Bridging the Gap between Migrant Children and School Teachers

Parental Involvement in Migrant Children’s Compulsory Education in Urban Schools in Contemporary China

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Abstract

The overall aim of this study is to examine the parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education in urban schools in China. By using secondary quantitative data from the large-scale survey on Rural-Urban Migrant Children’s Compulsory Education conducted by China National Institute for Educational Research in 2006, comparisons are carried out between migrant parents and urban parents in a variety of aspects of parental involvement. Comparisons are also made among different types of cities, i.e. large cities, medium cities and small cities.

The results show that there are large gaps between migrant parents and urban parents in most aspects of parental involvement. Generally speaking, there are certain limitations of parental involvement in children’s education in China. What is worse, parental involvement in migrant children’s education is more limited due to various reasons. Disparities are also found among different types of cities in parental involvement in migrant children’s education. It is found out that the situation in medium and small cities is better than that in large cities.

Barriers to parental involvement in education mainly include three aspects: barriers from the societal level, from the school level and from the family level.

Further, as a root of various educational issues in migrant children’s compulsory education, inequality of education, including urban-rural disparity, disparity within the school and disparity between different social classes are clearly revealed in parental involvement in education.

In order to improve parental involvement and further improve migrant children’s education, it is vital to involve stakeholders at different levels to work together.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMB</td>
<td>Renminbi (the Official Currency of the People’s Republic of China)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Background

Since the introduction of market reforms in the late 1970s, China has undergone great economic and social change underpinned by rapid economic growth. One feature has been the large scale internal migration from rural to urban areas since 1980s. With the development of industrialization and urbanization, the number of farmers who need to work in agriculture has been gradually decreasing. On the contrary, there is a great demand for labor force in tertiary industry. Therefore, more and more rural people move to cities and start seeking better paying jobs. It is estimated that 120 to 150 million rural people have relocated to China’s cities over the last two decades (Pan, 2002). After moving out, a majority of migrants will never go back to their hometowns. Some of them settle down and start a small business, but many others lead unstable lives, moving from one place to another. Their life is often a daily struggle (Qi, 2006).

In China, this group of people has been given a special name. They are called “peasant workers”. According to the Household Registration System (Hukou system) in China, they still possess rural hukou. However, they do not live on farmlands any more; instead, they live and work in cities. As a source of cheap labor, rural-urban migrants have the potential to contribute to national and local economic growth. Migration also accelerates the process of industrialization and urbanization to a certain extent. In addition, working in cities may help themselves improve the standard of living because they are more likely to get better paying jobs in cities. However in China, “migrants are often viewed as economic laborers rather than as complete social beings” (Murphy, 2009, p.1), because “labor migration involves the exclusion of rural people from urban health, education, housing and social security systems” (Li & Piachaud, 2006). As a vulnerable group, many internal migrants from rural areas and their families do not have their basic social needs met. And they are often regarded as second-class residents, neither belonging to peasants nor to city dwellers.

“Beginning in the mid-1990s, as employment stabilized and rental housing became more widely accessible, increasing numbers of migrant laborers brought their families, including children of school age, to join them in the cities” (Murphy, 2009, p.96). There has been a sharp increase in the number of children of rural-to-urban migrants that have been flooding
into cities all around China. By the year of 2005, there were approximately twenty million children of school age who had accompanied their parents in relocating to cities in China (Luo, 2005). However, these children have fallen into a conspicuous gap in the provision of public education and are facing a variety of difficulties during the process of schooling (Rural Education Action Project, 2009), such as children’s unwillingness to go to school (Jin, 2004; Kong & Gu, 2004; Xu & Chen, 2004), whether they are able to get access to educational opportunities, what type of schools they could attend, whether they can afford schooling fees, and whether they can be treated equally in schools and so on. Both the equality and quality of education are affected by factors at various levels, including societal level, school level, family level and individual level. In 2003, China’s Central Government announced a comprehensive policy on the schooling of migrant children, stating that the host cities should be the main provider of schooling for migrant children and public schools should be the main provider of education for migrant children (Jiang et al., 2008). In addition, some migrant schools have been established in order to meet the needs of migrant children who cannot get access to urban public schools. Each year, a large number of migrant children get access to compulsory education and start their new school lives in host cities. However, it leads to problems and challenges for urban schools in various aspects such as school management, funding, curriculum design, and teacher-parent relationships and so on. In such a situation, in spite of efforts made by governments at various levels and by schools, migrant parents would act as a link between schools and children in order to improve their children’s academic achievement and cognitive development.

There is a simple cliché—two heads are better than one—highlighting the importance of partnerships and combining intellectual effort (Whitney & Glasgow, 2009). If it is used in the field of education, then it can be understood in this way: students will benefit if schools, teachers, parents and communities are in consensus with one another and work as a team focusing on the student (ibid.). In this network, family plays an important role in children’s academic achievement and cognitive development. Parents’ support and participation in their children’s learning process would benefit schools, families and children.

1.2 Key Definitions and Terms

This section explains key definitions and terms that will be used in subsequent chapters of this paper in order to facilitate shared understandings.
1.2.1 Migrant Children

Before this paper goes any further, the term “migrant children” should be defined or explained in the first place.

So far, there are several different definitions of “migrant children” in China. The term “migrant children” can refer to different types of populations. For example, migrant children can be understood as children from migrant families who contemporarily live in one region. They might be urban children, rural children or street children. Migrant children may also refer to rural children who move to cities with their parents, or those who still stay in rural places while his/her parents work in cities. Migrant children in this study refer to children who move from rural to urban areas with their parents or children who were born after their parents’ arrival in host cities and they are receiving full-time compulsory education.

1.2.2 Compulsory Education

Education in China is composed of four parts: basic education, technical/vocational education, common higher education, and adult education. Basic education refers to pre-school education, general primary education and general secondary education. Pre-school education starts at the age of three and lasts for three or four years. Regular primary education starts at the age of six or seven. According to the newly adopted Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China in 2006, all children who have reached the age of six or seven shall go to school for the number of years prescribed, regardless of sex, nationality or race (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2006). Regular secondary education is composed of lower secondary education and upper secondary education. Lower secondary education takes three or four years, while upper secondary education usually takes three years. The nine-year compulsory education scheme covers the stages of primary education and lower secondary education.

According to the newly-launched Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, the State Council and local governments at various levels are responsible for raising funds for the operating expenses and basic constructions for the implementation of compulsory education, and the funds must be fully guaranteed (ibid.). In addition, governments at various levels are also responsible for assisting children from vulnerable families to receive full-time compulsory education by providing free textbooks, boarding and so on (ibid.).
1.2.3 Household Registration System (*Hukou System*)

The *Hukou* System, which was established in 1958, is an internal passport system. It registers people by their birthplaces with nonagricultural or agricultural *hukou* status upon which until very recently residential mobility and social benefits have been contingent (Cheng & Selden, 1994). The Household Registration System in China, compared with similar systems in Taiwan or Japan, serves far more important functions (Chan & Buckingham, 2008). During the central planning period, it made a great contribution to social and political stability under the rapid economic growth and to the maintenance of people’s basic needs and rights as well.

However, the Household Registration System has certain drawbacks. For one thing, this system hinders the migration of citizens from one place to another, which, as a result, might become a barrier to the sustainable economic growth and urbanization. For another, the division of citizens into urban residents and rural residents leads to injustice and inequality especially in the context of rural-urban migration. A large number of rural-urban migrants are treated as second-class citizens, deprived of the right to settle in cities and to most of the basic welfare and services enjoyed by urban residents, ranging from small benefits like being able to buy a city bus pass, to much more important matters such as enrolling their children in public schools in cities where their parents work (ibid.). Migrants’ free movement does not mean that they can completely move beyond the shadow of *Hukou System* in their everyday lives (Sa, 2004). “Although the government has rarely enforced the rules against migration since the 1980s, one of the legacies of the *Hukou System* is that the education system did not evolve with the changing dynamics of the labor force” (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). For migrant children, the fact that migration itself has not always been fully sanctioned by the government becomes the main source of exclusion in education (ibid.). On the basis of Household Registration System, migrant children are not included in the local budgetary educational expenditure. In this case, urban schools are allowed to collect temporary schooling fees to cover their expenses (Rong & Deng, 2010). Before enrolling in a public school, a child without a permanent resident permit has to pay a temporary schooling fee, which varies widely from school to school and many families can not afford it. In sum, the *Hukou System* has become one of the major obstacles for migrant children’s access to compulsory education in urban areas.

During recent years, the Household Registration System has become less restricted in many cities. Migrant workers have been allowed to settle down in host cities if they meet
certain requirements. In addition, the Chinese Central Government and local governments at different levels have taken measures to popularize nine-year compulsory education to migrant children. However, without an urban *hukou*, migrant children are still facing difficulties in their access to education due to various reasons.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to examine the parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education in urban schools in China. In order to achieve the aim of the study, the following research objectives are identified:

1. To examine the necessity of parental involvement in migrant children’s education;
2. To examine similarities and differences between migrant parents and urban parents in parental involvement in children’s education;
3. To examine differences in parental involvement in migrant children’s education among different types of cities; and
4. To explore barriers to parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

With a rapid increase in the number of migrant children moving from rural to urban areas and settling down in cities, their educational problems draw great attention from the whole society. Previous studies on migrant children’s education in China are mostly descriptive and focused on the lack of educational access of migrant children who resided in cities (Zhao, 2000; Han, 2001). In addition, most studies focus on describing the general picture of migrant children’s education without exploring detailed knowledge. This paper looks into the issue of migrant children’s compulsory education from the angle of family and parental involvement.

Previous studies have suggested that parents play a significant role in children’s education. Parental involvement in education increases student achievement, even after differences in individual ability and socioeconomic status are taken into account (Henderson, 1987). By comparing migrant parents with urban parents in different aspects of parental involvement, this study intends to explore barriers to parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education. Since the research of parental involvement in education is very limited in China (Ye, 2009), this study, to a certain extent, will make a contribution to
this field and arouse people’s attention to parental involvement. Further, this study intends to shed some light on the equality of compulsory education of migrant children in the context of China’s rural-urban internal migration, and on how migrant families, schools and teachers, and the whole society make efforts together to improve migrant children’s compulsory education as well.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

First of all, “unlike other countries with long histories, rural-urban migration appeared rather suddenly in China in the 1980s as a highly visible phenomenon” (Murphy, 2009, p.3). Therefore, there is a lack of studies in this field especially on parental involvement in migrant children’s education (Ye, 2009). Relevant data which can be found at present is quite limited. Therefore, urban parents, in this study, are taken as reference. And more focus will be laid on migrant families and migrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education.

Secondly, due to the large population and unequal educational development in different cities, the findings from the study do not reflect the general picture of China.

