the exams, but because I had a passion for teaching...Now I feel teaching is becoming more and more mechanical...Now if I could choose again, I would not choose to become a teacher. I feel this is very different from my ideal of teaching" (I026).

■ Access to Professional Development

Some teachers in the study reported good opportunities to access to professional developments. Some teachers in School E were sent by their Education Bureau to get their master's degrees in English teaching in the UK. One teacher said:



"In 2006 I took the IELTS exam and scored 7. I was selected to go to the University of Reading for a one-year Master's programme in Education. The fees were about 260,000 yuan, including tuition, rent, living expenses, insurance, transportation, etc. I paid half of the fees and Wenzhou Education Bureau paid another half. There was an agreement between Wenzhou Education Bureau and the University of Reading. Every year there were about 10 teachers in our city were selected to obtain their master's degrees".
(K033)

Wenzhou, with China's third highest per capita disposable income, has the economic resources to send their English teachers to English-speaking countries for professional development. The teacher continued to say that she felt the programme, which focused on English teaching methods on reading and vocabulary and psychology, improved her English teaching abilities. It was also an eye-opener for her to experience and learn British culture. Moreover, she had an opportunity to observe teaching in an elementary school for two days and in a junior high school for three days. Another teacher in School K, was selected to study at the University of Reading. He focused on teaching vocabulary. In addition, he led a group of teachers in their Sino-Australia High School Course Joint Programme to receive professional training in Melbourne for 35 days. The training focused on English proficiency and English teaching methods (K034). These teachers also gained first-hand experience of Australian culture.

Gongban teachers' professional development took place in local areas in Hangzhou. One participant reported having many opportunities to access professional development, often one week inside the school and another week outside the school (H022). Outside the school, the educational researchers of the district organized English teachers from different schools to observe teaching, participate in seminars offered by professors or experienced teachers, or various teaching competitions. Inside the school, they organized their own teachers to do peer observation. The observed teacher would reflect on his/her own teaching; the observing teachers would make comments and suggestions. Sometimes they organized meetings to discuss specific topics such as how to teach a reading lesson or how to teach a listening lesson.

Other teachers reported few opportunities for professional development. For example, one teacher said that being a lead teacher in Grade 7 means she has been sent by her school to participate in a provincial conference organized by the Department of Education of Zhejiang Province on teaching English reading in junior high schools (I029). Other than that, she had few opportunities for professional development, identifying in particularly her school's *minban* status as the source of the problem.

■ The Role of the Teachers' Union

Many participants reported that the teachers' unions in their schools organized various activities. One teacher said:

"The teachers' union organized sports and entertainments for teachers. For example, on Women's Day, they will send us flowers and small gifts. When it is someone's birthday, they will give you a coupon for a birthday cake". (H022)

A teacher in a different school shared a similar view:

"The teachers' union in our school often organizes different kinds of activities. For example, we learned Latin dance and Tai Chi this semester". (K035)

These quotes supported the observations above that the role of the teachers' union is mainly recreational. One participant explained the teachers' union does not have power:

"We don't expect much from the teachers' union. We all get used to the school system and we don't ask for many things. Actually, the union doesn't have power. The staff members there don't have much power because they can't do things without money". (K032)

The teacher continued to say that all the five committee members in the teachers' union were selected by the teachers. They organize summer trips for the teachers:

"We have been to Lijiang in Yunan province, Qingdao, and Xi'an. Every year we went to different places, but each teacher can only go once every three years, not every year". (K032)

Even when the teachers' union organizes these recreational activities, some teachers do not have time to participate. For example, one participant stated:

"They organized badminton, yoga and many other activities. Those activities often take place at noon. I have never been to one because I help my students with their homework at noon". (H023)



CASE STUDY THREE – HUNAN PROVINCE

■ Context

Hunan, located to the south of the middle reaches of the Yangtze River and south Dongting Lake, is, notably, the home province of Mao Zedong. Sitting in the middle of South China, its nominal GDP for 2010 was 1.59 trillion yuan (234.9 billion USD), with a per capita GDP of 30,226 yuan (2,961 USD). According to TouroChina (n.d.), with a history of more than 8000 years, Hunan is one of the places of origin of Chinese agricultural cultivation.

Hunan is divided into 14 prefecture-level divisions. Amongst these, thirteen are prefecture-level cities and the 14th is an autonomous prefecture called Xiangxi. These are further divided into 122 counties, and the counties are subdivided into the following 2587 township-level divisions: 1098 towns, 1158 townships, 98 ethnic townships, 225 sub-districts, and eight district public offices. The most recent census data (2010) indicate that Hunan's population is 65,683,722 (National Statistics Bureau of China, 2011) comprising 41 ethnic groups. About 90% of these people are Han and slightly more than 10% are minorities (Hunan, n.d.). According to the Hunan Economic Newspaper, the rural urban income discrepancy in Hunan has decreased slightly. The ratio between urban and rural residents on average is 2.95:1 in 2010, as compared to 3.05:1 in 2005. However, in Xiangxi Autonomous Prefecture, this ratio is 3.91:1. Hunan has always been a province of significant import in terms of education (Hunan Education Net, 2009). In 2009, the Province has a total of 13,263 elementary schools, 3,348 junior high schools, and 684 general senior high schools. There were 4.6 million students and 250,365 full time teachers in elementary schools, 2.1 million students and 174,179 fulltime teachers in junior high schools, and over 1 million students and 69,652 full time teachers in senior high schools. Hunan also has *minban* schools, educational institutions managed and financially supported by non-government organisations or individuals. In addition, there were hundreds of private elementary and secondary schools in Hunan.

The Hunan case study explores the experiences of teachers, focusing particularly on urban rural differences. Teachers in seven different schools, two in an urban (city/prefecture) area, two at the county or suburban-rural level, and three in remote-rural regions, were interviewed for this study. All schools are public and therefore are funded by the government. "Rural" in this study refers to rural schools in close proximity to a large or medium size city, while rural-remote school refers to schools that are at least 10 km away from any city/town.

The two urban schools are located in Changsha. One is a key senior high school and the other is a typical high school enrolling junior and senior students. Changsha is the capital city of Hunan province. Its administrative region covers close to 12,000 square kilometers. 2009 census data indicate a population of over 6 million people. Each urban school enrolls between 4000 and 5000 students taught by about 300 teachers. The two suburban schools are located in Ningxiang, approximately 80 KM from an urban centre. Ningxiang has a population of 1.3 million and is located to the west of Changsha. The number of students in these schools are about 3000, with about 200 teachers in each school. The three remote rural schools are located in Xiangxi Autonomous Prefecture, specifically in Jishou. Jishou City is the capital of the Xiangxi Autonomous Prefecture and had a population of more than 291,000 by 2008. More than 77% of its population are Miao or Tujia minorities. Consequently, there is a higher percentage of minority students in these schools than in the study's other schools. The first two schools are significantly larger than the last one. Specifically, Schools #5 and #6 have between 1200-2000 students while the last one only has 320 students. It is important to note that all the rural schools, even those in remote rural regions, are located in rural towns rather than the countryside. See Table 10 for details.

Table 10: School Information

School	Region/Location	Grade	Number of Students	Number of Participants
School M	Urban Changsha	Senior High School (Grade 10-12)	4,000	4
School N	Urban Changsha	Combined Junior and Senior High School (Grade 7 -12)	4,800	2
School O	Suburban Rural Ningxiang	Senior High School (Grade 10-12)	3,000	3
School P	Suburban Rural Ningxiang	Combined Elementary and Junior High School (Grade 1-9)	2,800	3
School Q	Remote Rural Xiangxi/Jishou	Senior High School (Grade 10-12)	1,200	1
School R	Remote Rural Xiangxi/Jishou	Combined Elementary, Junior and Senior High School (Grade 1-12)	2,000	3
School S	Remote Rural Xiangxi/Jishou	Combined Junior and Senior High School (grade 7-12)	320	2

■ Research Participants

A total of eighteen teachers in seven different schools voluntarily participated in the study. Six are from urban schools, six from suburban rural schools and another six from remote-rural schools. All of them (nine females, nine males) are full time employees in *gongban* (i.e. public/government-funded and -managed) schools. All have bachelor's degrees in education. These teachers have diverse backgrounds and experiences, ranging from relatively new teachers to teachers who have taught more than thirty years. They teach different grade levels (junior or senior high) and a wide range of subjects, including math, Chinese language arts, biology and English. Most of the teachers do not hold administrative positions.

Table 11: Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Region*	Gender**	Ethnic Minority	Age Range	Teaching Experience (yrs)	Subject
M043	U	M	Yes	36-40	14	Math
M044	U	M	No	56 and up	39	Chinese LA
M045	U	F	No	31-35	12	Chinese LA
M046	U	F	No	31-35	11	Math
N047	U	F	No	51-55	30	Math
N048	U	M	No	46-50	27	Biology
O049	S	M	No	31-35	8	Chinese LA
O050	S	F	No	26-30	8	Chinese LA
O051	S	M	No	36-40	10	Chinese LA
P052	S	M	No	36-40	18	Math
P053	S	M	No	31-35	13	Math
P054	S	M	No	46-50	27	Math
Q055	R	F	No	26-30	5	English
R056	R	F	Yes	31-35	10	English
R057	R	F	No	31-35	10	English
R058	R	M	Yes	31-35	10	English
S059	R	F	No	31-35	10	English
S060	R	F	Yes	Under 25	2	Chinese LA

*U: Urban, S: Suburban Rural, R: Remote Rural

**M: Male, F: Female

■ Disparity of Education in Rural and Urban Areas

One of the consequences of globalisation is the widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” in global society. The manifestation of this trend under China's market economy is disparity between rural and urban education as well as between

minban and *gongban* teachers. Usually located in poverty-stricken rural areas, or economically underdeveloped districts under urban administration, *minban* schools are set up with the resources contributed by individuals, households and the local communities, and are subject to the educational and political authority of communities and grassroots governments (Wang, 2002). According to Wang (2003), "children's schooling difficulties in poverty-stricken areas, high dropout rates, widened educational disparity between urban and rural areas, and insufficient investments in rural education are among some of the most severe problems" (p. 1). In 1986, the central government provided a categorical grant to convert 200,000 *minban* teachers (about 7% of the total in basic education) into *gongban* teachers; local governments have subsequently provided a monthly living subsidy to *minban* teachers. Because of the costs of conversion and the unwillingness of *gongban* teachers to work in rural areas, *minban* teachers will remain the backbone of rural primary education in the near future. A practical strategy is to continue to improve the monthly compensation to *minban* teachers, and to provide some pension benefits to retired *minban* teachers so that they feel more secured and continue to work hard in rural areas.

The gap between rural and urban schools as well as *minban* and *gongban* teachers in China has long been a topic in educational research (Knight & Shi, 1996; Tan, 2003; Wang & Li, 2009; Zhang, 2007). A study published in 1996 exploring the disparity between rural and urban education in China showed that rural schools have not only significantly less funding but also more decentralized funding than their urban counterparts (Knight & Shi, 1996). Another disparity between urban and rural China is reflected in ethnic and gender discrimination. For urban-dwellers under 30 years of age, no significant difference was identified between men and women's education. Rural women, however, are generally at an educational disadvantage. People with ethnic minority status are also at an educational disadvantage position in rural areas "despite the policies of positive discrimination" (p.115).

Moving to the market economy does not seem to bridge the gap between rural and urban education in various respects. For example, a recent study exploring the quality of compulsory education in West China identifies a serious gap between western rural and urban schools (Wang & Li, 2009). The data shows that some rural elementary schools fail to achieve the basic requirement of the curriculum standards; students in rural schools perform significantly poorer than their urban counterparts in various subjects including math, English, and Chinese language arts. Rural and urban disparity is also reflected in educational attainment of rural school students. Both elementary and high school students have high dropout and low graduation rates. Teaching quality is identified as the main factor contributing to such large discrepancies between urban and rural education. Rural teachers are poorly trained compared to their urban counterparts and have less opportunity for professional development and support. Rural schools also have fewer leading teachers, and are more likely to have insufficient number of teachers than urban schools.



Other aspects related to such regional disparity includes that rural teachers tend to be senior in age and less motivated to pursue further education (Bao, 2006; Wang & Li, 2009). Many rural teachers have to teach subjects that are not consistent with the major they studied at universities or colleges, while such a phenomenon in town and city schools is minimal. In rural schools, research and teaching reforms are hard to develop and put into effect because leaders of town and countryside tend to undervalue the importance of development of teaching research in these schools.

Teacher's wellbeing has also been investigated through the examination of their mental health (Gao & Yuan, 1995; Liao & Li, 2004; Zhang & Lu, 2008). These studies demonstrate that although the rates vary, in general, surprisingly high percentages of teachers are diagnosed with psychological problems. These problems include, but are not limited to, depression, anxiety, disturbance of interpersonal relations, and problems of employment behaviour. Considering the widely dispersed findings presented in the existing literature regarding Chinese teachers' mental status, Zhang and Lu (2008) quantitatively synthesize and systematically review teacher's mental health research in China since 1994. Their analysis reveals that rural teachers, in comparison with urban teachers, have more severe mental disorders. They conclude that the following factors are primarily contributed to the high rate of teachers' mental disorders: first, rapid changes in the social and political environment, in addition to social transition of different types bring teachers great shock. The second factor relates to the intensified conflict between different cultures and values and the abrupt change in cultural philosophy. A third source of mental pressure on teachers comes from changes in the educational teaching system and high expectations on teachers. Constant changes in information technology and the development of mass media cause teachers "falling behind" anxiety. This is further aggravated by high competition in their teaching.

Research exploring the impact of the transition from planned economy to market economy in China has also focused on the reform of teachers' employment system, namely from the traditional *tongyi fenpei* (TF, 统一分配, unified placement of all graduates) to *jiaoshi pinren zhi* (JPZ, 教师聘任制, a free contract employment system). In the 1980s, western scholars had already noticed the problems of the regional brain drain and possible inequity in education as a result of the 1985 educational reform (Bakken, 1988; Lewin & Xu, 1989). They therefore advocate for the teacher's "contract of employment." Since the 1990s, Chinese researchers have also paid attention to this field. Their studies reveal educational inequality, particularly between urban and rural schools (Bao, 2006; Yuan, 1999). Niu (2009) reviews the existing literature related to these reforms in the teacher employment system and concludes that although the transfer of the teachers' employment system from the traditional TF to JPZ enhanced teachers' motivation and working efficiency, it has nonetheless resulted in a brain drain of veteran teachers. This has consequently led to the huge gap of teaching quality between rural and urban regions. Rural teachers, compared to urban teachers, not only have lower

salaries (sometimes left in arrears for long periods) and no bonuses, worse medical care, and less funding and training opportunities,. They also teach more students in larger classes with fewer resources in worse conditions. Due to such disparity, rural schools suffer from 'brain drain' as rural veteran teachers flow out to urban schools.

■ Change of Teaching and Impact on Teachers

In Hunan province, the new curriculum consists of 5 compulsory courses and 16 electives. The compulsory courses are the traditional subjects, including math and Chinese language arts. They are designed as bench marks, and high school graduates are expected to meet the standards of these 5 subjects. The elective courses are designed to promote students individual development. Being electives, it is intended for students to choose freely amongst them with teacher guidance. Moving to a market economy, particularly since the implementation of the new curriculum, has meant changes in teachers' work. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data: learner-centred approach, textbook change, and teacher evaluation.

Learner-Centred Approach

First, many teachers, especially the ones teaching in urban key schools, described how their teaching approaches have changed because of the educational reform. They discussed how the new curriculum pushes for learner-centred approaches, which in turn have shaped their ways of teaching.

"The concept is new in the standard, which is to focus on the students. The goal of this reform is to put learners at priority. There should be more students' participation instead of the teacher's teaching. The teaching concept, implementation and process are undertaking dramatic change. Simply put it, it's a shift from teacher's talking to the communication between the teacher and the students". (M044, urban)

"Teaching concept has also changed from cramming to the encouragement of more participation and improvement of thinking mode. For example, the theorem of $\cos(\cdot+\cdot)$. In the past, teachers told the students how to calculate. Now, students raise some questions first. And the teacher uses some special examples to check the correctness of those questions. Finally, the students explore the ways to test the results. Teachers and students discuss together with the teacher being a guide". (M043, urban)

Textbook Changes

Secondly, the new curriculum reform changed not only curricula standards and content, but also curricula structure and textbooks. Each of these has had a significant



impact on teachers, as exemplified by the comments of O3, a teacher who has been teaching Chinese language arts in an urban key school for over 40 years:

"[The new curriculum] has a huge impact on my professional life. First, the textbooks have changed. It was unit teaching in the past; but now it's the category & module teaching. Compulsory courses have 5 categories and there are 10 modules. Five units are compulsory which is not different from traditional way of teaching. The aim is the evaluation of the students' performance, which means they should meet the standard for senior students after finishing those 5 units. Elective courses are for individualistic development. Unfortunately, this design is interference and can't be implemented.... Another change is subject integration and addition of new course like information course. Physics, chemistry and biology were independent in the past. But now they are somewhat integrated in senior 3 no matter how good is the integration. There was only one compulsory course and no elective courses before". (M044, urban)

Teacher Evaluation

Finally, changes in teacher evaluation have led to changes in teaching. With the shift towards learner-centred teaching, the initial implementation of the new curriculum created much anxiety.

"For the subject of Chinese, the influence is mainly in the teaching evaluation which includes interaction with the students. Initially the teachers were required to talk very little and leave the rest to the students. I couldn't agree with this because this is not suitable for all subjects and courses. There are different types of courses: lecture, appreciation and communicative. I didn't think it's suitable for all subjects. For example, ancient Chinese literature should be taught word by word. The aim of the reformers is good but the implementation is towards a radical direction. There are often experts coming to our school for research and evaluation at least once per term. They attend courses randomly". (O049, rural)

Teacher evaluation was based on various factors, depending on the school. Some schools relied solely on student achievement, that is, students' performance in final examinations or standardized tests determined a teacher's salary, promotion, and other benefits. Some teachers were happy about this, believing this approach was fair, while others thought differently and wanted to be evaluated in multiple ways:

"I want more platforms for development and fairness. The potential of some teachers is not discovered by our school administrators. And those administrators don't change their opinions of a teacher easily. I think they need to know the teacher more. They shouldn't base their judgment of a teacher simply on the score of his/her students. They should also get information from the students and colleagues of that teacher". (O050, rural)

■ Challenges for Teachers

In general, teachers from rural and urban schools felt the current education reform in China, particularly the implementation of the New Curriculum was not a successful endeavour. They complained that the reform makes both the teachers and students busier, under more pressure, and exhausted.

“Middle school education reform makes teachers and students tired and disappointed”. (O049, rural)

The challenges facing teachers ensue from the tremendous pressure they feel. The consensus is that moving to a market economy, coupled with the implementation of the new curriculum, made this pressure much higher. The challenge, for both rural and urban teachers, is reflected in five general areas: 1) the mismatch between assessment and new curriculum; 2) added content; 3) number of students; 4) limited resources; and 5) dissonance in philosophical beliefs.

The Mismatch between Assessment and New Curriculum

The most discussed challenge is the perceived disconnect between how students are assessed and the new curriculum. Although the intention of the new curriculum is to reduce the huge academic pressure on students, in reality, it has created even heavier burdens on both teachers and students. One tension relates to the disparity between the new curriculum and the National Matriculation Test (NMT). The Chinese educational system uses exam-based promotion, meaning that student achievement is the sole focus of education. The new curriculum, however, has a fundamentally different focus. This difference has created challenges for both teachers and students, as exemplified by the following comments:

“There is some disconnection between the new curriculum reform and the quality education. Schools are still graded by how many of their students go to top universities in China, which will cause a severe competition of student enrolment. Students don't have time to develop other skills apart from the academic ones”. (O050, rural)

“The new curriculum reform makes student learning more complicated and burdensome. Like the subject of Chinese, a lot of new content is added with teaching the students how to learn as the guiding principle. But in a rural school like ours and the demand from the National Matriculation Test which focuses on test-taking ability, quality education can't be implemented. The content in textbooks is more updated than the NMT content. As a result of this controversy, teachers have a heavy burden on guarantee quality education as well as exam-oriented education. Both teachers and students become more and more tired”. (O049, rural)



“... we are limited by the National Matriculation Test because it decides what the exams will look like. Important exams must be uniform nationally in China because otherwise it would be unfair. So you can't choose freely from the 16 courses... As a result, a balance has made. The Education Department in Hunan Province chose 5 courses as compulsory ones, and elective course become “other” compulsory courses”. (M044, urban)

Added Content

The curriculum reform inevitably led to changes in textbooks and courses. New content has been added to textbooks; teachers have to understand the new content and find the best ways to teach them. As discussed earlier, new elective components were also added. The “elective” designation belies the fact that these have largely become compulsory. Teachers have had to ensure coverage of this content as well.

“I have to spend more time to do lesson preparation because more content is added to the textbooks”. (O051, rural)

“New content is added to the textbooks so we have to not only understand them ourselves, but also know how to teach them to the students. That means the teachers have to prepare more and longer”. (M044, urban)

Large Class Size

One major change of in new curriculum reform is the shift in pedagogy. Teachers are expected to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches. Yet, large class sizes, usually 55 to 65 students per class, challenge teachers to implement this core idea of the new curriculum.

“Another limitation is from the student number. The different needs of a class of 60 students are impossible to meet”. (M044, urban)

Limited Resources

Limited time and teaching resources are another challenge that teachers face in implementing the new curriculum. Limited resources also mean reduced opportunities for advanced study or professional development.

“New standard and curriculum have some value. But it's not easy to implement them in terms of depth and coverage Take function and its characteristics [in math] as an example, it's easy to explain according to the textbook. But if the students have other problems during the explanation, they're required of stronger integral thinking ability, which is hard to achieve.

In this case, I can explain to them at a later time. But usually they still won't understand. It has to be this one-to-one way because many of their questions are beyond the new standards. There won't be time to explain them in class". (P054, rural)

"There are opportunities for advanced study but not much because of the budget limitations". (M044, urban)

Dissonance in Philosophical Beliefs

The last challenge facing teachers is created by the radical difference between traditional Chinese educational beliefs and the new curriculum. Such differences demand that teachers fundamentally transform their understandings of teaching, learning, and pedagogy, and, in the process, their identities. In addition, a top-down approach has further steepened the learning curve associated with curriculum implementation. The reform was initiated and supported by the central government. The new curriculum was developed by a group of experts who were not school teachers. It was then directly pushed down to schools with little teacher input. This implementation process, administered by executive fiat, has caused confusion and anxiety. Some teachers disagreed with the philosophical grounding of the new curriculum itself; others criticized the workings of the educational system as a whole. Whatever the specifics of the complaint, the process has caused dissonance and perplexities, as exemplified by these teachers' comments:

"I think education in China is in the hands of some so called: "education experts" but really laypersons. These people don't teach although some of them have done research and study in some schools. Unlike us, they don't have pressure from other schools, leaders' evaluation, students' score and students' evaluation. So they don't feel the same way as we do. All these make teachers different in their mindset. I saw many experts in other field receive criticism. But experts in the education field don't because this field is relatively independent. So they are the least qualified to be experts. Famous experts don't have the above things so their proposals are almost meaningless. In China, when a person becomes an expert, s/he will stop working hard as before. In the field of education, none of the experts teach well because they focus on research. They want to have advanced research results but don't care if they are applicable because that is the teachers' job. So I consider these people lack social responsibility". (O049, rural)

"The new curriculum was proposed in 2001, formally promoted nationally in 2004, and got national coverage in 2007. It is a total administrative order so lots of teachers have oppositions and confusions". (M044, urban)



■ Urban Rural Disparity

Urban-rural disparity is not a phenomenon unique to the market economy era. Nevertheless, under the market economy, urban-rural inequality persists in the Chinese education system. The urban-rural gap is reflected in teachers' living and working conditions with respect to salary level, student characteristics and teaching resources. It is also reflected in the relative distribution of opportunities for professional development.

Teachers' Salary

At first glance, the salary level between urban and rural teachers in this study is not significantly different, especially after factoring in the cost of living index of these regions. However, "grey income," a term popularized after 1978 to describe unofficial (and therefore non-taxable) monetary gains, is an important factor contributing to differences between in urban and rural teachers' incomes. In urban schools, all the teachers we interviewed have various venues to earn such grey income, ranging from tutoring students after school, to receiving gifts or hong bao (red envelopes with money inside) from parents. Urban teachers also have more opportunities to work at part-time jobs in other schools (e.g., trades and professional schools) in their spare time. The grey income of these urban teachers amounts to between 2000 and 5000 yuan per month, and for some, even more. Indeed, a couple of these teachers admitted that their grey income was more important than their official salary. Rural teachers, on the other hand, have fewer opportunities to earn extra income from other sources, and do so at a much lower rate when they do.

"During the planned economy era, teachers focused solely on their teaching without desiring for extra money. In this province, many teachers want to teach in famous schools not only because it meant more job satisfaction, but also they would earn more, especially if they teach extra courses. Also, there is an imbalance of teaching resources". (O049, rural)

Professional Development Opportunity

Compared to urban teachers, rural teachers have fewer professional development (PD) opportunities. The farther away a school is from any urban center, the less likely its teachers will receive PD opportunities, let alone programmes of high quality. Urban teachers, particularly those in key schools, attended professional development programmes offered by higher educational institutions more frequently than their rural counterparts. Many urban teachers have the opportunity to pursue advanced professional development courses organised and taught by experts in the field from top tier universities. Rural teachers, in contrast, can only attend professional programmes offered at the local level and rarely have the chance to hear from top-notch experts in the field.

Our interviews indicate that, consequently, urban teachers have a more advanced understanding of the new curriculum and associated pedagogy. Many urban participants were able to clearly articulate the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches and are able to give specific examples; none of the rural teachers discussed such matters, even with appropriate prompts.

Limited opportunities mean that not every rural teacher can advance through PD programmes. Present policies focus on sending excellent teachers for advanced learning opportunities. Rural teacher participants questioned the logic of a policy that widens the gap between good and no-so-good teachers:

"In this market economy, there is a policy that supports the strong and ignores the weak. Take training, especially for good ones, as an example: competent teachers get more chances for professional development. But it's illogical because not-so-good teachers should be trained instead of good ones". (P054, rural)

Student Population

Another significant urban-rural difference relates to diverse student populations. Although both urban and rural schools are faced with the problem of limited resources, scarcity is significantly more acute in rural schools. One school-based approach to this problem is to maximize revenue by increasing student enrollment. As a result, students of widely divergent academic backgrounds and abilities are placed in the same classroom. Although there are policies in place to limit such increased enrollments, many schools, particularly rural schools, persist nonetheless. Compared to their urban counterparts, students in such extended enrollment programmes in rural schools are often lower achievers.

"In rural school like ours, students have different levels. Plus the extended enrolment of secondary schools, some students have almost no school learning experience before. How to teach those students? We have the academic level test in senior 2, those students will add huge burden on teachers". (R057, rural)

■ Living and Working Conditions

Teachers' living and working conditions have significantly improved since the shift to the market economy. Comments from both urban and rural teachers clearly demonstrate the extent of this improvement. Under the planned economy, teachers' salaries barely covered basic needs such as food, and home and luxury item ownership were not even the stuff of dreams. Under the market economy, many teachers in urban and rural schools own their homes. Some teachers even own more than one. Similarly, many can afford to buy cars and drive to work.



"It was hard to live comfortably during the planned economy era no matter in the city or rural areas. Besides, more roads have been built which are more convenient. And we have more provisions, we can easily buy food outside the school gate. All these were impossible in the planned economy era". (O051, rural)

"Life for teachers has changed lot. When I graduated in 1984, I earned 78 yuan which was considered rich because a typical new teacher, with a bachelor's degree, would earn around 50 yuan. Now I can earn more than 3000 yuan per month". (N048, urban)

"I can save some money after daily expenses every month. I can use what I saved to buy a car. Normally, a three-people family has a house and a car. Some of them even have 2 or 3 houses". (N048, urban)

"Improvements such as these, however, have not been generalized across the profession".