Finally, as secondary data analysis is employed in this study, there might be an absence of key variables (Bryman, 2008). The data is retrieved from surveys which are conducted for other purposes rather than examining parental involvement in migrant children’s education. Therefore, it is difficult to examine relationships between two or more variables.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the area of the research, provides relevant background information, identifies the aim and objectives, and states the significance and limitations of the study. Further on, chapter two depicts a general picture of migrant children’s compulsory education in China, including the importance of education to migrant children, development and changes of their education since 1980s till present, and various barriers in front. Chapter three presents the key concept and theories that will be used for the analysis of this research which is followed by the methodology employed for the comparative study in chapter four. Chapter five presents the findings of the study, which is followed by the discussion and concluding remarks in chapter six.
Chapter Two  
Overview of Migrant Children’s Education in China

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the general picture of migrant children’s education in China will be presented from three aspects: the importance of education to migrant children; the development and changes of migrant children’s compulsory education since 1980s till present; and social and educational problems they are facing right now. This section aims to help readers enhance the understanding of current issues on migrant children’s compulsory education in contemporary Chinese society.

2.2 The Importance of Education to Migrant Children

As China is currently undergoing an expeditious industrialization and modernization, since the mid-1980s, mass migration from the rural to urban areas has been one of the most significant changes. Peasant workers provide unlimited financial resources for the construction and development of social projects (Hall & Lewis, 2008). While those laborers create large amount of social wealth for the locals, they also provide huge taxation. During the past twenty years, the contribution to the GDP growth of China from internal migrants accounted for about 16% (Murphy, 2009). Labor migration has not only exerted a profound impact on the economic growth in China, it has also had far-reaching consequences for the social development (ibid.). It is evident that the regions with labor influx enjoy both social and economic returns provided by rural-urban migrants. However, mainly due to the Household Registration System, migrants have difficulties in enjoying social benefits or at least having the basic social needs met in the regions they live. In the aspect of compulsory education in particular, a large number of migrant children are not covered by the formal education system in cities.

“In China it is not only the basic rights endowed by the law for citizen to accept equal education but the key to harmonized development of education and rational distribution of educational resources, which influences the economic growth,
income distribution and social welfare, and in further affects the long run
development and prosperity for a country or region” (Hall & Lewis, 2008, p.26).

Education fundamentally and directly benefits individuals in the first place. As families keep moving perpetually or temporarily because of various reasons, education of children becomes a major victim (UNESCO, 2009). A large number of migrant children are at present facing difficulties in getting access to compulsory education and in the process of schooling: some of them have no access to schooling; some go to school but cannot receive quality education; some are able to learn basic knowledge but hardly acquire cognitive capabilities. It is evident that in modern societies, individual’s life chance is always shaped by education, because we live in an age when knowledge and information dominates. For migrant children, education plays a much more significant role because better education improves the quality of life directly; it also increases a person’s ability to earn an income and be free of poverty (Sen, 2001). For many children, education is seen as one of the ways to change his or her social status and help them to be accepted in urban areas in the future. According to previous studies, it is found out that migrant children no longer fit back in their villages: they neither understand nor have any interest in farming. Yet neither do they fit in the social world of urban regions, where they are discriminated by local residents (Murphy, 2009). If these children grow up feeling that they belong to nowhere, then it may lead to serious psychological problems for individuals (ibid.). “Education is , first and foremost, a human right of learning how to live, which implies to equip each child, teenager and youth with means and fundamental notions that enable him or her to understand the surrounding world and to behave as a responsible individual” (UNESCO, 2009, p.22). Education in urban public schools can be regarded as one means for migrant children to adapt to the new environment and to be accepted by local people gradually.

For the large number of migrant children who are excluded from the vast compulsory education system, their education is not only significant and decisive for their own life chances, but also has a crucial and positive impact on the steady and continuous economic growth for the nation as a whole. According to the Human Capital Theory, the economic growth is related not only with the quantity but also with the quality of the labor force. Since the internal rural-urban migration has made great contributions to the economic growth in urban areas, with more and more migrants bringing their children to cities, there is an urge to provide education for them. In the future, these laborers with knowledge and certain skills will play an important role in the economic growth of the destination. Alternatively, if they go
back to their hometowns, then educated labor force would also bring benefits to poor regions or rural areas.

In addition to the impact on the economic growth, inclusive-exclusive phenomenon in education also influences social development. Lu and Zhang (2004) pointed out that excluding migrant children from life in the cities will bring further tensions into urban-rural relationships and solidify the disparities between the urban and rural areas (Lu & Zhang, 2004). More seriously, it will cause migrant workers to feel that they are being rejected and treated unfairly in the process of urbanization and modernization (ibid.). It is evident that excluding migrant children from education may lead to serious social problems for China as a whole. Wang (2003) argued that urbanization is not simply a process of making existing cities more modern, but also including helping rural people to become urban (Wang, 2003). This indicates that it is more important to make migrants and their children an integral part of the city in order to realize the urbanization in the whole nation. And Wang also pointed out that providing education for migrant children will be an important means for the process of urbanization to begin (ibid.). For migrant children, education could be perceived as the most basic form of social security, not only to secure their fair chance to be educated and to acquire the basic knowledge and skills in living (Qi, 2006). Education is also essential for them to secure their equal right to development. Education fairness therefore serves as the foundation of social fairness (ibid.). Hence, education for migrant children can be one of the factors that improve or hinder social cohesion and harmony in the country.

2.3 Three Stages of the Development of Migrant Children’s Education

The development of migrant children’s education is closely linked with the development of migration management in China. Implemented in 1958, the Household Registration System, which created a clear (and continuing) rural-urban divide (Rural Education Action Project, 2009), fundamentally had a great impact on migration and migration management in the history.

Migration management in Chinese history is composed of three stages. Here, the term “migration” has a far more broad definition, including migration from rural to urban areas, from inland cities to coastal cities, and from underdeveloped to developed regions. This paper is merely focused on rural-to-urban migration.

The first stage, from 1949 to 1957, was a free migration period when people were permitted to migrate between rural and urban areas (Qi, 2006).
The second stage, between 1958 and 1984, was a period of controlled migration. Starting in the 1980s, China has experienced rapid economic growth with the implementation of economic reform. The tertiary sector of the economy in developed regions has become the fastest-growing sector. Therefore, there has been a high demand for labor force in cities. A large number of rural people migrated to cities for better paying jobs. They provided cheap labor force and economic benefits, but also brought social problems to the cities such as heavy traffic, social insecurity and crowded housing. Hence, governments at various levels responded with measures to halt the massive shift from rural to urban areas. In fact, early in the life of the People’s Republic of China, migration was effectively restricted by the Household Registration System (Naughton, 2007). Migrants without an urban hukou were regarded as “illegal residents” in host cities. It was almost impossible for migrant children to receive formal education in urban public schools. Nevertheless, rural people with their families still moved to cities in very large numbers. “Population mobilization to metropolitan areas can no longer be easily controlled” (Postiglione, 2006, p.14).

The third stage began around the year of 1984, when the rule of National Identification Card began to be implemented. More and more migrants swarmed into cities and began to stay there longer. Despite the change in the official line, access to schooling was still not routine; there were considerable barriers remaining (Sa, 2004). Prior to the mid-1990s, as part of the Household Registration System, there was an attempt to keep migrant children from using the public services in urban areas (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). Some researchers even alleged that the Hukou System was kept in place in order to discourage migration (Solinger, 1999). Difficulties for migrant children to enroll in urban public schools have led to the emergence of privately-run migrant schools, which have been struggling to fill the educational gap (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). Migrant schools mushroomed in the last two decades by low-income migrant families in order to meet the large demand of education (Rong & Deng, 2010). Most of these migrant schools were not registered with local education authorities in the beginning. They were considered as “illegal schools” in the cities. By 2006, there were more than three hundred migrant schools in Beijing, but only fifty-eight of them were “legal schools” which did register with local education authorities (Jiang et al., 2008). In addition, migrant schools were often located in remote places, equipped with poor school facilities, inferior quality of teaching and curriculum design. A majority of teachers had neither bachelor degrees nor teaching certificates. Most of migrant schools were only able to provide elementary schooling for migrant children due to teachers’ low education levels. What is worse, these schools were always asked to move from one place to another due to
their “illegal” status. Under these circumstances, it was very difficult for migrant children to receive quality and consistent compulsory education.

“In the mid 1990s, migrant population once again increased dramatically by a large margin” (Qi, 2006, p.9). In April 1996, the former State Educational Committee published the Procedures on Education for School-Age Migrant Children in Cities and Towns (Pilot), and piloted it in some cities including Beijing and Shanghai (Yang, 2006). It states that it is the responsibility of local governments to provide compulsory schooling for migrant children, and to set up strict migration management mechanism. “Government of their origins should set strict restrictions to control the movement of registered students” (Qi, 2006, p.10). “Obviously, these procedures set up strict restrictions on the mobility of school-age population” (Wu, 2001, p.147).

In 1998, Ministry of Security and State Educational Committee jointly issued the Provisional Procedures on Schooling for Migrant Children and Adolescents. It states that “the governments of their present existence should shoulder the major responsibility to provide compulsory education to these children” (Wang, 2003, p.74). Schools are allowed to be established by companies, organizations or individuals under the instructions of local governments. And none of them should seek for profits. This document, to a certain extent, accepts the mobility of migrant children and comes up with a more positive and concrete plan to solve the problem (Qi, 2006). However, “the general principle made by the state may be differently put into action at local levels” (Wu, 2001, p.147).

In 2001, the State Council announced Decisions on the Reform and Development of Basic Education, which further indicates that more attention should be paid to migrant children’s education. Local governments and urban public schools should play an important role in migrant children’s schoolings (Yang, 2006).

In January in 2003, the General Office of the State Council issued the Notice on a Better Management and Service for Peasant Workers. It points out again that local governments should take various measures to enroll migrant children into urban public schools. Migrant children should be treated equally in terms of entrance requirements.

Currently China has initiated several policies in order to protect migrant children’s right to education, and to improve the equality and quality of compulsory education for migrant children. In 2003, the State Council No.1 Document called for “the provision of education for migrant children of the same quality as that received by urban children” (Murphy, 2009, p.6). In the same year, the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinion on Further Improving the Work of Providing Education to the Children of Peasant Workers in Cities,
which is a document jointly reached by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Security, National Development and Reform Commission and other three departments (Qi, 2006). It is a rather comprehensive policy on the schooling of migrant children. It stipulates that “the hosting cities should be the main provider of schooling for migrant children” and “public schools should be the main provider of education for migrant children” (Jiang et al., 2008).

In 2006, the new Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China was adopted at the Twenty-second Session of the Tenth National People’s Congress, and began to come into effect since September 1st, 2006. The newly-launched Compulsory Education Law aims to provide nine-year free compulsory education to children in all areas around China. The revised law emphasizes that the children of peasant workers shall have the equal right to education as children in cities do. In addition, some cities have designed policies and taken different measures to protect the rights of migrants (Ingrid et al., 2006).