For teachers in remote-rural areas, living conditions have become much worse. Although some teacher participants own homes, many have to live with their parents. Some schools provide rooms for teachers to stay overnight when needed (usually once or twice a week). The condition of these rooms tends to be poor. As described by one teacher,

"The living condition is also simple and crude here in school. For instance, we have 3 teachers sharing a 10 square meters room". (R056, rural)

Many young teachers live in old apartment buildings provided by their schools. These buildings often lack adequate lavatories space. As this teacher described:

"Our living condition has been improved and some teachers have moved in the "low-price houses" which are new buildings funded by the government. But most young teachers still live in old buildings. In summer, we have centipede and other insects falling from the roof of the building. Besides, most buildings don't have bathrooms or toilets, which is not convenient". (S060, remote rural)

Working conditions, especially in urban and rural areas, have fundamentally improved. Urban schools, particularly key schools, have good infrastructure, and are well equipped with updated technology and other facilities. For example, each classroom in the key schools has a computer and a LCD projector for teachers to use at their discretion. Hardware and software are usually up-to-date. Other urban and rural schools generally had one or two computer labs per school, but the equipment and software were not always current. Teachers in urban and rural schools had good working spaces, often with shared offices.

Remote rural schools, on the other hand, had substantially fewer resources, especially when compared with urban key schools. Remote schools have either no computers or only a few old ones with limited Internet service. As this teacher in a remote rural school described:

"Our school is a remote school and more than 60 km from a township. It is the most remote school in this district. Working condition is simple and crude". (S059, rural)

Different schools have different rules with respect to fixed vs. flexible hours for teachers, regardless of the geographic locations of the schools. No matter one's location, all teachers have to work long hours. Homeroom teachers and teachers working in boarding schools work most of all. A typical urban teacher arrives at the school around 7:30 am, and leaves about 6:30 pm, with a 1-1.5 hour lunch period to break up the day. They are also responsible for evening tutorials two nights per week and some regular Saturday morning classes. Homeroom teachers go to work earlier, arriving around 6:30 am and leaving about twelve hours later, thus allowing them to supervise students' morning and evening self-study periods.

"I get up at 6am and arrive at my office at about 7:30. Before 8 am, all the teachers have to decide their work schedule for the day, including teaching, assignment evaluation, etc. I often have students coming to ask some questions during class breaks. Besides, I have lesson preparation group meeting, material checking and work planning to do. At noon, I sometimes take a break but mostly I answer students' questions in my office. The noon break is best for planning your teaching because it is quiet. I have to finish the course at 5:20 pm because the school ends at 6 pm. After that, the students will have a short self-learning period. I almost never leave my office before 6:30pm. And I have some evening classes as well. I even have classes on weekends sometimes because the workload is very heavy for teachers of senior 3 students". (N047, urban)

Rural school teachers typically start work at about 6:30 am and finish at 9:30 pm every weekday. They have a 1 to 2 hour break for each of lunch and dinner. Boarding school teachers, however, only have one weekend off every three weeks, that is, they work for three weeks straight and get the fourth weekend off. Homeroom teachers get to school by 6 am to supervise students' physical exercises and self-study classes. They also provide supervision during lunch, dinner hours and evening self-learning periods.

"I'm the teacher in charge of a class (i.e. homeroom teacher), apart from teaching. I have to stay longer at school because there are some students who live in school. Students will have physical exercises in the morning, so I arrive at school at 6 am. Then they have a self study time till 7 am. I have a break at



noon in my office or dorm. The first class begins at 8 am and the school is over at 5 pm. Most students continue their study at school from 6:30 to 9 pm. Sometimes I stay with them but most of the time I stay in my office. I have to stay not only because the school regulations but also my own willingness. I go home at 9:30 pm every day". (P053, rural)

A retired *gongban* teacher receives both pension and retirement salary. Pension is provided by the provincial government while retirement salary is determined and supplied by the central government. However, even the teachers in urban key schools report problems with their pensions depending on the financial situation of the province. As well, it is relatively difficult for teachers to move from one school to another, even though the central government has promulgated policies promoting 'talent flow'.

"The core issues of market economy are still not solved. For instance, the Hunan Province doesn't have money to pay for our pensions. We can just get retirement salary and the amount is decided by the government. Now talent flow is not allowed unless in an unfriendly way". (M044, urban)

At first glance, teachers' living and working conditions seem to have improved, particularly for those in urban schools and those in suburban rural schools in close proximity to a big city. Yet, when we look deeper, our conclusions change. First, all teachers, regardless where they are, have long working days. In addition to some evening and weekend classes, a regular urban teacher works at least 9.5 hours per day. A typical rural teacher's working day lasts 11 hours or more. Homeroom teachers and teachers in boarding schools work even longer hours and more days. Other matters, such as pension, remain difficult issues. The data from this case suggest that the improvement for most is in material conditions of life. Secondly, considering that the participating teachers in this case are all *gongban* teachers in public schools, it is fair to conclude that work and living conditions seem to be worsened in remote-rural regions. Finally, it is important to note that urban-rural inequities are manifested in each of these aspects.

CASE STUDY FOUR XISHENG AUTONOMOUS REGION

■ Context

Since ancient times, multiple ethnic groups have called Xisheng home. Among the 47 ethnic minorities comprising its population, 13 major ethnic communities have established themselves with 60.7% of the total population. The capital city Xishi has a population of 2.08 million. It has a large ethnic minority population including Uygur, Kazak, Hui, and Mongol peoples that makes up about 27.3 percent of the total population of Xisheng.

Research participants were recruited from four schools in Xishi which are referred to as School T, School U, School V, and School W. School T was established in 1916 and is comprised of kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, and college for girls. Its principal is a high profile member of the community. Currently, it has 190 teaching staff numbers. Almost 40 teachers have completed or are working toward graduate degrees. The school's current student enrolment is 3,785, among whom 745 are junior high school students (7-9). These junior high school students are divided into 12 classes; the rest are senior high school students spreading amongst 36 classes.

School U was established in 1957 and became an ethnically mixed school (*min Han he xiao*) in 1963 when the Xishi Education Bureau relocated three minority junior high school classes from a normal university to the school. Among its 202 teaching staff, which is generally divided into minority native language and *hanyu* (*Chinese/putonghua*)⁴ departments, 87 of them teach in the *hanyu* department and 115 in the native language department. Almost 73 teachers are nearing retirement age. Of a total of 40 classes (1,818 students in total), 21 are in *hanyu* department, and 19 are in the native language department. While the native language department includes both junior and senior high school classes, the *hanyu* department has only junior high school.

School V, established in 1947, is an experimental school of modern education technology. It is recognised as a “model school for multimedia network classrooms,” and “nationally advanced institute for education”. As a subordinate unit of the provincial government, it is one of the best junior high schools in the province. Located in Xishi's downtown, with 120,000 m², it is the largest junior school in all of the five provinces of northwestern China. Its staff comprises of 305 teachers, among whom 8 are master teachers and 74 high level teachers. Five staff members sit on the

⁴ *Hanyu*, Mandarin Chinese, *putonghua* are used interchangeably in this document to refer to Chinese.



provincial education reform committee; 13 are research fellows at the provincial or city level; 10 are national core teachers (for new curriculum training); 144 are recognised as excellent young teachers at the city level. Eighteen have graduate degrees. The school enrolls 5,600 students in 85 classes from kindergarten to senior high school. Its senior high school section enrolls more than 3,000 students. In recent years, the school has witnessed rapid development in its infrastructure. Many new buildings have been built, including a Lab Building with digital equipment. One hundred million yuan have been invested in its building since its commencement.

School W was established in 1952 and is affiliated with a university. This school has a staff of about 152: 113 are full-time teachers, 19 are support staff, 14 are administrators, and 6 workers. Currently, it enrolls 1,023 students in 30 classes in its senior high school division and 1,372 students in 24 classes in its junior high school.

■ Research Participants

Data sources included a demographic survey and in-depth interviews with 22 (9 males and 13 females) junior and senior high school teachers in Xisheng, all collected by a research assistant of *han* ethnicity in March 2011. Interviews were conducted in hanyu. The tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed in Chinese by two research assistants, then translated into English and analysed by one of the lead researchers. The 22 participants covered a range of ages, ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, marital statuses, income ranges, and levels of work experiences. For example, four participants' ages range from 26-30 years, five from 31-35 years, three from 36-40 years, two from 41-45 years, two from 46-50 years, and six from 51-55 years. Sixteen of the 22 participants were of han ethnicity, four were Uyghurs, one was Kazak, and one Tujia. Nineteen participants were married, two divorced and one single. Twenty-one participants held bachelor's degrees and one an unspecified post-secondary degree. All participants reported holding teaching certificates.

Nineteen participants indicated that they could express themselves most easily in hanyu, while the remainder chose Uyghur, Kazakh, and Hanyu & Uyghur respectively. The total years of teaching varied from person to person, ranging from 5 to 32 years. Except for one part-time teacher, twenty-one participants were full-time teachers. Due to variations in years of service and workload, participants' monthly income also varied. One participant reported income of under 500 yuan per month, one of between 1,001-2,000 yuan, 12 between 2,001-3,000 yuan, six between 3,000-4,000 yuan, one between 5,001-6,000 yuan, and one participant did not provide any information about her salary. Table 11 below summarises this information:

Table 11: Participant Personal Information

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Education	Certificate	Language	Years of Service	Employment	Monthly Income (yuan)
T061	Female	36-40	Han	Married	B (1)	Yes	Mandarin	13	F.T.(4)	2001-3000
T062	Male	36-40	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	20	F.T.	3001-4000
T063	Female	31-35	Uyghur	Married	B	Yes	Uyghur	10	F.T.	2001-3000
T064	Female	41-45	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	24	F.T.	3001-4000
T065	Male	51-55	Han	Married	P.S.(2)	Yes	Mandarin	30	F.T.	3001-4000
T066	Female	41-45	Uyghur	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	25	F.T.	2001-3000
T067	Female	36-40	Uyghur	Divorced	B	Yes	Man.Uig.(3)	1(5)	P.T.; vol.(6)	1001-2000
U068	Female	31-35	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	12	F.T.	2001-3000
U069	Male	31-35	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	8	F.T.	2001-3000
U070	Male	46-50	Han	Divorced	B	Yes	Mandarin	24	F.T.	2001-3000
U071	Male	51-55	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	30	F.T.	Under 500
U072	Female	31-35	Uyghur	Married	B	Yes	Uyghur	11	F.T.	2001-3000
U073	Female	26-30	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	8	F.T.	2001-3000
U074	Female	46-50	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	24	F.T.	2001-3000
V075	Male	26-30	Kazakh	Single	B	Yes	Kazakh	5	F.T.	3001-4000
V076	Male	26-30	Tujia	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	6	F.T.	2001-3000
V077	Female	26-30	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	6	F.T.	3001-4000
V078	Female	31-35	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	11	F.T.	2001-3000
V079	Male	51-55	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	32	F.T.	5001-6000
V080	Male	51-55	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	32	F.T.	3001-4000
W081	Female	51-55	Hui	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	30	F.T.	2001-3000
W082	Female	51-55	Han	Married	B	Yes	Mandarin	30	F.T.	-----

Note:

1. B stands for Bachelor's Degree.
2. P.S. stands for Post-Secondary
3. Man. stands for Mandarin and Uig. stands for Uyghur.
4. F.T. stands for full-time teacher.
5. P.T. stands for part-time teacher and Vol. stands for voluntary.
6. The respondents misunderstood the question.

■ Educational Reform, Bilingual Education and Mix of Minority-Han Students

China has embarked on a path of rapid change in political, economic, educational, and language policies and practices. These changes have had a significant impact on



society in general, but have had particularly dramatic consequences for China's 110 million-strong indigenous and minority population, most notably in the areas of language of instruction and cultural identity (Beckett & Postiglione, 2010). Xisheng, a province in which many of those minority and indigenous peoples, languages, and dialects reside, was included in the current study for its geopolitical significance and as a province that has been most impacted by various reforms and changes in China. For example, enabled by a discourse of progress, opportunity, national unity, and harmonious society, the national language – *hanyu*, has been put in place as the medium of instruction (Beckett & Postiglione, 2011). As China deals with the market economy, exploring the lived experience of teachers in Xisheng can shed light on China's policies and practices in minority areas.

China mandated various national education development projects for the 21st century, which Xisheng responded to by issuing various policies. The Xishi Education Bureau has its own set of priorities and education work plans. Scientific development, quality education, nine-year compulsory schooling, bilingual education, vocational education, teacher quality, perfection of the education system, and educational justice are all priorities for 2011.

■ Interview Results

Analysis of the interview data revealed overwhelming agreement among participants that since the 1990s teaching and living conditions under the market economy have changed greatly and in a positive direction. They cited dramatic pay raises; improved work environment as evidenced by larger, newer, and cleaner work spaces, newer and stronger buildings, multi-media resources, better libraries and resources rooms, better sports fields, automatic gates; and continuous part-time and full time in-service professional development. The participants also cited larger and more plentiful living spaces; the ability to buy private cars; subsidies for transportation, housing, and heating; and free annual medical check-ups. Most of the participants said they are teachers because they love the profession; that they put in extra hours and effort because they feel responsible for students; and that students' achievements make them the happiest and most proud.

However, they also discussed various challenges brought about by economic and curriculum reform. For example, while all participants felt the changes (e.g., the new curriculum reform) good and necessary, an overwhelming majority felt overly stressed by constant professional development. Most also discussed the joys and jitters of working with more resourceful students and their parents; challenges of the han and non-han (minhan) combined school system; and bilingual education arrangements for minzu

(minority nationality) students. All teachers, however, seemed happy in their jobs and said that they were most proud of their students' achievements. They all elaborated on the role of teachers' unions and teacher representative councils and made suggestions for improvement for better implementation of the new curriculum and other aspects of their work. These are elaborated thematically below using excerpts from interviews.

Improved Work Environment

All 22 participants reported improved work environments as a result of increased budgets and more committed leadership. Specifically, newer, more modern and stronger buildings; computer equipped offices (some even reported having been given lap-tops); some overhead projector and TV equipped classrooms; Internet, laser printers ("huge improvement from the two type-writers and one recorder for the whole school in the 80s situation", V080); better resourced libraries; English language lab; automatic gates; as well as painted and better quality sports fields and equipment for students. This excerpt from Participant U073 exemplifies this:

"There's been much improvement in teaching environment. For example, the teaching buildings are new. With such change, teaching approach also improved. We now have multimedia classrooms. While there's much to discuss regarding whether every class needs to be multimedia, as the principals say, these things make it possible to teach differently in combination with the traditional approaches. Teachers bring their courses on U drive and show their contents to students, very convenient and versatile. Much more different from before where we did just chalk and talk only."

Participant T065 agreed:

"Since nine-year compulsory education policy, the government has invested much. All schools have had new buildings, which have been remodeled since last year to stand earthquakes. The three buildings in our school got remodeled as well, all with money from the government".

Others, however, thought that more needed to be done such as adding more computers (e.g., T065; T067). Participant T065 elaborated that:

"Yes, we have Internet and we can use it for teaching and other things. There is investment in it, but we think it can be improved. It's slow. We can also have more of it available. For example, currently, we have 40 classes that need to take exams, but only have two computer rooms".



Improvements in Teacher Welfare

All 22 participants agreed that there had been much improvement in their welfare, evidenced by increase in pay (many times more than the pay that they received in the 90s and even more compared to earlier days). For example, participant V079 said that his salary increased from 28.18 yuan when he started working in the 70s to current 3,000 yuan a month excluding bonus salaries. Participant 11 illustrated this by saying that when he started working in 1981, his monthly salary was 62 yuan. After 25 years of teaching, his current monthly salary is between 2,000 and 3,000. Participant 1 reported that she now earns 21,000 yuan in bonus salary alone, something that was impossible before the market economy. Some participants thought that their pay and bonuses could be increased because they were still lower than the salaries of others such as civil servants (*gongwuyuan*).

In addition, some schools created their own revenue to increase benefit to teachers as illustrated by the excerpt from the interviews with Participant T061.

Q: How are the teacher benefits like in this school?

A: Starting from the 90s, there has been good benefits, especially in comparison to our counterparts. Starting from the 90s to the beginning of 21 century, we the school had the advantage of being able to create some revenue by renting out some spaces and increase enrollment and the school had control of that revenue. The school had that advantage and we benefited us. Now there are more regulations and that there are bonus salary in place for all schools. Our school is more or less on par with other schools. In fact, some regular high schools have better benefits than us now. In the past, we had much better benefits and it was quite obvious.

Participants pointed out that experienced teachers can earn up to 6000 yuan a month. Additionally, those who have time and are physically able to do so can earn extra money (50 yuan hourly pay) for extra-teaching and tutoring. Some participants, however, also said that more improvement was necessary. For example, they said that their salaries could be higher. Participant U070 explained,

“Along with the changes that took place in the whole nation, teachers’ living standards here have improved much. There is some discrepancy between policies and practices and inconsistencies in growth and progress, but there is no question that there has been progress. According to the policy, teacher salaries benefits should not be lower than that of civil servants, but they are in reality. Also, a horizontal comparison would reveal unequal progress and gains. However, there has been progress and gains for sure. No denial there and it must be acknowledged”.

In addition to salaries, housing was commonly cited to illustrate improvement in living conditions. The participants pointed out that getting housing for young teachers was difficult before the 90s. Those who received any often got small and sometimes shared accommodation. Some even had to stay in flats where there were no indoor toilets, etc. Under the market economy, teachers can live in larger apartments with housing subsidies from their schools. Some even buy more than one home and rent one out. Participant W082 clarifies:

"Living conditions have also improved much. There weren't many apartment buildings before and therefore we lived in flats. The best new teachers could get was one bed-room apartments and that everyone was happy that their schools had somewhere for them to live in at all. Now all who teach and have over two years of teaching experience can have apartment allocated to them. People who have 25-30 year teaching experience all can have at least 100 square meter of living space that is well equipped. Some teachers can even buy and drive their own cars".

What participant U074 said below is another example to this effect:

"Yes, people have their own places, large ones. They even buy cars. I bought one, too. About half of my colleagues own their own cars. Because there are so many people, about 20 or so of us, driving to work, our principal had an underground parking built for us, though parking is no issue for me because my husband drives me to work. And parking is free".

Participants reported other benefits such as heating, professional development, and transportation that they got as subsidy from their schools.

The New Curriculum Reform: Necessary, but Needs Improvement

An overwhelming majority, 19 out of the 22 participants felt that curriculum reform was necessary, but needs improvement. According to them, the purpose of the new curriculum is to promote well-rounded learning and to motivate students. It calls for innovative, flexible, student-centered, exploratory, meaningful teaching/learning. They felt students were more interested in this new approach because it requires multimedia learning and teaching, which they thought provides many more opportunities to communicate with and engage students, up to two thirds of the students most of the time. However, the participants also thought that the new approach is more work for teachers because there is breadth to it, which requires much more time to prepare and deliver. All the 19 participants also discussed the challenges the new curriculum presents. They said the reform has increased their workloads because they feel constant pressure for professional development in the evenings and during breaks to



adjust to it and to catch up with students who have the resources to learn much on their own. They also said that it increased students' workloads because there is more, not less, for them to learn. Other concerns about the new curriculum include teachers' concerns about the mismatch between the new curriculum and the university entrance exams. They feel that while the curriculum has changed, the university entrance exams have not. This concerns them because they are unsure how reduced hours required for the core courses will be enough for students to practice and prepare for the exams. Many of them also feel that the policy was top-down and that teachers' voices need to be heard if it is to be actively implemented. Only then, they said, "teachers would really teach the new curriculum using the new resources and methods rather than sticking to what they had done for years before, making it old wine in new bottle" (T065).

The following dialogue between the interviewer and participant U070 captures these sentiments:

Q: What are some changes?

A: Overall, it's a desirable thing that should be welcomed. But, this reform seems to be too much and a bit problematic. So, teachers have some concerns about it, too. It sounds like the postsecondary entrance exam will stay the same and curriculum reform doesn't seem to reflect that fact. As a result, it presents a problem because the postsecondary entrance exam always drives the curriculum. But, reforming the curriculum without reforming the exam seems idealistic.

Q: Can you give some examples regarding what seems idealistic and what seems contentious?

A: Reduced teaching hours. For example, actual teaching hours for some courses like Chinese have been reduced quite a bit, replaced by exploratory learning and electives to boost depths and breadth of knowledge. This reduces the practice hours that students can use to solidify knowledge, which impact the entrance exam quality. So, we feel like under the double-edge sword: entrance exam and curriculum reform. We accept some of the changes, but must also think about the exam. That where the tension comes in.

Q: So, while curriculum reform has begun, the entrance exam hasn't changed. Because of this contradiction, there can't be real curriculum reform?

A: Right. Reform cannot be implemented as planned. The change so far has been on credit hours. So, the change is really surface change, formal. In reality, teachers are still trying to teach to the tests because that is what's important for getting students into universities and competition. Students need to practice to get good grades in those tests.

Q: Would you say this reform is bottom up or top down?

A: *It's top down.*

Q: Would you say reforms like this should consult teachers?

A: *Yes. Teachers have the most concerns about this reform. Their opinions should be heard.*

Q: Why?

A: *Because if it's bottom-up reform where teachers are given some decision power, they may accept reform. They can also try out some of their good ideas. Guess that won't happen because the government will lose control if does. But, the reform will be quite miserable, just like the medical reform, etc.*

Q: Sounds like the national government is determined and has made serious investment in this, does the school cooperate?

A: *We feel our leadership is in difficult place. On the one hand, it has to cooperate and implement the reform policy. On the other hand, it has to hear our concerns that have to do with the teaching reality and college entrance exams. They are in hard place.*

The excerpt from participant T066 is another example:

"The textbooks we used to were very appropriate. We knew what we were teaching. They started from easy and became more and more difficult as it proceeded. There were a plenty of practice problems, 10 to 20 of them, from simple to complicated ones. They were very thorough. The problems students have now are too simple. They are not systematic and there is no continuity. Students take tests as they study, not after. That makes things difficult for everyone".

Teachers also pointed out that the new curriculum requires teachers to do extra work looking for resources, while others said that it requires teachers to go through a paradigm shift because this curriculum is all about student-centeredness, flexibility, and exploration, while teachers are used to teaching classic foundational knowledge under an authoritative mode of teaching.

Access to Professional Development

Almost all participants (21 out of 22) confirmed that there were ample professional development (PD) opportunities, including a few weeks to six-month full-time professional development every five years. These take place locally, in other parts of China, and even abroad. For example, participant W081 reported having gone



through several PDs including a short-term one in the UK. Additionally, there were 8-10 day PDs during every summer vacation, in the evenings, and on weekends. The PDs took place interpersonally, intra-and-inter-institutionally through seminars, presentations, and through a mentoring system. They might be on topics such as computer skills, lesson and unit planning, and even on the policy and implementation of the new curriculum. They might also be on bilingual education, hanyu, or second language pedagogy. PD expenses are reimbursed by participants' schools. They also reported having received 400 yuan towards expenses during full time PDs. Participant U070 said:

"We are being trained since three years ago. All kinds of training. Sometimes, we have expert talking at school and other times we have on-line training (webinar), had a couple of those. We had two full summer training and two on-line training. Have had devoted time to hear lectures, trained, and submit homework in both cases. Only after our trainers receive our homework can they give us grades and certificates".

Q: Certificates?

A: *Yes, it's actually like requirement.*

Q: Does this training have any impact on the teachers?

A: *I think so. Different level of impact because it depends on how much each one invested in the depth and breadth of the study, but it should have some impact for sure.*

All 22 participants reported engaging in a mentoring system as another form of PD. All novice teachers are mentored by experienced teachers for the first six years of their teaching. Usually, mentees could pick their own mentors to help with lesson planning, delivery, and classroom management.

Opportunities and Challenges under Market Economy

Twenty-one out of the 22 participants expressed the belief that the market economy has created various opportunities and new resources such as better equipped offices and classrooms and working with more resourceful students and their parents. However, 21 participants agreed that changes under market economy have also been extremely challenging and stressful, "8 to 9 on the scale of 1-10". Much of this is due to having to keep up with rapid changes in teaching approaches and resources (learning to use technology); increasing competition; fear of being replaced; teaching smarter, richer, and more confident students; and working with their more knowledgeable and busier parents. Many "teach even on Saturdays and students learn even on Sundays" (V080). The stress also stems from the need to get more students into better universities

because, due to the heightened competition in the labour market, everyone is after the degree that gets him/her a job, rather than the degree itself. Participant T061 put it clearly:

"It's tough. The thirteen and fourteen year-olds have emotional issues for us to deal with. They are quite perceptive. Then, 55 students have 55 sets of parents who have 55 different needs. Teachers have to work with all these. We have to be strict, but friendly. Not easy".

All 22 participants agreed that homeroom teachers carry most of this burden and must work longer hours (e.g., up to 11 hours a day). Participants pointed out that there is 400 yuan in incentive pay for homeroom teachers. But all said that homeroom teachers have more responsibilities, with some reporting that every spare minute is spent checking students' homework, solving student problems, communicating with parents, and organising parent-teacher meetings after school, on weekends, and during winter and summer breaks, etc., typical tasks that homeroom teachers engage in. They said that the most challenging work for homeroom teachers is communication with parents. See the excerpt below from participant T064.

"The most difficult work is communicating with parents. Parents should be responsible for their children too. But many of them feel that unless they are at home, their children are teachers', particularly homeroom teachers' responsibility. That's why we need to communicate with parents and talk to them about their children's study and moral issues. They, especially those born after the 70s, are knowledgeable themselves and expect a lot from their children and their teachers".

Uyghur participants reported that reforms under market economy have created opportunities such as those available in *minhan hexiao* (Han and nonHan combined schools), where teachers are able to work and learn about/from each other. According to participant T067,

"In our junior high, we work together. Because of the bilingual education arrangement, nonHan teachers often observe Han teachers' teaching. We discuss teaching methods and approaches together".

Participant T067 also believed that bilingual education creates opportunities for locally born teachers to go to other parts of China and learn Hanyu and teaching methods. She did, however, also discuss the challenges of such changes for students and teachers like her. Participant T063 confirmed this sentiment. She pointed out:

"the situation actually is dilemmatic. On the one hand, learning another language is opportunity. On the other hand, learning in Hanyu presents challenge for students. They look like they understand. In reality they do not. We need to find a better way of teaching them".



She noted the following about herself as another challenge:

"My pronunciation is okay, but there are some expressions that I have difficulties with, that cannot express. I didn't go to school in Hanyu. I just learned one year basic Hanyu at university. Then, I didn't use it for five or six years. There was no bilingual education then. The government is putting a lot of emphasis on this now. So, I was sent to be trained to teach bilingual education".

Happiest about Teaching and Students' Achievement

Teachers also discussed what makes them happiest and most proud. Seventeen participants said that teaching makes them happy, that they pride in their students' achievements and are happiest when their students do well, when their students visit them, or that when they hear from their students. Some said that these things make happier than getting pay-raises. They see teaching as a responsibility that goes beyond pay and other material benefits. The following excerpt from participant U070 represents this sentiment:

Q: In terms of work, what makes you the happiest?

A: *Teaching, teaching in front of the class.*

Q: Why?

A: *Because the happiest there is nothing better than having a bunch of smart students listening to you teach them, learning from what you say, and exchange ideas. There is nothing more joyful than that. You learn something new and pass them on to the students. It's a great joy. Also, no matter how naughty they are, children are happy, pure, and lovely. Nothing makes one happier than looking at a few dozen of bright eyes and inspire them.*

Q: Forget all the fatigue.