In 2010, the Central Government launched the National Education Reform and Development of Long-Term Planning Programs (2010-2020). It states that equality of education serves as the foundation of social equity, and the key to the equality of education is the equal access to the educational opportunity. In order to improve the equality of education in the whole Chinese society, more focus should be laid on vulnerable groups and underdeveloped regions. It stresses once again that “the hosting cities should be the main provider of schooling for migrant children” and “public schools should be the main provider of education for migrant children”. Furthermore, local governments are responsible for the formulation of regulations on entrance examinations after migrant children’s accomplishment of compulsory education (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2010).

Though the Central Government and local governments have taken various measures to improve the quality and equality of migrant children’s education, it will be a long way to go to turn these new policies into practices. In addition to reforms and innovations at the systemic level, it is equally important for the whole society to create inclusive cultures in communities and schools. Hence, compulsory education is no longer seen as a pure matter of schooling. It is a significant move away from the traditional values of education for competition and social mobility, and education is given its own meaning (UNESCO, 2009).

2.4 Problems and Barriers

2.4.1 Barriers from the Society
First of all, in the official line, “as migration became more and more a fait accompli and policy makers began to understand the importance of the contribution of migration to economic growth and the rise of productivity, the regulations against migrant students gradually began to be relaxed” (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). However, there is a lot of confusion about China's policy towards migrant children in urban areas. There are also different rules, regulations and policies in different cities—as schooling in many ways is still a locally provided public service (ibid.). Although Chinese government has taken measures to tackle the problem of migrant children’s education, in reality, these policies are frequently found to be interpreted and implemented differently in different regions (Qi, 2006). For local governments, they often hold passive attitudes towards rural-urban migration. From their point of view, as the number of migrants is going up, the maintenance of social order becomes a serious issue to tackle with. In some cities, local governments set up rules that have kept migrant students out of the best urban schools and forced them into schools in suburban areas or into migrant schools (ibid.). More specifically, migrant students have a chance to attend local public schools if there is a room. However, the demand for better schools is already very high from urban parents. Since schools with a better reputation often fill up quickly, migrant students are not able to attend urban public schools because there is no seat available (Ma et al., 2008).

Secondly, the financing of education is serious problem for local governments. According to the newly-launched Compulsory Education Law, the expenditures of students in local public schools are jointly shouldered by the Central Government and local governments. And local governments should put the expenditure for compulsory education in their budgets (Xinhua News Agency, 2006). However, due to the Household Registration System, when migrant children study in their hometowns, their expenditures for compulsory education are shouldered by the Central Government and local governments of their domiciles. After they move to cities, they cannot be counted as city dwellers, as their hukou are still in their hometowns. Yet, the expenditures for migrant children’s compulsory education are not included in the budget of the governments of their hometowns. Hence, enrolling migrant children to local public schools means a huge financial burden for local governments. As a result, strict restrictions are often set in order to block migrant children’s access to compulsory schooling.

Finally, the national examination system and associated rules remain as barriers to migrant children being educated in urban public schools (Rural Education Action Project,
2009). According to the Ministry of Education, students should take university entrance examinations in the regions where their original hukou belongs. The university entrance examination, however, is based on the curriculum that is in use in the local education system (ibid.). Migrant students who receive their elementary and secondary schooling in urban public schools have to return to their hometowns to take examinations. Then they may not be as competitive as local students because they have studied in different curriculum.

In addition, peasant workers and their children are often looked down upon by urban residents due to their dressing, manners, living habits, and accents in speaking Mandarin, as well as their low educational levels, low employment status, and poverty (Kwong, 2006).

2.4.2 Barriers from Urban Public School

As the main provider of compulsory education for migrant children, urban public schools face a variety of difficulties in enrolling these children.

Education funding can be regarded as one of the most significant problems. Being lack of enough financial support from local governments, urban public schools are reluctant to enroll migrant children. As mentioned earlier, migrant children, before they are enrolled in public schools, are asked to pay for extra fees, which sometimes are not affordable for migrant families. According to the large-scale national survey on migrant children’s compulsory education in 2006, among reasons why peasant workers believe their children are treated unequally in schools, most of parents voted for “high schooling fees” (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). Since China has initiated several policies with the aim of improving the current situation of migrant children’s compulsory education, the temporary schooling fee has been greatly reduced, which means urban public schools have to afford higher education expenditure for each migrant child. According to a survey in the city of Nanjing, the annual expenditure for a pupil is 1500 RMB. The temporary schooling fee should be 480 RMB at maximum annually. Thus, the school has to pay almost 1000 RMB for each migrant child (Du et al., 2004), which creates a financial burden for most urban public schools. It is one of the reasons why these schools are unwilling to enroll migrant children.

In addition to financial problems, there are also difficulties in school management. The class size is one of the concerns. Plus, the quality of teaching in rural places in general is poorer than that in cities. Migrant children’s learning abilities and academic achievements are relatively poorer than urban children (Song, 2006). Thus, when they study in the same class, it is difficult for teachers to manage.
2.4.3 Barriers from Migrant Families

First of all, there are often many rules that are set up by urban governments to “establish local domicile” (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). Migrants are always asked to apply for and possess five or more certificates (temporary residence permits, work permits, proof of residence, certificates from the place of origin, and household registration booklets) before they send their children to urban public schools without paying temporary schooling fees (ibid.). However, some of migrant families are unable to obtain all five certificates.

Secondly, in China, compulsory education is carried out on a basis of the Household Registration System, in other words, the local public education resource is only open to the local residents, excluding non-local citizens (Hall & Lewis, 2008). Before enrolling in a public school, a child without a residence permit in the city is required to pay a temporary fee. “In addition, most schools also collect miscellaneous fees for extracurricular activities, books, supplies and materials…these fees are prohibitively high for migrants…for migrant families who move frequently, these charges post a major obstacle to obtaining school education for their children” (Murphy, 2009, p.37). For them, “free” compulsory education is too expensive to afford.

Thirdly, migrant families, after they move to cities, are still difficult to get the permanent resident permit. And due to their poor education background, the jobs they can find are normally low-paying jobs. Therefore, they always move from one place to another to seek better jobs. Frequent migration has a passive effect in the consistency in their children’s education. As mentioned earlier, migrant children’s academic achievement is relatively poorer than urban children because of the educational disparity between rural and urban areas. When migrant children move frequently with their families, it is hard for them to catch up with other students in their studies. In addition, it is difficult for migrant children to make friends because they often study in one school for a short period of time. The unstable life for migrant children might also lead to serious psychological problems in the future. In addition, because of migrant families’ low economic status, they often tend to live on the outskirts of the city where the rent is cheaper. However, in this case, the transportation to urban public schools can be expensive, time-consuming and dangerous (Rural Education Action Project, 2009). All of these can be reasons why peasant workers often prefer to send their children to poorly equipped migrant schools which are available within their communities instead of urban public schools.
Finally, parents play a very important role in the choice of schools for their children and in the process of their children’s schooling. The educational levels of peasant workers are very low in general. Most of them have merely accomplished basic education. They themselves do not have a good understanding of the importance of education. This is one of the reasons why some parents do not have high expectations for their children and could not provide enough support in their children’s learning process.
Chapter Three
Review of Key Concept and Theories

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretical background within which the research is placed as a basis for further analysis. The key concept of this thesis—parental involvement—is introduced in the first place, followed by several relevant theories that will support this study.

3.2 Key Concept - Parental Involvement

3.2.1 Definition of Parental Involvement

Various literature on parental involvement shows that there is no complete agreement on what is meant by the term “parental involvement” (Bouakaz, 2007). There are different terms which are frequently used to describe the relationship between parents and the school, such as “home-school relationships”, “home-school collaboration”, “family-school involvement” and “home-school partnerships” (ibid.).

Parental involvement can be divided into two categories: school-centered parental involvement and home-centered parental involvement. According to Epstein, school-centered parental involvement is characterized by parental activities at a system level which often take place in the school. It includes activities such as participation in social and service events in the classroom (the classroom level), attending parent-teacher association meetings (the school level), and participating in school board meetings (the district level) (Epstein, 2001). By contrast, home-centered parental involvement is characterized by activities that are carried out by parents directly with children, such as helping children with their homework.

It is suggested that increased parental involvement would improve students’ attitudes, learning habits and performances, the teacher morale, the school climate and finally the overall quality of the school (Sussell, Carr & Hartman, 1996; Karther & Lowden, 1997; Ballantine, 1999).

3.2.2 Barriers to Parental Involvement
There is a set of factors which might influence the levels and types of parental involvement in children’s education. From previous studies, barriers to parental involvement can be divided into three categories: society, schools and parents.

**Barriers from the Societal Level**

At the societal level, there are several factors such as historical factors and policies on parental involvement that might improve or hinder parental involvement in children’s education. For example, in some countries, schools are regarded as places where children are sent to be educated and parents are not expected to be involved in their children’s education (Hornby, 2000). In addition, relevant legislation or agreed policy on parental involvement is an important factor that helps to maintain high levels of parental involvement.

**Barriers from the School Level**

At the school level, parental involvement is influenced by factors such as organization of the school, school culture, school policy and procedures, resources, teachers’ training and teachers’ attitudes.

The education system at the national or provincial level is a fundamental element which may improve or hinder parental involvement, because it affects parents’ choices of schools in the first place. For example, in a country where the results of national examinations determine which school one is able to attend, he or she is more likely to attend a school far from home, which will result in difficulties for parents to participate in their children’s schooling frequently.

Within the school, the model school leaders apply to their leadership and management is equally essential. In China, bureaucracy is the preferred model in school systems (Bush, Coleman & Si, 1998).

“The purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization…is, from a technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability” (Weber, 1989, p.16).
The structure of a school which applies the bureaucratic model is like a pyramid, with the principal at the top and working staff being allocated in different positions on the basis of expertise. This model seeks and maintains maximum efficiency through rational approaches, rules and regulations. Bureaucracy can also be regarded as the most appropriate form of organization to facilitate the attainment of educational goals (Lungu, 1985).

The type of leadership most closely associated with formal models is managerial leadership. This model of leadership is mainly focused on managing existing activities successfully rather than envisioning a better future for the school (ibid.). Schools structured according to this model are goal-oriented and focused on maintaining the functioning of the present system. If there is need for innovations and changes in the school, teachers simply are required to implement those changes. They need to contribute more time and energy in addition to accomplishing their present tasks. They are likely to do so without enthusiasm, leading to possible failure (Bush, 2003).