A: *Don't feel any fatigue. Teach even when I'm sick, don't even notice that I'm sick. After class, I'd feel the symptom, but when I start teaching, I forget that I'm sick. Teaching is really an enjoyable thing.*

Q: As a person, what makes you the happiest?

A: *Teaching. Teach all my students and watch my students grow. If I have students going to Beida [Peking University], Qinghua [University], and some other famous university, I'd be very pleased. My students success is my success. This is not some moral judgment thing as I have high morals, etc. It's just a natural human thing. The feeling that comes with watching*

students grow, graduate, and be successful in life is really a tremendous joy that one cannot suppress. If you ask what I get out of it, I'd say nothing. But, it just makes me very happy.

Eight participants, including those who said students' achievement made them happiest, expressed satisfaction in their own achievements, though most of these also relate to their students, and for their own children's happiness. Participant T066, for example, said that she is happiest about her city-wide teaching excellence award. Participant T064 said being able to provide for her children and seeing them grow happily and healthily gives her satisfaction. Participant U072 said that she feels happiest when she feels her teaching has gone according to the plan and students have understood her teaching and learned from it. Participant W081 feels happiest when students acknowledge his good teaching.

■ Teachers' Union and Teachers' Representative Council

According to all 22 participants, their schools have teachers' unions at no cost for teachers (no membership fee) with appointed union chairs who organize social activities such as hospital and holiday visits. It also organizes physical activities such as table tennis; annual health-checks; and fund-raisers for natural disaster relief in places such the Sichuan earthquake zone. During holidays such as March 8th Women's Day, it gives out souvenirs and flowers. Work-related teacher concerns are addressed through Teacher Representative council members whose chair is elected by the teachers. The dialogue between the interviewer and participant U070 illustrate this:

Q: Are there any union in your school? If there is, what's the role of the union?

A: Yes, there is. It organises some outside work activities during holidays. Even though we are busy, we try to be part of the activities. There are some benefits. For example, the union distributes some presents, etc, which are in addition to our other benefits and salaries. Not sure the money comes from though.

Q: What about some other benefits?

A: There are some others. Like when there is sports events, we get some awards/presents, etc. The events are free for us.

Q: Do the teachers have decision making power? Can they make suggestions and get their voice heard?

A: No, we don't have decision making power. If we have suggestions and have something to say, we do so through teachers' representative council. Also, our school has good democratic atmosphere. We can also talk to the administration directly if we want to.



Q: What does Teachers Representative Council do?

A: It's decision making body. They made decisions, write policy and rules such as who should get what benefits for what reason, etc. All decisions go through this body.

Teachers believed unions to be very important and said that about 95% of the teachers participated in union activities that were organised two to three times a semester because those activities were good for relaxation.

■ Suggestions for Improvement

Twenty-one participants (one couldn't stay for the question) made suggestions for improvement on various fronts. The issue that everyone focused on was the stress and pressure that saps much time and energy. They suggested reducing teachers' stress by reducing long 12-14 hour work days and by providing quality PD rather than quantity. They also thought that the amount homework should be reduced and that teaching should be fun with choices like in the West. Other suggestions included smaller class size, lighter teaching load especially for middle aged and senior teachers. According to participant U071:

"Schools need to find ways to lighten the workload or burden of the middle aged and senior teachers. Otherwise, they'd develop professional diseases such as neck and shoulder problems. It crucial that the school help improve their health".

CASE STUDY FIVE – GUANGDONG PROVINCE

■ Context

As stated earlier, Guangdong was chosen as a case study because it is one of most economically developed provinces in China. The recent national census reveals that Guangdong also has the largest population (104 million) among China's provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). Guangdong comprises 21 prefecture-level cities. This study selected Shenzhen and Zhuhai because they were two of the first four special economic zones (SEZs) established in China. It was in Shenzhen that China decided to experiment with capitalism and the market economy in 1980. Subsequently, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen followed suit. Its success led China to expand its SEZs to include another fourteen coastal cities across ten provinces (Dutta, 2006). One reason for the initial choice of Shenzhen and Zhuhai as China's first SEZs was mainly because of their proximity to Hong Kong and Macao and their potential to lure foreign investment. This strategy also meshed well with the thirst of the world economy for cheap labour and natural resources.

As globalisation penetrated China over the past 30 years, Shenzhen and Zhuhai developed into a high-tech and manufacturing hub in southern China. By 2009, Shenzhen's had been transformed from a small town of 30,000 in 1979 into a world metropolitan city of nine million (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2011). Among these, only 2.4 million have local hukou and over 6.5 million hold household registrations in other parts of China, a curiosity that classifies the vast majority of Shenzhen's residents as "migrants." In 2009, it had the highest annual GDP per capita among major Chinese cities at ¥92,771 yuan or 13,590 USD (Wikipedia, 2011). "There is no perfect historical analogue to Shenzhen's growth," Fishman (2005, p.88) argues. Like Shenzhen, Zhuhai also experienced exponential growth and development but at a rather modest pace and scale. The recent national census of China shows that Zhuhai's permanent population has reached 1.56 million, an increase of 26% over the past decade and the smallest in the province in terms of both the growth rate and population size (Zhuhai Municipal Government, 2011). One third of Zhuhai's population are people without local hukou. In 2009, Zhuhai's GDP per capita ranked fourth on the national scene, after Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Foshan, and surpassing 10,000 USD. Shenzhen and Zhuhai attract people from all over China because they are often seen as symbols of "all things possible" (Fishman, 2005). As Fishman notes, people from elsewhere in China often view them as places "where a migrant's dreams of work, adventure, and love might all come true" (p. 90). Given the growing migrant population in both cities and the challenges facing their adaptation, the Guangdong case will focus on the experience of teachers who work with the children of migrant workers.



■ Understanding Migrant Schools

Migrant schools or schools for the children of migrant workers are a relatively new phenomenon, reflecting socio-economic and demographic changes resulting from globalisation and expansion of the market economy in China. Migrant workers are temporary workers from China's rural areas working in its urban construction industry, manufacturing, food and domestic services, providing a source of abundant, cheap, and exploitable labour for China's market economy. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, in 2005 about 150 million migrant workers moved to cities from rural areas in search of jobs, and the number will reach a total of 200 million by 2015 and 250 million by 2025 (Fan, 2008). The floating population in China is claimed by some to be the largest in human history (Fishman, 2005). According to Jordan and Düvell (2003), migration is "a requirement of, a response to and a resistance against, global institutional transformation and integration of the world economy" (p. 63). While globalisation has contributed to the widening gap between the northern and southern countries internationally; within China it has exacerbated the gap between China's east coast and western regions. As a result, many migrants are moving to China's coastal cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai.

While many migrants are temporary sojourners, some bring families to the cities. One prominent issue facing migrant families concerns access to education for migrant children (Liang & Chen, 2007; Lu, 2007; Zhu, 2001). Given the transient nature of migration, it is difficult to assess exactly how many migrant students there are in China. It is estimated that approximately 20 million migrant school-aged children have accompanied their parents in relocating to cities in China (Wong, Chang & He, 2009). Despite China's education law, which putatively provides equal access to nine years compulsory education for all school-aged children, migrant children are often deprived of such opportunities because they do not have urban household registration or hukou. Research shows that migrant children are much less likely to be enrolled in school compared to local children; a relatively large proportion of migrant children delay schooling owing to the interruption of migration (Liang & Chen, 2007). Furthermore, there are substantial regional variations regarding migrant children's education. Surprisingly, migrant children in destinations with high levels of development and high concentration of migrants, such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai, tend to experience more barriers to education because local governments in these regions are more likely to impose more rigid controls as a way of deterring permanent settlement of migrant families (Lu, 2007).

To enter local public schools, until recently migrants were required to pay a number of extra fees, including "education endorsement fees" (*jiaoyu zanzhu fei* 教育赞助费), "education rental fee" (*jiaoyu jiedu fei* 教育借读费), "education compensation payment" (*jiaoyu buchang fei* 教育补偿费), "school choice fee" (*zexiao fei* 择校费), often totaling in the thousands of yuan. Because most migrants work at low-paying jobs, they cannot afford the additional fees. Even with the recent ban on extra fees,

many migrant children are still excluded because they do not have the documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate, education rental permit) to satisfy entrance requirements. Local prejudices mean that, even with all the required documents, public schools still use every excuse to refuse accepting migrant students due to concerns that migrant children will lower their academic standard and ranking.

When public schools are neither accessible nor affordable to migrant children, their only option has been to enroll their children in unlicensed, under-funded and inadequately staffed schools specifically for migrant children (Irwin, 2000; Kwong, 2004; Woronov, 2009). It is estimated that there are between 200 and 300 migrant schools in Beijing alone (Inwin, 2000). While some proprietors of such schools are motivated to provide an affordable education for migrant children, others are driven by profit or simply by the need for operators to make a living, or a combination of all these reasons. Unfortunately, these schools lack the good conditions of public schools. Many of them are shanty schools housed in makeshift sheds, typically unsafe and overcrowded, with poor lighting and inadequate air circulation (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). In addition, pedagogical standards are low and the quality of teaching poor owing to lack of qualified teachers, adequate equipment, books and other teaching materials.

It is important to place the above discussion in the context of Shenzhen and Zhuhai. In 2009, Shenzhen had a population of 8.9 million, among which 6.5 million were migrants (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2010). In the same year, Shenzhen had 974 kindergartens, 346 elementary schools, and 285 secondary schools. In addition, there were more than 255 *minban* schools in Shenzhen, many of which are run by entrepreneurs or corporations primarily for migrant children (see Table 12). In each district, the number of *minban* schools varies according to the migrant population of that district.

Table 12: Distribution of Shenzhen's Population and *Minban* Schools

District	Population (10,000)	With Local Hukou (10,000)	Without Local Hukou (10,000)	<i>Minban</i> Schools
Futian	120.61	60.40	60.21	20
Luohu	88.5	43.49	45.01	23
Nanshan	98.89	49.52	49.37	13
Yantian	22.77	4.26	18.51	not available
Baoan	317.74	41.22	276.53	94
Longgang	180.02	34.26	145.76	83
Guangming	41.59	4.62	36.97	10
Pingshan	21.10	3.67	17.43	12
Total	891.23	241.45	649.78	255

Source: 1. Shenzhen 2009 Economic and Social Development Report, retrieved May 11, 2011, from <http://www.szjtj.com/main/xxgk/tjsj/tjgb/gmjshsfzgb/201004265740.shtml>
 2. Shenzhen *Minban* Schools, retrieved May 11, 2011, from <http://bbs.eduu.com/thread-678836-1-2.html>

The Guangdong case focuses on “*minban* school for public good” (二三三办学校). In fact the name contradicts with the reality. Government regulations stipulate that profit making should not be the goal of this kind of *minban* school; they are, however, classified as enterprises. Four schools were chosen from Shenzhen’s 255 *minban* schools as research sites: one elementary school (School X) and three combined elementary and junior high schools (School Y, Z & AA), all of which are located in the same district (see Table 13). Zhuhai’s educational system is much smaller than Shenzhen’s, consisting of 170 kindergartens, 192 elementary schools, and 53 secondary schools (Zhuhai Municipal Government, 2009). There are 31 *minban* schools in the city of Zhuhai serving a population of half a million migrants. We chose two schools from this group as research sites, a combined elementary and junior high school (School BB) and a junior high school (School CC). Both are located in the same district. Among all six schools, one is an elementary school, another a junior high school, and the rest combined elementary and junior high schools. With respect to the combined schools, this study focuses on the experience of secondary school teachers.

Table 13: Selection of Shenzhen and Zhuhai Schools

Name	Location	Grade	Year of Est.	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School X	Shenzhen Urban	Elementary (Grade 1-6)	1997 (moved to a new premise in 2005)	1,500	52	Collectively owned	¥2,600
School Y	Shenzhen Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900 (Elementary: 1400; Junior High: 500)	58	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥3,000; Junior High: ¥5,000
School Z	Shenzhen Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900	55	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,600; Junior High: ¥2,300
School AA	Shenzhen Suburban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2003	1,600	60	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,100; Junior High: ¥1,800
School BB	Zhuhai Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	1997	2,000 (Elementary: 1,200; Junior High: 800)	70	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,400; Junior High: ¥2,100
School CC	Zhuhai Urban	Junior High School (Grade 7-9)	1987	1,800 (migrant: 1,000; Local <i>hukou</i> : 800)	91	Public	Free

All six schools are relatively new. School CC was the oldest was built in 1987, though not specifically for migrant children. With the dwindling local population in its surrounding area, the school gradually opened up to the migrant children who now account for 60% of the school population. However, not every migrant child is eligible for admission. They have to have been residents of Zhuhai for a minimum of five years, and must provide a number of required documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate). Unfortunately, many migrants cannot meet these requirements. For example, with respect to the one child certificate, many families are from the rural areas where more than one child is allowed under China's family planning policy. Additionally, the children of parents who fit into categories known as "special talents" do not have to meet these requirements, including high-tech talents, business people with certain amount of investment, and people from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan. Although public schools are banned from charging extra fees, in reality the new policy still discriminates against rural migrants when it comes granting access to public school.

School X is owned by an incorporated entity whose share holders are former village residents whose agricultural land was given over to urbanization. The villagers invest collectively in real estate and other businesses under a limited corporation. They rent out School X to a board for ¥500,000-800,000 yuan a year. The other four school sites are privately owned by entrepreneurs. Some own more than one school, with one owner surprisingly holding more than 10 schools of this kind. Most of them hire retired principals from outside of Guangdong province to run the schools, but they hold little authority over school finances. School fees are monitored by municipal governments, but vary significantly (from ¥1,100 to ¥5,000) based on the location of the school and its physical condition. Because most migrants work at survival jobs, many find the tuition fees excessive. Conditions vary significantly among these schools. Some have new buildings while others are located in deserted factories. Adequate space is a problem in most, with the exception of School CC which remains a public school despite its intake of migrant children. One school uses its roof for extracurricular activities. Students in another have to rotate when they come to do morning exercises and extracurricular activities. It is important to note that all the schools we visited were recommended by the local education bureau. They have not only been licensed by the local education authority but also have been awarded the title of municipal key school (市一级学校). The condition of unlicensed and non-recommended minban schools is left to the reader's imagination.