School culture also plays an important role in parents’ attitudes and participation. With the development of decentralization and globalization, nowadays, there is an increasing interest in culture as an element in school management and leadership, since their traditional emphasis on the technical aspects appears to be inadequate for schools to achieve excellence (ibid.). The stress on the intangible world of values and attitudes is a useful counter to these bureaucratic assumptions and helps to produce a more balanced portrait of educational institutions (ibid.).

The literature on culture in education is related not only to organizational culture, but to societal culture as well. Societal and organizational cultures differ from each other but they also have a close link. Societal culture provides an essential aspect of the context for education and school leaders. According to Dimmock and Walker, there are seven dimensions of societal culture including power distributed or concentrated, group or self oriented, consideration or aggression, proactivism or fatalism, generative or replicative, limited or holistic relationship, male or female influence (Dimmock & Walker, 2002b). All of these dimensions together can be used to analyze the societal culture and can also be applied to the educational system in a country.

At the level of organizational culture, each school has its own distinctive culture, dependent on the mix of values, beliefs and norms prevalent in the organization (Bush, 2003). The culture of a school may be expressed through its goals. Where goals and values are consistent with each other, the statement of purposes and their espousal in action serve to reinforce the values and beliefs of the organization. If there are competing cultures within the
institution, the official aims may be subverted by members who interpret those aims according to their own values (ibid.).

Other factors at the school level such as teachers’ training also affect parental involvement. If teachers lack the skills such as interpersonal communication skills, and knowledge needed for working with parents effectively, then this can be another barrier to high levels of parental involvement (Hornby, 2000).

**Barriers from the Parental Level**

In a world of genuine equal opportunity our life chances would largely depend on effort, motivation, and skills and very little on the luck of birth (Andersen, 2005). The democratization of education should eliminate perhaps the most important filter of traditional class privilege, namely parents’ unequal ability to invest in their children’s human capital (ibid.). However, a lot of social scientific evidence indicates that individual’s life chances remain as powerfully determined by their social origins as in the epoch of our fathers and grandfathers (ibid.). Family milieu during early childhood is very important, or we can say, decisive for later achievement and also for later social problems.

Since the early 1930s, it has been increasingly recognized that differences in social background are strongly related to educational outcomes in most countries (Keeves, 1985; Ma, 1990). It is well known that home-related factors have a great impact on students’ academic achievement. Various studies have suggested that the home background is more important than school factors in influencing students’ scholastic achievement (Zhao, 1993). In developing countries, under circumstances of limited provision of education, children mainly depend on family resources for their education. Thus the relationship between household socioeconomic status and children’s education opportunities is strengthened (Sa, 2004).

At the parental level, families’ socioeconomic statuses, in the first place, may lead to parental involvement at different levels and of different types. The Coleman (1966) report confirmed that “a strong relationship exists between all kinds of achievement variables and what has come to be known as socioeconomic status (SES)” (Coleman, 1966, p.46). “The family characteristic that is the most powerful predictor of school performance is socioeconomic status (SES): the higher the SES of the student’s family, the higher his academic achievement” (Boocock, 1972, p.32). This relationship has been documented in countless studies and seems to hold no matter what measure of status is used, for instance, parents’ occupation, family income, parents’ education level, or some combination of these
Parents with lower educational levels may feel uncomfortable and less confident when they help children with their homework. Parents’ occupations and working hours directly affect the length of time they are able to participate in their children’s schooling.

However, the influence of the home-related factors on achievement depends much more on dynamic process variables than on home global characteristics, such as socioeconomic status or parental education (Chinapah, 1983). There were some studies focusing on what characteristics of a home environment can have a positive impact on student achievement. In 2001, Xitao Fan and Michael Chen conducted a meta-analysis that involved more than 90 correlations. They found out that the home environment accounts for 10.89 percent of the variance in student achievement. However, home environment is not a one-dimensional construct. Rather, it is composed of three basic elements: “communication about school, supervision and parental expectations and parenting styles” (Marzano, 2003, p.128). Communication about school refers to parents’ interest in and communication about the schoolwork of their children (ibid.). “Supervision generally refers to the extent to which parents monitor and control their children’s behavior to optimize academic achievement” (ibid.). Specific behaviors commonly associated with effective home supervision include monitoring the time spent doing homework (Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers, 1987; Peng & Wright, 1994), monitoring when students return home from school and what they do after school (Ho & Willms, 1993), and monitoring the extent to which students watch television (Paik, 1995). Parental expectations and parenting styles, according to the study, are the most important among the three elements. Parental styles include three categories: authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. An authoritarian style is one in which the parents establish and implement all household rules with little or no discussion with children. The permissive style is the opposite of the authoritarian style. Parents establish few if any household rules and rarely punish inappropriate behavior. Children are left to develop their own rules for conduct and, for the most part, are left to their own devices when it comes to day-to-day decisions. The preferred style is the authoritative style. Jennifer Rosenau (1998) explains that authoritative style is characterized by “parental warmth, inductive discipline, nonpunitive punishment practices, and consistency in child rearing” (Rosenau, 1998, p.12). By contrast, inappropriate parenting styles are harmful to children’s schooling and cognitive development. Home environment is closely linked with parents’ attitudes and participation in their children’s education, which is another key point that may improve or hinder their participation in their children’s schooling.
So far, it is clear that children’s development including academic achievement and cognitive development is influenced by a variety of home factors. Here, a conceptual model from Feinstein (2003) is used to show the link between home background and child development (Feinstein, 2003).

In this model, distal family factors can also refer to home global characteristics. And factors such as parental cognitions, mental well-being and parental styles can be put in the category of dynamic process variables. This model will be used to discuss barriers to parental involvement from the parental level in chapter six.

### 3.2.3 Models of Parental Involvement

In order to develop more comprehensive and practical programs of school-family or school-family-community partnerships, different frameworks of parental involvement have been developed. In this section, Epstein’s six types of parental involvement and Hornby’s six models of parental involvement will be introduced.

Epstein (2002) divided parental involvement into six categories: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

1) *Parenting*. Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
2) *Communicating*. Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.
3) *Volunteering*. Recruit and organize parent help and support.
4) *Learning at home*. Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at
home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

5) **Decision-making.** Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

6) **Collaborating with community.** Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development (Epstein *et al.*, 2002).

According to Hornby, there are six common models of parental involvement: protective, expert, transmission, curriculum-enrichment, consumer and partnership models (Hornby, 2000).

**The Protective Model**

The main aim of the protective model is to avoid conflict between teachers and parents by separating teaching and parenting functions. The major responsibility of parents is to make sure that children get to school on time with the correct equipment. Therefore, parental involvement in education is considered unnecessary (Swap, 1993).

**The Expert Model**

In the expert model, teachers regard themselves as experts on all aspects of the development and education of children and they take control of decision-making, while parents only receive information and instructions about their children (Hornby, 2000).

**The Transmission Model**

According to Swap, in the transmission model, teachers regard themselves as the main sources of expertise on children, but they also recognize the benefits of using parents as a resource. Teachers take control of decision-making. However, they do accept that parents play an important role in children’s progress (Swap, 1993).

**The Curriculum-enrichment Model**

The aim of the curriculum-enrichment model is to extend the school curriculum by incorporating parents’ contributions (ibid.). It is based on the assumption that parents are able
to make great contributions to the implementation of the curriculum material, which will enhance the educational objectives of the school (Hornby, 2000).

**The Consumer Model**

In the consumer model, parents are regarded as being consumers of educational services. They have control over the decision-making process while teachers provide relevant information and a range of options for parents to choose (Cunningham & Davis, 1985).

**The Partnership Model**

Partnership model can be considered as the most appropriate model for relationships between teachers and parents. In this model, teachers are regarded as experts on education while parents are viewed as experts on their children. Teachers and parents cooperate with each other and share the expertise and control. There are four key elements of the partnership model: two-way communication, mutual support, joint decision-making and enhancement of learning at school and at home (Swap, 1993; Hornby, 2000).

### 3.3 Theories

#### 3.3.1 Human Capital

“Beginning in the early 1960s, changing economic and social conditions have given knowledge and skills - human capital - an increasingly central role in the economic success of nations and individuals” (OECD, 2001, p.10). In OECD report, human capital is defined as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (ibid., p.11). As one of factors of production, people are able to make investment in it. Although types of human capital investment generally include health and nutrition (Schultz, 1981), “education consistently emerges as the prime human capital investment” (Sweetland, 1996, p.341).

Education can be regarded as “the quasi public goods” between “public goods” and “private goods”. In other words, education has both “internalities” and “externalities” (Hall & Lewis, 2008). “The individual is the direct object of education, and the impact of education is reflected first of all through the development of the individual” (Zhao, 1993, p.33). The social
function can be further subdivided into political, economic and cultural functions (Huang, 1985) and the social function is implemented through the individual function (Zhao, 1993).

For individuals, “education has an important role to play because individual life chances are often shaped by it” (Lauder et al., 2006, p.5). “By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them” (Schultz, 1961, p.2). People complete their labor reproduction, especially intellectual reproduction through education investment or accepting education, and therefore gain a certain social status, economic return and satisfaction (Hall & Lewis, 2008). For vulnerable groups or people with disadvantages, education especially basic education has a much more important role to play. UNESCO and the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights have identified education as the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain means to participate fully in their communities (UNESCO, 2007). Previous studies have shown that differentials in earnings correspond closely to corresponding differentials in education, and they strongly suggest that the one is a consequence of the other (Schultz, 1961).

Benefits of education not only belong to individuals, but also belong to the country as a whole. The fact that people are an important part of the wealth of nations has been proved by economics (ibid.). “Measured by what labor contributes to output, the productive capacity of human beings is now vastly larger than all other forms of wealth taken together” (ibid., p.2). Pursuit of education leads to national economic growth. In addition, “education could foster the dispositions required for a democracy such as rationality, tolerance and empathy with others, strengthening the bonds of social cohesion between the individual and society (Dewey, 1916), keeping and developing demonstration and freedom, reducing crime, improving social security and promoting the development of social welfare and so on.

So far, it is clear that education benefits both individuals and the nation as a whole. However, the distribution of skills and learning opportunities often varies considerably among different groups of people (OECD, 2001). At the level of the school, because of economic, cultural or social factors, the competencies of children differ from each other. If children whose competencies are not valued in schools or cannot facilitate adaptation to schools and school learning, they will be at a disadvantage in schools (ibid.). In the adult population, people with low skills or low levels of education are exposed to additional risks of unemployment and social exclusion (ibid.). China is a developing country with the largest population around the world.
“Actively developing human resources, bringing into full play the potential ability and value of each individual and promoting the people's all-round development so as to provide powerful labor and intellectual support for China's modernization drive and to realize its transformation from a country rich in human resources to one with powerful human resources, is a significant aim the Chinese government has been cherishing and a major undertaking it has been unremittingly advancing” (China Daily, 2010).

Here, human resources have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The number of people, the proportion who enter upon useful work and working hours are major quantitative characteristics. Qualitative components mainly include skills, knowledge and similar attributes that affect particular human capabilities to do productive work (Schultz, 1961). In order to enhance the development and utilization of human resources, the Chinese government has pursued a variety of proactive and effective policies and measures (China Daily, 2010), and education is always given the first priority in the national development strategy. According to the National Education Reform and Development of Long-Term Planning Programs (2010-2020) launched by the Central Government in 2010, education is the foundation of national development and social progress. In addition, pursuit of education leads to all-round development for people (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2010).

3.3.2 Social Capital

“Social capital refers to the resources gained through social ties, memberships of networks and sharing of norms” (OECD, 2001, p.16). “Shared norms, values and understandings relate to the subjective dispositions and attitudes of individuals and groups, as well as sanctions and rules governing behavior, which are widely shared” (ibid.). Trust is the key which supports social capital (ibid.).

When the term “social capital” was introduced to educational research, it emphasized the importance of a surrounding community of adults for young persons who are “embedded” in the enclaves of adults closest to them (Coleman, 1988). Previous studies have suggested that student achievement depends more on how the various factors including students, parents, teachers and those in the wider school community interact and make use of resources (OECD, 2001).
Among sources of social capital, family is the fundamental one. Families create norms and social ties, and provide a social network that benefits its members (ibid.). Families provide and share material and emotional support. In addition, “the family is a primary source of learning, as well as a potential stimulator of success in formal education” (ibid., p.38). There are two indicators Coleman used to measure social capital in families: 1) Physical presence of adults or parents in the household; 2) The quality and intensity of attention paid by adults or parents to children (Coleman, 1990). In this case, the more siblings and the fewer adults in the house, the less social capital is available to students. Other factors, such as divorce, single-parent family, moving residence, also have a negative influence on social capital children tend to receive.

3.3.3 Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital was developed in the early 1960s by Pierre Bourdieu in order to help address an empirical problem, i.e. economic obstacles are not sufficient to explain disparities in the educational attainment of children from different social classes. Cultural capital exists in three main forms: the embodied state which is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment; the objected state such as writings, paintings and monuments; and the institutionalized state such as academic certificates (Lauder et al., 2006).

As one dimension of capitals of the family (economic capital, cultural capital, social capital), cultural capital has a great impact on children’s academic achievement. Here, cultural capital refers to the resources residing in families whereby individuals attain a particular social status (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). It also represents the collection of family-based resources such as parents’ education levels, social class, and family habits, norms and practices which influence academic success (OECD, 2001). To be specific, there are five major categories: 1) Work habits of the family; 2) Academic support and guidance; 3) Stimulation to explore and discuss ideas and events; 4) Language environment which provides opportunities for thinking and imagination; 5) Academic aspirations and expectations (Kellaghan et al., 1993). Cultural capital, which is more important than “money”, varies by class and has a strong relationship with children’s access to education, the whole process of schooling and education outcomes. There are a number of literatures indicating that cultural and educational resources of parents, for example, the quantity of books in the home and the frequency of discussing cultural themes with children, are vital for children’s cognitive development and school performance (OECD, 2001). Cultural resources
may also be decisive in allowing parents to better navigate the educational system in the best interests of their offspring (Erikson & Jonsson, 1996). And interestingly, the correlation between family income and family culture is quite low (Andersen, 2005).

3.3.4 Equality of Education

Education has a strong power to influence the well-being of both individuals and the nation. However, “what strengthens this faith is the idea that it is a source of social justice and national efficiency: that education offers students the promise of equality of opportunity irrespective of social background, gender, or ethnicity, while providing the economy with an educated workforce” (Lauder et al., 2006, p.2).

Equality of educational opportunity, in general, includes two aspects—access to education and outcomes of education. Access to education means firstly the opportunity to participate in education, and secondly the facilities available to and used by students (Fägerlind & Saha, 1991). The outcomes of education particularly refer to students’ school performances, when associated with students’ social distributions (Catela, 1990). In addition, equality of education can also be defined and categorized in other ways. For example, it includes equality at the macro level and that at the micro level. In China, equality at the macro level refers to equal educational resources distributed by Central Government or local governments; while equality at the micro level focuses on the equality in various aspects within schools, such as teachers’ attitudes (Gao, 2009).

There are a variety of factors that may influence the equality of education, such as economy, educational laws and policies, social and cultural factors. Economic factors mainly include economic gaps between different cities, between urban and rural areas, and between families. National policies may also cause inequalities in education, such as funding and national entrance examination. In addition, there are a variety of factors related to culture and society that might influence the equality of education, for example, gender issues, family’s cultural capital and corruption (ibid.).

In China, during recent years, remarkable improvement of education has been made throughout the country. The Nine-Year Compulsory Education has become more universal; hence, illiteracy among people has been basically eliminated. The number of students who attend higher secondary schools has increased greatly. And higher education is becoming more popular (China Daily, 2010). However, China, being a large country with uneven economic and educational development, the requirements and contents of compulsory
education vary from place to place (Zhao, 1993). Educational inequalities of compulsory education can be found in a variety of aspects, such as the quality of schools, the qualifications of teachers, school facilities, and dropout rates and so on. At present, the Chinese government pays more attention to equality of education. According to the National Education Reform and Development of Long-Term Planning Programs (2010-2020) launched by the Central Government in 2010, promoting equality of education should be one of the most fundamental and significant educational policies. Equality of education serves as the foundation of social equity, and the key to equality of education is equal educational opportunity. Due to the China’s present situation, more focus is and will be laid on Nine-Year Compulsory Education. As mentioned earlier, inequality in education can be found in various aspects. Among them, regional disparity in the distribution of educational resources has become the most serious problem in contemporary China. Hence, more support should be provided to rural areas and remote and poor areas by the Central Government and local governments (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2010).

3.3.5 Economics of Education

“The economic value of education rests in the proposition that people enhance their capabilities as producers and as consumers by investing in themselves and that schooling is the largest investment in human capital” (Schultz, 1963, p.10). By using Human Capital Theory, economists have analyzed the relationship between investment in education and its social and individual returns. Here are some trends which have been approved through the years:

1) Among the three main levels of education, namely primary education, secondary education and higher education, primary education continues to exhibit the highest social profitability in the world.

2) Private returns are considerably higher than social returns because of the public subsidization of education, and the degree of public subsidy increases with the level of education.

3) Family plays an important role in students’ academic achievement and has an impact on offspring’s future careers and earnings (Carnoy, 1995).
As the world economy is becoming more competitive, more global, and increasingly dominated by information and technology, human capital has become a more crucial input (ibid.). In China, rapid economic growth requires rural-urban internal migration of workers to adjust to changing job opportunities. Many, especially young people, have recognized that migration itself is a form of human investment (Schultz, 1961). For individuals, they are able to improve their living conditions after they move to cities; and for Chinese society, migrant workers have made a great contribution to the economic growth. However, it is the fact that most rural-urban migrants perform low-income jobs because of the lack of skills and knowledge. At present, there is a need for Chinese society to shift from a nation with rich human resources to one with high quality human resources. The key of such a transition is education. As mentioned earlier, primary education or basic education has always exhibited the highest social profitability. Thus, investment from society and individual family in education has returns over the long time, and will eventually benefit the sustainable development of individuals, families and society as a whole.

3.3.6 Economic, Social and Cultural Reproduction

Before we discuss the concept of reproduction and its relationship with education, the meaning of reproduction should be examined in the first place. Reproduction does not simply imply replication in either social or biological systems (Morrow & Torres, 1995); instead, the opposite is suggested: “reproduction implies differentiation, growth, change (continuous or discontinuous)” (Barel, 1974, p.93).

When we connect the concept of reproduction with education, schools become the major agency. However, the role of schooling is in reality doubted by many researchers: do schools primarily reproduce the economic/social/cultural division of people or do they lessen those existing disparities in our society (Apple, 1982).

In the perspective of economic reproduction, the better the socioeconomic status of a family, the better quality of education the child will receive. When parents are able to make more monetary investment in their children’s education, children are more likely to receive quality education and higher education. As a result, the economic returns they will get from education are greater than those from poor families or working class (Morrow & Torres, 1995).

Education’s role in the reproduction of the social relations is another dimension. Previous studies have suggested that school systems may reproduce class, status, and racial
relations through a system of urban segregation and through their integration into a marketplace of credentials (ibid.).

Cultural reproduction, as one of the dimensions of reproduction in education, has a strong relationship with equality or inequality of education. According to Pierre Bourdieu, first of all, students’ cultural capital varies by class; secondly, cultural capital can be presented in the form of academic certificates, and they, to a certain extent, determine individuals’ future careers. Hence, schools do not lessen the disparities between people from different social classes; instead, they reproduce such disparities and result in social stratification (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

In China, in order to lessen the disparity between individuals especially in the context of rural-urban internal migration, the Central Government has launched several educational policies to popularize the Nine-Year Compulsory Education plan and also to improve the equality and quality of compulsory education for all.
Chapter Four
Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This part of the thesis presents the research method employed for data collection and data analysis. Secondary quantitative data analysis is employed in this thesis. In this chapter, secondary data analysis, including its advantages, disadvantages, and reasons of choosing secondary analysis as the research method in this thesis are introduced in the first place, followed by the research design and analytical framework employed in this study. Finally, the data collection and data analysis are presented.

4.2 Secondary Data Analysis

Many of the research methods, such as questionnaires, observations and interviews, can be extremely time-consuming and expensive to conduct (Bryman, 2008). Secondary analysis offers the opportunity for researchers to reanalyze the existing high-quality data collected by social scientists, organizations and government departments (ibid.).

There are many advantages of secondary analysis. First of all, secondary analysis offers researchers the access to high-quality data if there is lack of money and time. In such a situation, researchers will have more time to focus on data analysis (ibid.). Secondly, secondary data analysis provides the opportunity for longitudinal analysis, subgroup analysis or cross-cultural analysis (ibid.). Thirdly, data can be analyzed in different ways. During the process of reanalysis of data, researchers can select variables they are interested in and explore the relationships between these variables, which might not have been done by initial researchers. In this case, reanalysis may offer new interpretations of the existing data (ibid.).

However, there are several limitations or disadvantages of secondary analysis. Firstly, it takes time for researchers to get familiar with the secondary data especially if the data sets are very complex (ibid.). Secondly, it is quite difficult for researchers to control the quality of data (ibid.). Last but not least, “because secondary analysis entails the analysis of data collected by others for their own purposes, it may be that one or more key variables may not be present” (ibid., p.300).

The researcher of this thesis employs secondary analysis due to several considerations. Lack of time is the first consideration. By applying secondary analysis, the researcher will
have more time to analyze and interpret the existing data. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, there is a lack of studies in parental involvement in migrant children’s education (Ye, 2009), and comparative studies in this field are very limited. Therefore, it would be of a great interest to reanalyze the existing data, focus on parental involvement in children’s education and offer new interpretations of the data.