Unfortunately there is no senior high school in Shenzhen or Zhuhai for migrant children, either public or private, because the majority of these children are admitted into vocational schools upon completion of junior high school. Also, according to Chinese Education Law, grade 12 students have to take the university entrance examination at the location where their hukou is registered, another complicating issue for migrant children. Many must return to their hometowns for senior high school.



■ Opportunities or False Hope: Experience of Migrant Teachers

Motivations of Migration

To reiterate, the purpose of the study is to explore changes in education under China's market economy through investigating the teaching and living conditions of teachers. For the Guangdong case study, we focus on the experience of teachers who teach in migrant schools and who are migrants themselves from elsewhere in China. Twenty-two teachers completed the Basic Information Survey, but one teacher decided not to be interviewed. In total, we interviewed 21 teachers. Among them, five were elementary school teachers and the rest were junior high school teachers. Thirteen had bachelor's degrees, six had 2-3 year diplomas from junior teachers' college, and two had master's degrees. All teachers who participated in the case study had a teaching certificate before starting the job. These facts make clear that teaching in China has reached a high degree of professionalization. As can be seen from the discussion below, however, it is not high salaries and comfortable living conditions that have lured people to the teaching profession. Rather, standardization that accompanies globalisation seems to be the cause. Furthermore, under China's market economy, employment has become more competitive. Many people are running out of options in choosing a profession. In addition, questions need to be asked whether licensing teachers means teachers have gained the level of professionalization required for teaching.

All 21 teachers had migrated from elsewhere in China, with the majority from Hunan and Hubei provinces. During the interviews, one of the discussions explored reasons for migration and whether market economy has created more opportunities or simply false hope. Previous studies focusing on the experiences of early Chinese migrants who moved to Canada show that people were motivated to migrate for economic opportunities (Li, 1998). Recent studies reveal that non-economic reasons, such as Canada's clean natural environment and its liberal education or school system, motivated Chinese migrants to move (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006). Responses from migrant teachers clearly show that economic reasons were the most important motivations for their migration to Shenzhen and Zhuhai. One teacher from Heilongjiang explained:

"Relatively speaking economy in the north is not as developed as the south. Maybe there are more opportunities in the south. I always believe people in the north are more conservative in terms of ways of thinking and managing things. This is why I decided to move here to give it a try". (BB097)

Shenzhen is at the forefront of reform in China. It is also the centre of international communication and exchanges. Many expected things can happen here. I know I have to give up a lot of things for my move to Shenzhen, but I also experience many advanced things here. This is where I can chase my dream. (Y087)

Another respondent explained that it is the city life which attracted her to Shenzhen. She said:

"I'd like to experience the outside world while I'm still young" (X085). Many of them moved to Shenzhen and Zhuhai to satisfy their curiosity. For people from Northern China, warm weather is another attraction. Furthermore, some teachers moved there because they had friends, families or a classmate who had moved previously and gave positive reports. One teacher also pointed out:

People who have never been to Shenzhen hold the view that there is gold everywhere in Shenzhen. In fact that is not true. Life in Shenzhen is just as hard as that in the hometown. Particularly when I just arrived, life wasn't as comfortable as people in the hometown thought. I didn't have family members around me. I had to look for jobs everywhere and moved places several times. (Z092)

Shenzhen and Zhuhai also offer escape from workplace or family issues for some of the teachers. One teacher from Hebei moved here many years ago because she was not happy with her former school principal. She explained:

"I was a teacher for 13 years at my hometown. The reason I came here is because of an unhappy incident at home. In 1993 I was still teaching at a rural minban school. There was an opportunity to change my status to a government-paid teacher. There was a quota for five people for the whole county. I was the only one who passed the examination in my township. When it was time to complete the form, I found my name disappeared from the list. I was very upset. I was mad with the principal's management style. During the same time, a friend of mine who was already teaching here [Shenzhen] told me that a new school just opened. So I applied". (X086)

As migrants themselves, one issue facing many teachers is that they do not have local hukou. Most are registered as temporary residents. Instituted in 1958, hukou is a registration system originally designed to prevent rural-to-urban migration. Under the hukou system, everyone is assigned a hukou location, either agricultural or urban. Whereas the benefit of the former is the way it ties people to agricultural land (and, thus, to a means of subsistence), the latter provides access to jobs, housing, and benefits. In essence, the hukou system defines who you are, where you belong, what your life chances are, and how much access you have to resources (Fan, 2008). Because it was extremely



difficult for rural migrants to survive in cities without urban hukou, the system once had the effect of keeping rural–urban migration to a minimum. Owing to labour shortages resulting from the economic boom, since the mid-1990s China has been experimenting with scrapping the hukou system in some major cities to facilitate labour mobility. The relaxation of hukou has pushed forward China's urbanization, which increased from 19.6% in 1980 to 43% in 2005 (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2008). It is estimated that by 2020 China's urbanization will further increase to 60%. In large cities—such as Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai—however, hukou remains a primary gatekeeper. As in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, it has become more difficult to obtain a permanent hukou from Shenzhen, a city built by migrants. One has to meet many requirements to obtain a local hukou, including age, years of residence, level of education, employment status, etc. Since most of the teachers are employed on contract basis, it is almost impossible for them to obtain a local hukou. Without it, however, it is impossible for them to enjoy welfare benefits, or find schooling for their children. Considering all these difficulties, several teachers who are married with children left their children with their parents in their hometowns. The teacher from Hebei who was introduced to you earlier said she lives in Shenzhen on her own. Her husband is taking care of her elderly parents-in-law in her hometown. They only have time to visit during school holidays. When asked about her plan to apply for Shenzhen hukou, she had this to say: “I'm 45 years old. I've already exceeded the eligibility age for applying for Shenzhen hukou” (X086). Even with local hukou, they all felt that rocketing housing prices mean that they cannot afford to buy an apartment and settle down in Shenzhen and Zhuhai permanently. Many indicated that they will eventually return to their hometowns. In light of this, many of them live a sojourner's life much like early overseas Chinese migrants in Canada and elsewhere (Li, 1998). It is sad that teachers and many migrant workers like teachers contribute to the building of a new city, but cannot become active participants in the way they had originally hoped for.

Issues of Workload

China is notorious for its large class sizes which are as large 60 to 100 in some places. In the past 10 years, China began to tackle this issue. The Basic Information Survey reveals that in some places average class size remains as high as 70. In Shenzhen and Zhuhai, education authorities have regulated standard class size to be around 50 students in each class, which is large by European or North American standards, but nevertheless an improvement. All six schools begin around 8 am and finish around 5 pm with a two-hour lunch break. Each period of class lasts 40 minutes. Most subject teachers teach 3-4 classes a day, usually at the same grade level. In public schools, teachers usually teach 2 classes a day. As Kwong (2004) notes, many migrant schools are inadequately staffed. At School AA, the only fine art teacher teaches 17 classes of fine arts across different grades to almost half of the school's students. Furthermore, homeroom teachers (ban zhu ren) have many more responsibilities than subject teachers. They

not only teach academic subjects, but are also required to do administrative work. One teacher commented:

"It is time consuming to keep records of the students. We have to do this at the beginning of every semester. If the Education Bureau needs statistics, sometimes I have to work overtime to enter each every student's records. I don't even have time to prepare for my lessons". (X086)

Furthermore, homeroom teachers have to perform a number of pastoral duties. She has to supervise student's morning exercise, reading classes, cleaning the school compound, and escorting students home. The same teacher described her daily routine and workload as follows:

I: Can you describe a typical day of your work?

R: My day? I get up at 6:45 and then get ready for school. I usually arrive at school at 7:30 although the school requires us to there by 7:50. Homeroom teachers often get there before 7:30.

I: Is it voluntary or required by the school?

R: It is voluntary. Our school requires us to be there by 7:50. But homeroom teachers arrive early because some students come early. We need to look after their safety, clean the campus, or check their homework.

I: You are also responsible for cleaning the campus?

R: No, supervise the students...

I: Oh, supervise the students...

R: because the students have an area they look after, for example, picking the leaves in the garden behind our classroom.

R: On Mondays we raise the national flag and do morning exercises on Wednesdays and Fridays. The students have morning reading classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. When they do morning exercises, we join them. When they have morning reading classes, we supervise them [They rotate the morning exercises with reading classes because of limited outside space]. The morning exercises are from 7:55 to 8:20. We have our first morning class starting at 8:30. Sometimes I teach two periods in the morning and sometimes I have three. Then, the lunch break.

I: How long is the class?

R: 40 minutes

I: How about in the afternoon?

R: In the afternoon I basically have one class.

I: You have four classes a day?

R: Yes, four classes. Students leave school around 11:45 and we have to escort



them to the closest road to their home to ensure safety. We have several routes and we escort them twice a day, at lunch and in the afternoon.

I: You escort them twice every day?

R: *Twice every day.*

I: How long is one trip?

R: *About 20 minutes. We arrange in a way that it is also the same route on our way home.*

I: I just saw your students' line up [Students are going home at 5 pm.].

R: Yes.

I: So you line them up and call their names?

R: *Yes, we call their names to find out who is on which route because we have different routes.*

I: Oh, so the students on each route can be from different classes?

R: *Yes, they can be from different classes.*

I: Do you do this voluntarily or is it part of the school requirements?

R: *It is a school requirement because we have done this for ten years. Every teacher has to take part. We always escort the students no matter it's raining or windy days.*

I: After you finish your teaching in the afternoon, what do you do?

R: *Marking assignments or preparing lessons for the next class. We also have our 6th period for exercise class. We tutor those who are falling behind in the class. Also, at least once every weekend we visit students at home. We first visit these busy parents who can't attend our parent meeting. The second targeting group are those mischievous students. We need to better communicate with their parents. (X085)*

This rather long excerpt vividly illustrates the workload and multiple responsibilities of migrant teachers. At School AA in suburban Shenzhen, students do not go home at lunchtime because they live far away. In fact several schools offer lunch programs for an additional fee and homeroom teachers have to supervise students' noon nap. It is clear that teachers' responsibilities go far beyond teaching academic subjects, but also look after students' safety and life. One teacher described homeroom teachers as "nannies". Like School X, homeroom teachers in Zhuhai schools have to supervise student's noon nap. In addition, they have to serve lunch for students. One teacher explained:

R: *Frankly, if we put it simply, the homeroom teacher is like a nanny.*

I: Like a nanny?

R: *No matter how trivial the things are, the homeroom teacher is like a nanny of the class. They have to take care of many things, including things required by the school, we just mentioned noon nap and lunch. I have to serve them lunch by myself and the younger students need supervision after lunch. We have about 10 minutes break after lunch and the school will ring the bell for the noon break. Students will then go back to their classrooms to rest and sleep. If the students cannot sleep, they can read a while. The school requires the homeroom teacher to monitor them at that time because some students may go out for example to the internet café so if something happens to the students both the school and the teacher will be responsible for it. So the teacher will sit in the classroom resting with the students. (BB096)*

The results of the Basic Information Survey show that many teachers have to spend evenings and weekends marking assignments, preparing for new lessons, or attending meetings. In interviews, teachers discussed their evening work in further detail. For example, at School AA, teachers have to hold their regular weekly meetings in the evening after dinner. They also have to visit students in the evenings. This school has the same morning schedule as School X. In fact, they are required to report to the school office at 7:30 am. It is unlikely that they have any time left for recreational activities, nor the space or facilities to do so. They are trapped in the school compound 24 hours a day. One teacher described this situation as follows:

I: When do you have dinner?

R: 5:40.

I: What do you usually do in the evening after dinner?

R: *We usually visit students on Wednesdays and we hold our regular meetings on Fridays. There might be academic subject group activities in between which can usually be arranged by ourselves.*

I: Do many teachers come to the office in the evening?

R: *More than half. Some teachers don't need to prepare lessons in the office, they can do it in the dorm.*

I: Any recreational activities?

R: *Nothing. I like sports and usually ask some male teachers to play basketball. It seems female teachers don't have anything in the evenings.*

I: Any common space for recreational activities?

R: *There used to be a music room, but not many people go there. I used to go there a lot but not any more. Now we got more and more younger*



teachers. We don't have the same interest. [He is married with one child.]

I: Any TV?

R: *Male teachers have one, and female teachers have one. Some teachers bought their own computers.*

I: There is a TV for male and female teachers separately?

R: *Yes. I wonder why the relationship is not intimate. There are a few successful marriages among teachers. Many female teachers don't like to get married to male teachers because of low pay and living conditions. Because of low pay, many male teachers are not confident enough to look for girlfriend. (AA094)*

The above discussion demonstrates that workload is a serious issue at migrant schools. It is common for teachers to work 12 hours daily starting from 7:30 in the morning. Furthermore, they have to work in the evenings and at weekends. It seems also clear that the nature of teaching has changed under China's market economy. The responsibilities of teaching have been transformed from teaching academic subjects to include providing services to students. Teachers have become commodities who are sold to the school to be dispatched at the discretion of school owners and management.

Teacher's Pay

In terms of salary, however, migrant teachers are paid poorly. The majority earned between ¥1,001 and ¥3,000 yuan a month (see Figure 14), which is far below average income in both Shenzhen and Zhuhai. We were reminded by the interviewees that a factory worker or vegetable vendor can make ¥2,000 yuan a month. To compare the two cities, pay in Shenzhen is even lower than in Zhuhai, although it has the highest GDP per capita among major Chinese cities in 2009 at ¥7,730 a month (Wikipedia, 2011). It is also lower than that of public school teachers, who are paid ¥6,000-7,000 month. This finding has important implications regarding developing new policies to raise teacher's salaries.