4.3 Research Design

The comparative design is applied in this study and this design entails studying two contrasting cases - urban parents and migrant parents. This is because we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations (Bryman, 2008). By comparing migrant parents with urban parents in a variety of aspects of parental involvement in their children’s education, and also by comparing the situation of migrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education among different types of cities, the limitations or problems of parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education will be more clearly revealed, and the findings from these comparisons will offer a basis for further analysis and discussion.

4.4 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework in this study is inspired by Epstein’s six types of parental involvement and Hornby’s six models of parental involvement which have been explained in the previous chapter. Based on the theories, different aspects of parental involvement are selected and will be compared between urban parents and migrant parents in the following chapter.

Parental involvement can be divided into home-centered involvement and school-centered involvement. Aspects of home-centered parental involvement in this study include: 1) Provision of the learning environment; 2) Checking homework; 3) Helping with homework; 4) Purchase of books; 5) Cultivation of children’s interests and capabilities; 6) Communication with children. Aspects of school-centered parental involvement are frequency of contacts with teachers and the attendance of teacher-parent meetings.

4.5 Data Collection and Data Analysis
This research carries out a secondary analysis of official statistics from a national large-scale survey on Rural-Urban Migrant Children’s Compulsory Education. In this section, data collection and data analysis are introduced respectively.

4.5.1 Data Collection

This research conducts a secondary data analysis of a national large-scale survey on Rural-Urban Migrant Children’s Compulsory Education conducted by China National Institute for Educational Research supported by the World Bank from May to November in 2006. Detailed information was collected and analyzed mainly in five aspects: 1) Background information of migrant children; 2) Migrant children’s home background; 3) Migrant children’s access to educational opportunities in host cities; 4) Migrant children’ learning process during compulsory schooling in host cities; 5) Migrant children’s psychological well-being and their expectations for the future. The survey is mainly focused on the analysis of information about migrant children. But it also includes comparisons between migrant children and urban children, comparisons between migrant families and urban families and comparisons among different types of cities. Based on the findings from the survey, constructive suggestions on how to improve migrant children’s compulsory education and their personal lives were given in the end.

Based on the information collected from the large-scale survey, pilot programs were designed and implemented in selected schools (two urban public schools and two migrant schools) in Haidian District of Beijing and Hanyang District of Wuhan with the aim of improving migrant children’s access to education, enhancing their adaptability to the new environment and improving the quality of teaching.

Sampling

The national survey was conducted in nine regions in China, namely Beijing Municipality, Shanghai Municipality, Guangzhou in Guangdong province, Changzhou in Jiangsu province, Yichang in Hubei province, Mianyang in Sichuan province, Sanhe in Hebei province, Yiwu in Zhejiang province and Changle in Shandong province. Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are namely large-sized regions; Changzhou, Yichang and Mianyang are namely medium-sized regions; Sanhe, Yiwu and Changle are namely small-sized regions. In total, sixty-two schools including urban public schools, legal migrant schools and illegal migrant schools were
selected. And 6220 students including migrant children and urban children were selected randomly from the third grade, the fifth grade, the seventh grade and the eighth grade from the selected schools. Data was also collected from parents of sample students. There were 5739 parents including migrant parents and urban parents who participated in this survey. Table 4.1 shows detailed information about the sample students and sample parents.

Table 4.1
Sample Students and Sample Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of City</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Migrant Children</th>
<th>Urban Children</th>
<th>Migrant Parents</th>
<th>Urban Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Cities</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guangzhou</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Cities</td>
<td>Changzhou</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mianyang</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yichang</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Cities</td>
<td>Sanhe</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changle</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yiwu</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3514</td>
<td>2706</td>
<td>3334</td>
<td>2405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table below shows the information about the sampling of different types of schools.

Table 4.2
Sample Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of City</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Urban Public School</th>
<th>Legal Migrant School</th>
<th>Illegal Migrant School</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Cities</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guangzhou</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Cities</td>
<td>Changzhou</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mianyang</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yichang</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Cities</td>
<td>Sanhe</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changle</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yiwu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Research Instruments

Two major instruments were used during this survey: questionnaires for students and parents respectively and interviews. There were 6220 student questionnaires and 5739 parent
questionnaires that were completed. Researchers interviewed 62 principals, 248 teachers and one dropout. In addition, interviews with officials from local governments and from educational authorities were conducted in these nine regions.

4.5.2 Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, two instruments - questionnaires and interviews were employed in the national survey. Both quantitative data and qualitative data were collected and analyzed by using SPSS 11.0. In this thesis, only secondary quantitative data from the national survey and pilot studies is used as a basis for further analysis and discussion.

The statistics are analyzed with descriptive statistics, for example, frequency and percentage by using Microsoft Excel. The results are presented by tables and descriptive texts.
Chapter Five

Findings on Parental Involvement in Education

5.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to examine similarities and differences between migrant parents and urban parents by using relevant data at the national level. Comparisons will be carried out from two aspects: 1) Home-centered involvement; 2) School-centered involvement. Meanwhile, comparisons will also be carried out in parental involvement in migrant children’s education among different types of cities, i.e. large-sized cities, medium-sized cities and small-sized cities.

5.2 Home-Centered Involvement

As mentioned in the literature section, home-centered involvement includes activities which are carried out by parents directly with their children. These activities may help children to improve their academic performances, develop good learning habits, and enhance children’s positive attitudes towards education and so on.

5.2.1 Provision of the Learning Environment

In order to support children’s study and involve in their education, parents, in the first place, have the responsibility to provide a pleasant physical environment for their children at home. Unfortunately, due to peasant workers’ low socioeconomic status, most migrant families’ living conditions are very poor. Tables below show details of migrant families’ living conditions, for instance, the source of housing, basic house facilities and house sanitation. Firstly, Table 5.1 introduces the distribution of different sources of housing of migrant families in different types of cities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1</th>
<th>Source of Housing of Migrant Families in Different Types of Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided by employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self built</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table above, it can be seen that a majority of migrant families live in rented rooms, which indicates that most migrants, to a certain extent, do not lead a stable life because they do not have permanent places to live. Compared with small cities, more peasant workers in large and medium cities live in purchased or rented apartments. More peasant workers in small cities prefer to build apartments on their own.

Secondly, Table 5.2 shows details of migrant families’ possession of private kitchens or bathrooms in different types of cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2</th>
<th>Possession of Private Kitchen or Bathroom of Migrant Families in Different Types of Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only bathroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only kitchen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table, it can be concluded that around half of migrant families own both kitchens and bathrooms. However, there are differences among different types of cities. Generally speaking, the living conditions of migrant families in small cities are better than those in large or medium cities.

Thirdly, Table 5.3 shows migrant children’s opinions about the sanitation of their houses.
According to the table above, a majority of migrant children show positive views about their house sanitation. Yet, there are still 20% of children who are not satisfied with the sanitation of their houses. There are differences among different types of cities. More migrant children living in large cities show negative views about their house sanitation, and the situation in medium cities is the best.

Tables above reflect the situation of migrant children’s home environment in general. With regard to the study environment, researchers regard the “possession of the desk” as one of criteria to measure if the home learning environment is pleasant. According to the survey, 67.3% of migrant children are in possession of their own desks for study; while the percentage of urban children who possess desks at home is 86.9%, which indicates that the home learning environment of urban children is better than that of migrant children. Further studies also examined the frequency of purchase of school necessities such as books and stationary, which is considered as another measurement of the home learning environment. The table below provides detailed information about how often migrant parents buy books and stationary for their children.

Table 5.4
Frequency of Migrant Parents’ Purchase of Books and Stationary for Children in Different Types of Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1371</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, only a small number of migrant parents buy books and other school necessities for their children very often. According to the national survey in 2006, there is a significant disparity between migrant parents and urban parents in this aspect. Compared with migrant parents, urban parents buy books and stationary for their children more often (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). In addition, there are significant differences among different types of cities. According to the table above, the situation in small cities is the best. The frequency of purchase of books and stationary for migrant children in large cities is the lowest among different types of cities.

### 5.2.2 Checking Homework and Helping with Homework

In order to improve children’s academic achievements, helping with children’s homework is one of the most important ways for parents to do so. It is known to all that homework can help students to become better learners, and also help them to develop good study habits and positive attitudes towards learning especially during early grades. In addition, “homework can help create greater understanding between families and teachers and provide opportunities for increased communication. Monitoring homework keeps families informed about what their children are learning and about the policies and programs of the teacher and the school” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p.7). The table below shows how often migrant parents check their children’s homework in different types of cities.

**Table 5.5**

| Frequency of Checking Children’s Homework by Migrant Parents in Different Types of Cities |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|                                              | Large Cities                                    | Medium Cities                                   | Small Cities                                     | In Total                                         |
|                                              | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Every time                                   | 188       | 14.6     | 329       | 24.1     | 98        | 14.7     | 615       | 18.5     |
| Very often                                   | 421       | 32.7     | 513       | 37.5     | 233       | 34.9     | 1167      | 35.2     |
| Regularly                                    | 141       | 11.0     | 151       | 11.0     | 81        | 12.1     | 373       | 11.2     |
| Occasionally                                 | 476       | 37.0     | 332       | 24.3     | 225       | 33.7     | 1033      | 31.1     |
| Never                                        | 60        | 4.7      | 42        | 3.1      | 31        | 4.6      | 133       | 4.0      |
| In Total                                     | 1286      | 100.0    | 1367      | 100.0    | 668       | 100.0    | 3321      | 100.0    |


From the table, it can be seen that there are significant differences between migrant parents in different types of cities in the frequency of checking homework. For instance, the situation in medium cities is much better than that in large or small cities. In general, the percentages of parents who check their children’s homework “very often” or “occasionally”
are almost the same. There are only a small number of migrant parents who check children’s homework every time. Generally speaking, migrant parents check their children’s homework on a frequent basis. However, there is a question: what does “checking” mean? Checking children’s homework can refer to checking whether children accomplish homework or not; it can also be understood in this way: parents check if children finish or not in the first place and then check if they have done the assignments satisfactorily as well. In this way, it cannot be simply predicted that checking homework does help with children’s studies. The table below provides further information regarding homework and it shows how often migrant parents help with their children’s homework, which is more significant than “checking homework” during children’s learning process.

**Table 5.6**

**Frequency of Helping with Children’s Homework by Migrant Parents**  
in Different Types of Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table above, we can see that 35.7% of migrant parents help with their children’s homework occasionally; 30.6% of parents do help on a frequent basis; but the number of parents who help very rarely is not small. As the target group is the same one when the survey was conducted, if we simply compare Table 5.5 and Table 5.6, it can be found out that the frequency of helping with children’s homework is lower than that of checking homework. In addition, from interviews with migrant children in pilot programs in Beijing and Wuhan after the national survey, 84.9% of them stated that their learning difficulties mainly result from the lack of support and assistance from parents (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). According to the table, there are significant differences among different types of cities. The situation in medium cities is the best among different types of cities.