Table 14: Shenzhen and Zhuhai Teacher's Income

Salary Range (Yuan)	Shenzhen	Zhuhai
¥1,001-2,000	9	
¥2,001-3,000	4	5
¥3,001-4,000		1
¥4,001-5,000	1	1
¥5,001-6,000		1

At this stage it is important to discuss the impact of teacher's earnings on the quality of teacher's lives. If we compare the current salary with that of a decade ago, it appears that at present teachers are better off. However, China has experienced significant inflation in the last thirty years--8.7% in 2008 alone, a number reported to be the highest in a decade (CNN, 2008). More importantly, food prices jumped by 23% in 2008. One teacher commented that her salary does not last till the next pay day so she often asks for help from her parents. Another teacher compared the current pork price with the 1990s and stated that they used to pay a few yuan for a pound of pork and now it costs more than 10 yuan. In reality, the quality of teacher's lives has deteriorated because increases in salary have not matched inflation.

One manifestation of the impact of teacher's salary on the quality of their lives can be found in the housing problem. Before China adopted privatization and marketization approaches, teachers enjoyed housing benefits, although often in poor conditions (Guo, 2005). With such welfare schemes dismantled, teachers are expected to purchase their own housing. In light of this, we explored the possibility for teachers to purchase their own place under current salary conditions. A clear message we got is that it is impossible. In the district where School X is located, the average price for purchasing an apartment is ¥10,000/m², which is not the highest in Shenzhen (the highest had reached ¥30,000/m²). The price in Zhuhai is slightly better at ¥15,000-20,000/m². This is an excerpt from a conversation with one Shenzhen teacher:

I: Are you going to buy your own place?

R: *How can I buy an apartment with 2000 yuan a month? Are you kidding me? The price in Shenzhen has reached ¥10,000 per square meter. It is impossible to buy my own apartment.*

I: ¥10,000 per square meter in this district?

R: *You see even if my parents help me pay the down payment, I still cannot buy an apartment.*

I: Is that so?

R: *I can tell you this is impossible. Actually I feel very sad. I studied for so many years, I cannot even take care of myself, let alone look after my parents. I may even depend on them in fact. I feel how to say, it's hard to say, everyone has their own expectations of life but the reality is life is too cruel.*
(X084)

Another teacher told us that she had to send her two and a half year old child away to be looked after by her parents-in-law because she does not have the time to take good care of her, nor the financial capacity. She explained:

I: Is your child living with you?

R: *No, not now.*

I: Back in the hometown?



R: *Yes. We'd like to keep the child with us. She is only two and half years old and she needs us. It's important to develop good habits at this age. We're worried she will be spoiled by her grandparents. We often call home. She began to talk and understand things. But right now we can't afford to keep her here.*

I: **Do you often go back to see her?**

R: No, only during the Spring Festival, sometimes in summer holidays. One trip costs us half a year's salaries. In addition, we have to visit relatives. We have to spend money on gifts for the Spring Festival.

I: **By train or by plane?**

R: *By train. We can't afford to fly. It usually takes seventeen or eighteen hours by train. (AA095)*

How do teachers survive in a marketised and commercialised society on meager salaries? Some have to rely on their spouse, usually the husband, to bring in a bigger cheque from a higher-paying job. Others have to get a second job, usually tutoring in their spare time. Because it is prohibited by the school, people were very cautious to say too much about this practice, despite our emphasis on confidentiality. We respected teacher's choices, so did not press. Only two teachers talked about it. This is what one teacher said when asked about professional development. He commented:

R: *We don't have time to do professional development. Working from 7 am to 5pm, teaching and correcting homework, we don't have extra time to do other things. Teachers in minban schools don't have enough energy for professional development. With such a low salary, life is hard if we don't find another job outside of school.*

I: **What do most people do for a second job?**

R: *Teachers have their own things to do.*

I: **Anyone works as a tutor?**

R: *Yes, to tell you the truth. It is impossible to survive here in Shenzhen without an additional job. Teachers' salary can't make a living. It is common that people have other jobs besides teaching. (Z091)*

Working and Living Conditions

A consistent message in interviews with migrant teachers is that workloads at minban schools are heavier than public schools. Pay is lower and working and living conditions are poorer. Again, it is important to keep in mind that all the schools we visited were recommended by local education authorities. These schools are not only licensed, but

have also won the title of key municipal schools (市一级学校). There are schools which are not licensed where the situation could be even worse. It is also important to remember that public school teachers are not well paid and their working and living conditions are poor (Guo, 2005; Li, 1999; Zhou, 2002). Among them, School CC has the best campus and best facilities, with a track/field and space for extracurricular activities. Two schools use renovated factories and four schools have relatively new buildings. Luckily none of them are housed in makeshift sheds (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). However, space is a problem for all of them. Offices are crowded, usually with 10 teachers in a small office. School Z has 14-15 people sharing an office. Teachers felt comforted that classrooms are equipped with multimedia facilities such as computers and LCD projectors. Now they can use powerpoint for teaching. In most schools, however, the same subject groups or teachers teaching the same grade (5-10 people) share a computer. Many teachers had to use their personal laptops for teaching or lesson preparation. Here is an excerpt of a conversation with one of the teachers in School Z:

I: Any computer for teachers?

R: *We have computers in the office, but not for everyone.*

I: How many people share a computer?

R: *Two computers in one office.*

I: How many people in one office?

R: *About ten.*

I: You take turns? What if many people need the computer at the same time?

R: *We negotiate. (Z092)*

Since most teachers are migrant workers, they need places to live. As discussed earlier, teachers cannot afford to buy their own places, so they have to rely on the schools. Luckily all six schools provide dormitories, mainly for single teachers, as part of their remuneration package. The challenge, however, is for four to six people to share a room in poor conditions. These are often located on the top floor of a classroom building. It is noisy and hot in summer and cold in winter. One teacher commented that it is not even as good as a university dorm:

I: Do you live in the school dorm?

R: *Yes, all single teachers live here. Married teachers live outside.*

I: Is your dormitory upstairs?

R: *Yes, the third and fourth floor.*

I: What is it like? Like the dorm in university?

R: *Frankly, it cannot be compared to my university dorm. There are four single bunk beds in one room. Basically every bed is taken. We store things in the upper bed and sleep in the lower one. We have shared washrooms*



and two big tables, no closets. The conditions are worse than university dorms. Not only the room is small, but also the beds are very shabby. The bathrooms don't have showers. We have to boil water with kettle and use the bucket to take a shower. Frankly, the conditions are not good. (BB099)

None of the schools provide housing for married couples. In School AA, one couple who are both teachers at the same school live in a room built on the empty space between staircases which is about 10 m². They considered themselves to be “lucky”. The researchers got permission to visit this room. Basically there is a single over a double bunk bed, a desk, a wardrobe for storing clothes, a computer, and a TV. They have a two and a half years old child who is living with grandparents in their hometown. They use the downstairs in-between space to build a washroom which is shared with another family. When asked how they coordinate the shower timing, she told us:

Before we use the washroom, we usually check with each other. They live downstairs and we live upstairs. They like to take a shower in the morning and we're used to having a shower in the evening. Usually the time works out fine. (AA095)

Food was another hot topic in the interviews. There are two major challenges with school canteen food. Firstly, teachers eat in the same canteen with students. Usually four to five chefs cook for over a thousand people. The quality of food is a problem for most teachers. One teacher compared it with her university student canteen food and felt “we might have more choices in university, but not here.” (Y089) Secondly, people come from different parts of China, but the local chefs mainly cook Guangdong style food considered as bland and dull by outsiders. One teacher stated, “I understand it is hard to satisfy a lot of people with different tastes. For instance, people like me from Hunan like spicy food, but they only provide mild food here” (Y091). Several teachers commented that they have to get used to the food because they do not have enough money to eat outside, nor do they have the time or facilities to cook for themselves. Otherwise, they will go hungry. The following excerpt drives this point home:

I: How about the meals?

R: I kind of got used to it. I couldn't bear it at the beginning. By the fourth period, I usually get hungry.

I: What for breakfast?

R: Porridge, noodles and steamed buns.

I: Eggs and milk?

R: No.

I: What if you are hungry?

R: We prepare snacks by ourselves.

I: What usually for lunch?

R: *Three dishes plus one soup to choose from, the same for both lunch and dinner, cooked in a big pot.*

I: *Anything special on the weekend?*

R: *The same.*

I: *Do you go outside to eat?*

R: *Sometimes we give us a special treat.*

I: *Is there any public kitchen where you can cook?*

R: *No.*

I: *Is it better if there is a kitchen?*

R: *Sure, we can cook by ourselves in that case.*

I: *Have you suggested that to the school?*

R: *No use, since there is not enough space in the school.*

I: *Is 150 yuan worth for the meals?*

R: *It was 100 at the beginning, later increased to 200, then decreased to 150 because teachers complained. Higher price, but nothing changed. (BB098)*

Access to Professional Development

Access to professional development is crucial to ensure quality education; it is also part of teacher's rights. Research shows that there is new emphasis on professional development to improve teacher qualifications in China (Li, 1999). This study reveals that professional development is used for in-house training to keep teachers updated about curriculum changes and new teaching skills development. The Basic Information Survey shows that only half of the surveyed teachers have had ongoing professional development. While most PD activities took place at school hours, some of them were offered in the evenings or at weekends. Shenzhen and Zhuhai have made PD compulsory. Every term teachers are required to commit a certain number of hours to attend PD activities organized by both the local education bureau and the school. In the context of migrant schools, however, it is always a challenge to find extra time to participate in PD activities owing to teachers' busy teaching schedules. Furthermore, as Teacher Z091 pointed out, migrant teachers need the extra time to work on second jobs. He stated:

"We don't have time to do professional development. Working from 7 am to 5pm, teaching and correcting homework, we don't have extra time to do other things. Teachers in minban schools don't have enough energy for



professional development. With such a low salary, life is hard if we don't find another job outside of school". (Z091).

One teacher told us when she needed help, she called her former colleagues in her hometown to seek support. It seems clear that having access to professional development is not enough. Migrant teachers need paid release time to ensure that they are freed from their busy schedule to attend PD activities.

Social and Political Status

Shenzhen and Zhuhai are places where the market economy first took hold in the early 1980s. In light of this, it is important to ask: has the market economy created more opportunities or false hope for migrant teachers? Has teacher's social and political status been improved? We had numerous discussions with migrant teachers about these questions. When the question was posed, participants were hesitated to respond. They hesitated because they feel the market economy has nothing to do with them. One teacher explained:

I: Shenzhen is a place where market economy first started. What opportunities do you think the market economy has brought to teachers like you?

R: I don't see any opportunity. It seems irrelevant to teachers.

I: No benefit for teachers?

R: No. Education has no relation with market economy. Two separate concepts.

I: Who benefits the most?

R: Business people, high-tech people. (Y089)

One teacher argues that the market economy created instability for teachers because their teaching contracts could be terminated at any time. One teacher stated:

"Many teachers don't feel secure to teach in a minban school or work as a substitute teacher. We used to have an "iron rice bowl" with a secure employment teaching in public schools in our hometown. Now we have a porcelain rice bowl. The situation could change any time. There are too many unstable factors". (Y088)

Another teacher felt that one thing market economy has brought to the society at large is that it has stimulated competitive consumption (CC103). Many teachers feel the pressure to purchase a house or a car in order to keep up with the rest of the society.

To come back to the question "has market economy improved teachers' social and political status?", the reality appears rather disappointing. Here is one response:

I: To what extent has market economy improved teachers' social and political

status?

R: *Most parents in our schools are migrant workers. Like migrant workers, our social and political status is low. Public school teachers look down upon us. We do the same job [as public school teachers], but are paid one seventh or one eighth of their salaries, or even one tenth. They can get more than 10,000 yuan a month, and we only get 1000. Sometimes we internalize all this. We don't see any future. We even look down upon ourselves sometimes.* (Z091)

The same teacher compared teachers' current situation with the 1990s and stated:

"Teachers' status is even lower than the 90's when parents thought highly of us. But now I can't find my value. Sometimes I ask myself 'Why am I still a teacher?'" (Z091).

Teachers had a lot to offer when asked what can be done to improve teachers' social and political status. One teacher commented:

I: What should society do to improve migrant teachers' social and political status?

R: *Personally speaking, to improve teachers' social and political status, the first thing is to raise teachers' salaries. Only by doing this can we improve how students and parents view and treat teachers. Students and parents know how much we earn. If the salary is increased, teachers don't need to go for another part-time job. They will devote wholeheartedly to teaching. With a monthly salary of 1000 yuan and no savings, some young teachers have to borrow money from colleagues for a visit back to their hometown.* (Z091)

The suggestion to raise teachers' salaries is shared by another interviewee, who is a principal. He argues that the issue needs to be tackled urgently. If it is not handled properly, it could cost the society more than just money. He stated:

"The biggest challenge for our school [School AA] is that teachers' salaries are too low. The teachers' average monthly salary is about 1600 yuan, for new teachers 1300 to 1400, and older teachers about 2000. It is too low. Teachers cannot even afford trips to visit their hometown. Some teachers haven't got married at the age of 27 or 28 because it is hard for them to find spouses with such low salaries. It is time to raise teachers' salaries. If this is not done in 3 years, it will become one of the most serious social problems for Shenzhen City". (AA093)



Minban schools are required to follow the required regulations to set up a teachers' union. Every school now has a teachers' union. Unlike teachers' unions in Europe and North America which are concerned with teachers' trade union rights, teachers' unions in China are more concerned with recreational activities, usually conceived as addressing the well-being of teachers. Teachers' unions in all six minban schools in Shenzhen and Zhuhai organize recreational activities and social events (such as karaoke, dinner party, or touring surrounding places of interest) on special occasions such as the International Women's Day on March 8th, the Labour Day on May 1st, the National Day on October 1st, and the New Year's Day. A union of this kind leaves problems reported in this study untackled, critical issues such as teachers' low salaries, poor working and living conditions, and low social and political status. One of the school principals argues that there is a difference between teacher's union in the West and teacher's union in China. She explained:

Y: This school has teachers' union right?

H: Yes, we do.

Y: What is the main function of the teachers' union?

H: *In China teachers' union is different from that in capitalist societies. In the capitalist society the union has great power to protect teachers' rights, but our union is mainly to appease.*

Y: Appease?