It should be realized that monitoring assignments is more than checking if they are accomplished successfully or helping children when they have difficulties. The value of assignments would be further explored if parents have a better understanding of “how to deal with homework”. Homework can be regarded as a bridge that connects, on the one hand,
parents and children; on the other hand, parents and teachers. In the aspect of parent-child relationship, first of all, parents could prepare a nice environment and available resources for their children before they start doing homework (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Secondly, while children are doing homework, it might be helpful for children to have someone nearby. Parents can talk about homework together with their children and answer questions from them (ibid.). Meanwhile, it is equally important for parents to encourage good study habits such as time management (ibid.). Finally, after they finish homework, it is important for parents to look over completed assignments. In addition, “children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most—their families” (ibid., p.16). In the aspect of teacher-parent relationship, “homework” also provides opportunities for both teachers and parents to have frequent communications. Expectations for parental involvement vary from teacher to teacher. Some teachers want parents to monitor homework closely, whereas others want them simply to check to make sure the assignment is completed on time (ibid.). Therefore, it is important for parents to communicate with teachers and get guidance from them. In addition, when parents find out that their children encounter problems in their homework or other learning difficulties, it is necessary for parents to contact teachers immediately and work out a way together to solve or lessen those problems. According to the national survey, in the aspects of checking and helping with children’s homework, there are no significant differences between migrant parents and urban parents (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006).

5.2.3 Purchase of Books for Children

In addition to checking and helping with children’s homework, parents often prescribe or purchase newspapers, magazines and books relevant to school curriculum for their children in order to help them to get a better understanding of what they have learnt at school, and to get certain knowledge of other fields as well. The table below shows the differences between migrant children and urban children in their possession of magazines, newspapers and other readings. Details are showed in two aspects: parents’ prescription of magazines or newspapers for their children, and parents’ purchase of collateral readings for their children.
According to the table above, there is a significant gap between the number of newspapers, magazines and other readings possessed by migrant children and by urban children. And the gap becomes larger as the number of readings increases. As mentioned in the literature section, one of the most important features of a family’s cultural capital is the number of books. From the table, it is evident that the family’s cultural capital varies greatly by class.

5.2.4 Cultivation of Children’s Interests and Capabilities

In order to improve children’s academic performances further and to explore their capabilities in other interests, nowadays in China, parents often encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities. The table below shows the differences between migrant children and urban children in the participation of various extracurricular activities.

Table 5.8
Differences between Migrant Children and Urban Children in the Participation of Extracurricular Activities (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Painting</th>
<th>Singing Dancing</th>
<th>Musical instrument</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Computer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migrant children</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban children</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is evident that there is a large gap between migrant children and urban children in their participation of extracurricular activities. Further research has been done to investigate children’s activities in their spare time. Compared with urban children, migrant children spend more free time studying at home or helping parents with housework (China National
Institute for Educational Research, 2006). It can be concluded that, first of all, migrant children’s lives are not as colorful as urban children; secondly, migrant parents are more likely to regard schools as the only place where children can receive education; finally, migrant parents pay less attention to the cultivation of their children’s other interests and capabilities due to various reasons such as migrant parents’ attitudes and their low socioeconomic status.

5.2.5 Communication with Children

Communication with children about schools can be regarded as another aspect of home-centered parental involvement. Through conversations, parents would know better about children’s education, for instance, the progress they have achieved and learning difficulties. According to the national survey in 2006, there are 64% of migrant parents who have conversations with their children on a frequent basis. However, there is a significant difference between migrant parents and urban parents in the aspect of communication with children. Urban parents talk with their children on a more frequent basis (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006).

In addition to less frequency of communication with children, migrant parents have other problems in the aspect of parent-child interactions. In their conversations, some of parents pay more attention to their children’s physical conditions; some merely focus on children’s studies; some parents usually ask about their children’s daily routine lives; some put more focus on children’s psychological well-being. The table below shows detailed information about migrant parents’ focuses on different aspects of their children’s personal lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health condition</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>1209</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily routines</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-being</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>2777</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here it has to be mentioned that the total number of respondents is larger than the number of sample parents mentioned in the methodology section, because parents were allowed to select more than one aspect. From the table above, it can be seen that only a small number of migrant parents pay attention to their children’s cognitive development and potential psychological problems. In addition, when migrant parents were asked how well they know their children, 14.1% of parents stated that they know where children go and what they do after school; 17.5% of them know about their children’s friends; 11.1% of parents know clearly of how children spend their pocket money; 27% of parents have more considerations about whether children accomplish their homework or not; 26.2% of them pay close attention to their children’s academic performances in schools; 4.1% of parents know nothing about their children at all (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). We can see that migrant parents often put focus on their children’s studies, but always neglect other aspects in their daily lives. According to the national survey in 2006, migrant children often prefer to keep silent or keep their secrets in diaries when they have worries (ibid.).

According to the table, there are no significant differences among different types of cities.

Though migrant children and their parents talk with each other very often, we cannot make the conclusion that children benefit from those interactions. Through interviews with teachers conducted by researchers in the national survey in 2006, most of teachers stated that because of the lack of effective communication skills and correct guidance, migrant children are more likely to have psychological problems during the key stages of personal development (ibid.). Compared with urban children, migrant children feel more isolated and lonely. More than half of migrant children stated that they always miss their relatives and friends in their hometowns (ibid.). In addition, migrant children often think that they do not get enough attention, support and love from their parents (ibid.). Under such a situation, migrant children’s psychological development needs more attention from parents.

5.3 School-Centered Involvement

School-based involvement is the other dimension of parental involvement. In China, school-based involvement mainly refers to contact with teachers and attendance of parent-teacher meetings. The parent-teacher relationship is equally important as the parent-child relationship for children’s achievement. For migrant children, on the one hand, teachers in urban public schools are better educators than migrant parents; on the other hand, to a certain extent, migrant parents know better of their children and their situations than teachers. It is necessary
for parents and teachers to create a two-way communication channel in order to help migrant children to adapt to the new environment quickly, and make them feel happy and safe in schools. However, the real situation is not that satisfying.

5.3.1 Frequency of Contact with Teachers

In order to improve children’s school performances and cognitive development through collaborations between schools and families, contact with teachers is necessary and significant. Generally speaking, migrant parents’ contact with teachers is on a less frequent basis compared with urban parents (China National Institute for Educational Research 2006). The table below shows the frequency of contact between migrant parents and teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table, it is evident that almost 80% of peasant workers contact with teachers occasionally or rarely. Based on the survey conducted in Beijing and Wuhan, 55.7% of teachers pointed out that migrant parents contact teachers only when their children experience school bullying, or break rules in schools, or encounter serious learning difficulties (ibid.). Otherwise, migrant parents rarely contact teachers initiatively. According to the table, it can be seen that there are differences among different types of cities. The situation in medium cities is the best among different types of cities.

5.3.2 Attendance of Teacher-Parent Meetings.

In the aspect of attendance of teacher-parent meetings, relevant data which can be found is very limited. But according to the interviews with teachers in Beijing and Wuhan, most teachers stated that migrant parents do not attend teacher-parent meetings very often (ibid.).
Generally speaking, teachers have worries about migrant children’s home education and parent-child relationships.

5.4 Conclusion

So far, it is evident that there are both similarities and differences between migrant parents and urban parents in parental involvement in their children’s education. The table below shows in which aspects migrant parents and urban parents show similarities or differences as a conclusion of this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.11</th>
<th>Comparisons between Migrant Parents and Urban Parents in Various Aspects of Parental Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspects</td>
<td>Migrant Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of the learning environment</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking homework</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with homework</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of books</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation of children’s interests and capabilities</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with children</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with teachers</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance of teacher-parent meetings</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: — means high level or high frequency
+ means low level or low frequency
/ means no significant difference


From the table above, it can be concluded that there are gaps between migrant parents and urban parents in most aspects of parental involvement in their children’s education. In the aspects of checking and helping with homework, there are no significant differences between migrant parents and urban parents. In addition, it is found out that there are significant gaps in parental involvement in migrant children’s education among different types of cities. Generally speaking, the situation in medium or small cities is better than that in large cities.
Chapter Six
Discussion and Concluding Remarks

6.1 Introduction

From the previous chapter, it can be seen that parental involvement in education in the Chinese context has its limitations. For example, parents have few opportunities to participate in school management and decision-making processes. What is worse is that migrant families’ backgrounds and current situations lead to more restrictions and less involvement in their children’s education. Therefore, there is a large gap between urban parents and migrant parents in many aspects of parental involvement. And with regard to parental involvement in migrant children’s education, the situation in large cities is worse than that in medium or small cities.

This chapter intends to explain the necessity of parental involvement in migrant children’s education due to migrant children’s situations as a beginning in order to arouse people’s attention to parental involvement in migrant children’s education. It is followed by the discussion on barriers to parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education from three aspects: the societal level, the school level and the family level. Finally, as a root of educational issues in migrant children’s compulsory education, equality of education and its relationship with parental involvement in migrant children’s education will be discussed.

6.2 The Necessity of Parental Involvement in Migrant Children’s Education

Migrant children, during the period of compulsory education, are aged between six and fifteen. This period is one of the most fascinating periods of personal development. For migrant children, they are experiencing rapid physical and psychological changes; meanwhile, they are trying to adjust themselves to new urban lives, which for them is more challenging.

In the aspect of “Adaptability of Migrant Children”, according to the large-scale national survey in 2006, 59.2% of migrant parents stated that their children are able to adapt to new lives very quickly; 36.7% said that it takes a short period time for their children to adapt to new school lives; 3.4% of parents said that their children need a very long time to adapt to the new environment; and 0.7% of children could not adapt to new schools lives at all (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). From the data, it is evident that there are still some migrant children who have difficulties in adapting themselves to new situations.
Migrant children come to urban public schools and study together with other children, but they are considered “different” from urban children. When migrant children move from rural to urban areas within one province or between two provinces, on the one hand, they may encounter several school-related problems. They may follow a different curriculum, use different textbooks and experience a new teaching and learning style. On the other hand, they might experience emotional changes when they start to study in new places for the first time. All of these may have negative effects on the adaptation to the new environment and the continuity of education for migrant children. The inadaptability of migrant children is reflected in their studies. Many of them have difficulties in their studies when they start to study in new schools. The table below shows the distribution of migrant children’s pressure in studies at different levels in different types of cities.