H: *Yes. At the same time, teachers' unions also do some logistic work to look after teachers' life, hold some activities and events, hold some competitions to ease teachers' pressure from heavy teaching duties. Of course, when it involves teachers' rights and benefits, we also consult the unions. But the union representatives are often our own teachers or administrators. It's difficult for them to speak entirely on behalf of teachers. That is impossible. This is the main different from capitalist societies. (X083)*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigates changes in education under China's market economy, with a focus on the teaching and living conditions of teachers. The study adopts a case study approach and draws on questionnaire findings and personal interviews conducted in 29 schools in five municipalities and provinces of China: Beijing, Zhejiang, Hunan, Xincheng (pseudonym), and Guangdong. The study reports that, fuelled by forces of globalisation, China has gradually shifted from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. As a result, China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, and migration. The profound socio-economic and political transformation poses significant fundamental changes to education in China. One such change is the privatisation and marketization of China's education system by adopting the fee-paying principle, providing private and non-government schools, introducing market-driven curricula, and receiving funding from non-state sectors. Another significant paradigm change is the decentralization of educational policy from a centralized governance model to local governments. As a result, the nature of the Chinese state has shifted from a paternalistic welfare stature providing for every need of its citizens to a less powerful and less effective one.

Since penetrating into Chinese society, globalization has contributed to the widening gap between the coastal and international regions and has further exacerbated the gap between China's 'haves' and 'have nots'. As a result, it has created significant disparity between rural and urban education, and lack of accessible and affordable education for migrant children. The study also shows that recent changes in education have had tremendous impact on teachers in many different ways, including their workload, remuneration, wellbeing, and teaching and living conditions. For example, as a requirement of and in response to globalization and the market economy, China introduced a massive curriculum reform that has brought teachers tremendous pressure, dilemmas, ambivalence, constraints, as well as other psychological and pedagogical struggles in the process of new curriculum implementation. Furthermore, despite China's economic miracle, teachers' teaching and living conditions have not improved. On the contrary, the status of teachers, particularly for rural and migrant teachers, has deteriorated because they are living in poor housing conditions and being paid less owing to high inflation rates, expensive living costs, and soaring housing prices. Furthermore, all teachers face heavy workloads and greater responsibilities, and, consequently, more pressure and stress. Many teachers have to tutor outside of school hours or work a second job to make ends meet. Under the fee-paying principle, some parents expect teachers to provide the best service to their children, and as such the roles of teachers and students have changed into those of business and clients. It seems evident that teaching has been devalued and commodified in the age of market economy. The study also reveals a number of serious issues with respect to teachers'



labour rights. In particular, this study finds that teachers' unions in China plays a minimum role in advocating for teachers' labour rights and bargaining collectively on teachers' salary and working conditions because it is constrained by its affiliation as an employer-based union.

In light of the abovementioned challenges, immediate actions need to be taken to enact positive changes. Any number of ameliorative measures seem inescapable, including reducing teachers' work load, decreasing class size, increasing teachers' salary, improving teachers' welfare, raising teachers' status, informing teachers about their rights and responsibilities, involving teachers in policy matters, promoting transformative leadership in schools, and enhancing the role of teachers' unions. All these work towards the goal of achieving social justice and equity in education.

REDUCING TEACHERS' WORK LOAD

There is a lack of policy on the structure of teachers' overall workload and how work-related tasks should be allocated. This study has shown that teachers are experiencing increasing pressure and stress owing to long working hours. Most teachers in all five provinces on an average spend more than 40 hours per week at their work, particularly on non-teaching related tasks, including administrative responsibilities and frequent meetings. Although Chinese labour law stipulates that teachers' working hours should not exceed 40 hours per week, there is no clear policy or regulation on teachers' minimum instructional hours. Workload is also a collectively shared factor causing job dissatisfaction amongst the teacher participants in this study. Teachers' complaints about unpaid overtime work indicate that teachers enjoy very low autonomy in their profession. This reveals an inefficiency of the education system that causes job dissatisfaction for many teachers.

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education of China develop a better policy regulating teachers' working hours with specific information on the allocation of teaching-related and non-teaching related tasks. Decreasing teachers' non-teaching related hours and balancing their teaching-related hours with other tasks will increase teachers' job satisfaction and efficiency. When making such decisions, the size of class, total number of students taught by one teacher, and administrative responsibilities (such as those of homeroom teacher and extra-curriculum supervisors) should be factored in.

DECREASING CLASS SIZE

Although the Chinese government has made attempts to regulate class size, in reality it is still a problem that dominates Chinese education. The most recent government

reported statistics on class size in Beijing sets the student-teacher ratio in secondary schools at 1:12 (People's Daily, 2010). In Shenzhen, the local government stipulates that class size should not exceed 50, which still is a lot. Though student-teacher ratio is different from class size and typical class sizes observed in schools tend to be larger than the measured student-teacher ratio, the much smaller figure on student-teacher ratio clearly indicate that there is room to reduce class sizes through enhanced school efficiency and better resource allocation. Smaller class sizes will certainly make it easier for teachers to engage students into active and participatory learning while meeting the new curriculum demands for student-centered pedagogy. Furthermore, this measure would help reduce teachers' workload.

INCREASING TEACHERS' SALARY

One of the guiding principles of the ILO/UNESCO recommendations is that salaries should provide teachers with the means to ensure a reasonable standard of living and to invest in further professional development. They should also reflect the importance of the teaching functions and take into account the qualifications and experience required by teachers together with the responsibility they carry. Moreover, they should compare positively with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar qualifications. This study clearly demonstrates four prominent issues concerning teachers' salary in China: tremendous regional differences, differences between urban and rural schools, differences between public schools and migrant schools, and drawbacks associated with the merit-based salary system. The study reveals that teachers' salaries, particularly those of rural and migrant teachers, are not commensurate with their educational qualifications and experience, nor are they compatible with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar qualifications. New policy needs to be introduced to allocate resources to increase teachers' salaries, particularly those in migrant schools and in rural areas. By doing so, teachers' living conditions will be improved along with their social and political status. It will also stop the migration of teachers from rural to urban schools or from minban migrant schools to public schools, not to mention outward moves to other fields.

With regard to the merit-based salary system, it was implemented in all schools in China in 2011. According to the new system, a teacher's salary consists of basic wages, seniority pay, performance-based bonus pay and allowances for administrative responsibilities. Though the objective of the merit-based salary system is to guarantee that the average wage level of teachers is on par with other civil servants, it has some negative consequences on the quality of education and the teaching profession. First, teachers' work in Chinese schools is mainly evaluated according to the test scores of their students. Merit pay based on teachers' performance, *i.e.*, students' test scores,



strengthens the exam-orientation of teaching and learning, which plays against the student-centered education advocated by the new national curriculum. As a result, teachers will not focus their teaching on developing students' problem-solving skills, self-autonomy in the learning process, and creativity but, rather, on preparing students for frequent standardized tests. On the contrary, teachers will become more controlled and even exploited by their employers. Furthermore, merit pay for teachers will not influence the so-called "poorly performing" students and "bad" parents to change their ways. Even if a teacher works 100 hours a week, little will change if the students are not motivated to learn. In addition, merit pay will increase inequity in the teaching profession. Key urban schools with better educational resources and highly qualified teachers have larger budgets for merit pay while rural schools often survive on limited means. This income gap motivates teachers to move from rural to urban schools and exacerbates teacher the retention problem in rural areas. The Chinese Government ought to take action to make sure teachers' salaries and benefits are on par with those of other civil servants without heavily relying on the merit-based pay system such that teachers can make a reasonable living based on their salary. It also ought to allow the Teachers' Unions to assume their role of collectively negotiating salary range and welfare on behalf of teachers.

IMPROVING TEACHERS' WELFARE

Teachers in gongban schools enjoy various types of welfare benefits, including pension, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, work injury insurance, maternity insurance, and housing accumulation fund. On the other hand, there is a lack of guaranteed insurance for minban teachers, particularly those working in marginalized schools. Some teachers in the study were creative enough to plan their maternity leaves during the summer holidays. Compared to gongban teachers, teachers in minban schools have a strong sense of job insecurity. The minban teachers were concerned with the prospect of unemployment when their schools close down. Many teachers in our study could not afford housing, unless helped financially by their parents. Some minban teachers lived in apartments provided by their schools, but the conditions in these are poor. One teacher had to cook in his bathroom as there was no kitchen. The teachers could not express their concerns to their teachers' unions because teachers' unions mainly played a recreational role, organising sports, social activities, and travel. Unlike teachers' unions in Western countries, teachers' unions in China do not have much power. Despite the challenges, many teachers in the study reported viewing teaching as a noble call. They are happy to be teacher because they derive happiness from the act of teaching itself. It is critical for the Chinese government to revisit the welfare system and redistribute resources fairly and equitably so that both gongban and minban teachers can benefit.

RAISING TEACHERS' STATUS

As Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao once stated, "the nation's rise and fall will rely on education, as only first-rate education can generate first-rate talents which in turn can build a first-rate nation." Without question teachers play an important role in a nation's social and economic development.

The teachers in the study expressed concern that teachers' status has declined considerably in the last decade or so. Once conceived as the most glorious profession, teaching is now constructed as a commodity (Kutoba, in press) under the market economy in China. As such, teachers are seen as paid service providers. Our findings are in accord with Guo and Pungur (2008) and Zhou (2002): the social status of the teaching profession, once so highly thought of and respected, needs to be reclaimed through renewed professionalism. The Chinese government needs to raise awareness among the public about the important role that teachers play in a knowledge-based society, introduce legislative efforts to improve the status of teachers, and, more importantly, increase teachers' salaries and distribute more economic and material benefits to teachers.

INFORMING TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is surprising to find that a majority of teachers are not aware of their rights and responsibilities other than their right to certain holidays. They are aware that there is a Teacher's Law and a Compulsory Education Law, however, the majority of teachers could not share much specific information on these laws and other educational policies. They have a common sense of teachers' codes of conducts but were not sure where to obtain specific information on this aspect. It is recommended that Teachers' Union put forth effort to ensure that all teachers are well-informed of their rights and responsibilities. For example, pre-job information sessions and in-service professional development workshops could be the venue of such efforts. An information package could be also prepared to share with teachers.

INVOLVING TEACHERS IN POLICY MATTERS

The study shows that teachers rarely have opportunities to express their views on policy matters, student and teacher evaluation standards, curriculum development, and other issues that directly concern them. Currently there is no well-established mechanism to rectify this. Theoretically, it is the responsibility of Teachers' Union to ensure that teachers' views are sought and adopted in policy decisions and that information on policy and curriculum change, professional development, and other education related matters is sent to teachers. In practice, teachers' rights on participation



in decision making are not guaranteed as Teacher' Unions in Chinese schools are under the leadership of the school principal and not separated from school administration. This arrangement made some sense under socialist organizational schemes, but under the market economy works to only to further undermine teachers material well-being and professional status.

PROMOTING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Research has suggested that autocratic leadership approaches are least likely to lead to sustained school improvement (Fullan, 2006; Harris & Chapman, 2002). Massive education reform and dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes resulting from the market economy suggest that schools are facing tremendous challenges. This changed educational landscape demands transformative school leadership that embraces equity, empowerment and moral purpose. Data collected from this study clearly indicate that teachers who assume an active role in schools' decision-making process feel greater job satisfaction and are intrinsically motivated to make positive changes in their educational endeavours. However, teachers also indicated that they are very much controlled and manipulated, rather than heard, empowered, and supported by the school leaders. The autocratic leadership they experience makes it very challenging to foster the student autonomy required by the new curriculum. The changing school context implies a different power relationship within the school, one in which leadership is a shared and collective endeavour that engages all teachers in the school. In order to construct and refine educational practices leading to a shared set of goals defined by the new curriculum, more democratic leadership should be promoted in schools so that a professional learning community can be formed to support both teachers and students.

ENHANCING THE ROLE OF TEACHERS' UNION

Though teachers are all members of Teachers' Union, which is officially considered the representative body for all teachers and other educational workers, it is not established as an organisation to fight for teachers' labour rights, to bargain collectively on their salary and employment conditions, or to support employees. The Teachers' Union in China is an employer-dominated union and its formation, administration, budget, and representation of employees are heavily interfered in by employers. It is strongly recommended that Education International work collaboratively with the Chinese government to enable the Teachers' Union to fully enjoy rights recognised in international conventions and to strengthen union activities focusing on the most important

issues for teachers and students, such as educational reform and improvement of educational services, and to promote the ratification of ILO Conventions No.87, 98, and 151, which specify public workers' rights to bargain collectively.

TOWARD EDUCATION EQUITY

This study evokes debates on even more important issues than those initially laid out. Through an account of changes in education in China, this study contextualises the concept of globalisation by examining its impact on China through the influence of the market economy. One important debate this study evokes pertains to issues of social justice and equity. Many argue that the market economy has produced not only an economic miracle but also glaring inequality (Davis and Wang 2009, Han and Whyte 2009, Lee 2009, Postiglione 2006). As Davis and Wang note, the practices and institutions of socialism appear to have receded into a distant past. China is converging toward a pattern of inequality in which “the returns to capital exceed those to labour” (16). Han and Whyte (2009) identify a long list of people who have lost out in the reform process, including rural residents, rural migrants living in cities, those with low incomes and little schooling, the unemployed, factory workers, those still employed by financially troubled state-owned enterprises, non-Party members, residents of China’s interior and Western provinces, women and those middle-age and older, and anyone whose standard of living is threatened or has fallen. As Lee notes (2009), social injustice is ubiquitous, a view that is not restricted to the ‘losers’ but also ordinary Chinese of different generational, educational, and occupational backgrounds. It seems clear that there is a dire need for the Chinese government to take active measures to reduce social injustice and inequity. To achieve this goal, it is important that equal access to educational opportunities be guaranteed, particularly for the migrant population, minorities, and rural residents. Furthermore, resources need to be redistributed nationally to help improve teachers’ wellbeing; teaching and living conditions; and social, economic, and political status.



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