Table 6.1
Migrant Children’s Pressure in Studies at Different Levels in Different Types of Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pressure</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little pressure</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High pressure</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table above, it can be seen that around 72% of migrant children have different levels of stress when they start to study in urban public schools. When they were asked reasons of the pressure, many of them voted for “teaching too fast” and “too much homework” (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). And some of migrant parents believe that their children’s learning methods are not effective enough (ibid.). In addition, according to the interviews with migrant children, some of them have to give up studying in urban public schools, and then transfer to migrant schools because of the differences between textbooks used in their hometowns and in host cities (ibid.). But different textbooks and curriculum are not significant problems for the majority of migrant children (ibid.). It can be concluded that in the aspect of study, migrant children’s inadaptability mainly comes from teachers. Undeniably, a new school environment, new textbooks and new faces would probably make children feel uncomfortable. During this period of time, teachers’
more attention and support are needed. Unfortunately, in reality, teachers do not make many changes for migrant children who need more help. But there is a possibility that they do not know much about these children’s learning difficulties or how they feel about their new school lives.

In addition to learning difficulties, migrants are often regarded as “second-class” citizens or a marginalized group, neither belonging to city dwellers nor to peasants. Since migrant children’s living conditions and schools performances are relatively poorer than urban children, though they do enroll in public schools, they may suffer from misunderstandings or even discriminations, which might lead to serious psychological problems in the future. When migrant parents were asked about the reasons why they thought their children were treated unequally in urban public schools, nearly 70% of parents voted for “higher schooling fees”. Undoubtedly, higher schooling fees lead to most parents’ dissatisfaction. This issue will not be discussed in this paper. In addition to high tuition fees, teachers’ different attitudes towards migrant children and discriminations from urban children exist in urban schools. There are 18.4% of migrant parents who think that teachers treat migrant children and urban children differently; and 5% of migrant parents believe that their children are discriminated by urban children (ibid.). Besides, according to the large-scale national survey in 2006, parents of migrant children and those of urban children were interviewed and asked what problems they thought their children may encounter in schools. Compared with urban parents, more migrant parents stated that their children have difficulties in social communications, and teachers often pay less attention to their children, which, to a certain extent, lead to migrant children’s lower confidence in their studies and less satisfaction with schools (ibid.).

From the above, it is clear that migrant children are more likely to encounter both academic and psychological problems in schools. The hometowns and new host cities might be two different worlds for them. The values, norms and knowledge gained in schools in their hometowns might not be understood or accepted by peers and teachers in urban schools. Meanwhile, the values and knowledge that migrant children gain in urban schools might not be understood by their parents. In this case, children may suffer from a type of “loneliness”. Thus, there is a need for parents and the teacher to create a two-way communication channel in order to bridge the gap and reduce this type of loneliness. Previous studies suggest that parents play an important role in their children’s school performances and cognitive development. On the one hand, parents do help in their children’s academic process if they frequently communicate with children about their schools and schoolwork, monitor or help their children with their homework and so on. On the other hand, meetings between the
teacher and parents on a frequent basis are necessary. Through effective communications, the teachers in urban schools will know of migrant children’s difficulties in their studies. Furthermore, teachers will be able to help children to overcome those difficulties and to adapt to new school lives quickly. Parents, at the same time, would know more about education in urban schools and what they can do to help children during their learning process.

Improving parental involvement in migrant children’s education is also important for urban public schools and Chinese society as a whole. School is often considered as a place where young people acquire knowledge. Moreover, the school is also an arena in which young people with various backgrounds meet and together enhance the democratic values of a multicultural society (Bouakaz, 2007). Once public schools enroll migrant children, the structure of students has changed from urban children to a mix of urban and rural children. The school culture has also changed from monoculture to co-existence of dominant and non-dominant cultures. Cultural differences between migrant workers and urban people will lead to different values, norms and behaviors, which will result in problems and difficulties in many aspects in education. At present, China is in the process of urbanization. Wang (2003) argued that urbanization is not simply a process of making existing cities more modern, but also including helping rural people to become urban. It is more important to make migrants and their children an integral part of the city in order to realize the urbanization in the whole nation (Wang, 2003). Public schools have responsibilities to bridge the gap between migrants and urban citizens by involving parents in urban education and urban lives (ibid.). On the one hand, it will help schools and teachers to have a better understanding of migrants and their children’s present situations; on the other hand, teachers will educate other children in the classroom to respect and then build a good relationship with migrant children. In this way, urban schools can be regarded as a gear to reduce differences between rural-urban migrants and city dwellers. Migrant children will receive the equal quality education in a happy and safe place as urban children do. Eventually, schools may make contributions to the process of urbanization and the establishment of a harmonious society.

6.3 Barriers to Parental Involvement in Migrant Children’s Education

6.3.1 Introduction

Previous studies show that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their families actively support them. When family members read with their children, talk with their
teachers, participate in school activities or other learning activities and help them with homework, they give children a tremendous advantage (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), including higher academic achievement (Yan & Lin, 2002) and greater social and psychological development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Schools can also benefit from parental involvement. According to Simon and Epstein (2001), there is growing recognition that schools are more likely to succeed in self-improvement if families are effectively involved. Activities include curriculum design, school management, and classroom organization and so on (Simon & Epstein, 2001).

In China, generally speaking, parents value education and they have high expectations for their children. Since the year of 1979, the one-child policy started to be implemented in China. The hopes and dreams of a family, therefore, are centered on the only child (Gu, 2008). Believing education as the beginning rung on the ladder leading to success and better lives in the future, Chinese parents try their best to provide their children with best education (Ming & Abbott, 1992). During recent years, parental involvement in public schools in China has undergone great changes. More public schools in China provide opportunities for parents to participate in school activities in the process of their children’s schooling, such as athletic games, school events and so on. In addition, new technologies are being used to develop and reinforce teacher-parent relationship. Teachers and parents have more connections with each other through phones calls and emails. However, parental involvement in China still has certain limitations.

Some parents do not participate in their children’s education, and the functions of schools and families are completely separated (Gu, 2008). Parents believe that teachers are experts in education, and they regard schools as the only place where their children could receive education. Parents’ responsibilities are to provide food, clothes, stationary and other living necessities to their children (ibid.). Some Chinese parents are partially involved in their children’s education at home settings (ibid.). They spend time communicating about schools with their children and helping with children’s homework. However, parents’ participation in education is mainly focused on home-centered activities but often neglect school-centered involvement. Some parents, in addition to providing living necessities for their children and involvement in education at home settings, also have connections with teachers and attend teacher-parent meetings as required. However, parents rarely become involved in other school-based activities such as school management and curriculum design.
There are many reasons that lead to these limitations. The following section intends to analyze and discuss barriers to parental involvement in migrant children’s education from the societal level, the school level and the family level.

6.3.2 Barriers at the Societal Level

First of all, in traditional Chinese culture, schools and teachers are considered as experts in education, and parents and students should show great respect to teachers. There is an old Chinese saying that “He who teaches me may be considered as my father-figure for life”, indicating that people should respect their teachers as they respect their parents. Students are always taught to be polite and listen to teachers. Parents, to a large extent, are considered as supporters instead of active participants in their children’s education. And from some parents’ point of view, once children are sent to schools, it is the responsibility of schools and teachers to educate children.

Secondly, since Chinese culture is group-oriented, collective benefits are more important than personal needs (Bush & Qiang, 2000). Collectivism is focused on achieving and maintaining social order and interpersonal harmony (Gu, 2008). Chinese collective culture encourages people to be obedient and self-restrained for the benefits and interests of the collective (Chen et al., 1998). Being influenced by the collective culture, Chinese parents try to maintain a harmonious relationship with teachers and avoid any conflict, since they believe that conflicts between parents and teachers will lead to children’s negative attitudes towards education (Gu, 2008). When parents have disagreements with teachers or opinions concerning education, they feel uncomfortable to speak out, or prefer not to express their opinions directly to teachers. As explained in the literature section, the model of parental involvement which aims to avoid conflict between teachers and parents is the protective model. In this model, parental involvement in education is usually considered unnecessary (Swap, 1993).

In addition, there is no relevant national policy concerning parental involvement in the Law of Compulsory Education. Hence, how much parents involve in education and in which aspects they are able to participate mainly depend on individual school’s desires and parents’ willingness and capabilities.

6.3.3 Barriers at the School Level

Educational Policy
At present, in Chinese urban areas, according to the Compulsory Education Law, during the nine-year compulsory education which covers the stages of primary school and lower secondary education, children should be allocated in schools which are nearest to their homes. However, not all public schools are open to migrant children due to various reasons such as the Household Registration System. As a result, migrant parents have to seek for schools which are open to their children. Those schools might be located far away. The distance could be one of the reasons why many parents are not able to visit schools regularly. In addition, once schools are far from the community where migrant workers gather or live, the values and norms shared among people in these two worlds may be very different and they might have difficulties relating to one another. Parents and teachers find it hard to understand each other, which may make parents uncomfortable and less confident to participate in their children’s education.

**Entrance Examination System**

In the previous chapter, it has been found out that one of the problems of migrant parents’ involvement is that a majority of migrant families have more focus on their children’s academic achievement, but often neglect their psychological well-being and development in other capabilities which are also important for children’s development. One of the reasons that lead to this problem is the examination system in China. At present, whether children are able to continue to study is mainly determined by the marks in entrance examinations. Though during elementary education and lower secondary education (compulsory education), according to Compulsory Education Law, children should be enrolled by nearest schools from their homes. It means that which schools children can attend depends on locations of their homes. However in reality, many parents prefer to send their children to “key schools” or schools with good reputations. These schools normally organize examinations each year and select students who meet their own standards. After secondary education, if students would like to continue to study, they have to take university entrance examinations held in June every year. We can say that a student’s whole education process is filled with various examinations. For migrant families, to receive higher education seems to be one of the most possible and accessible ways to change their social and economic status in the future. That is why parents pay much attention to their children’s academic performances in schools but neglect their development in other aspects.
School Management

Limitations in parental involvement in the Chinese context have a connection with the model of educational management employed in Chinese schools.

Bureaucracy is the preferred model for the Chinese education system (Bush, Coleman & Si, 1998). There is a clear division of labor. Offices at various levels have their specific tasks to do, and they need to follow the principle of hierarch. In other words, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one (Bush, 2003). The “Principal Accountability System” is applied in elementary and secondary schools in China. Under this system, principals at schools are responsible for making decisions of school management and school operation in general. Departments, under the leadership of the principal, are generally divided into two categories: one is in charge of teaching and learning; the other is responsible for general affairs, including administration, finance, security, personnel, purchasing and so on. In the body that is in charge of teaching and learning, there is a division of staff working within a top-down system. People at lower levels are required to accomplish goals set by those working at upper levels. Departments work independently and also cooperate with each other. A significant aspect of bureaucracy is that accountability to officials is regarded as more important than responsibility to clients such as students or parents (ibid.). In China, “heads know that parents and children are important but in fact they have been used to accepting the superior institutions and authorities as the real and powerful ‘consumers’ on which they are really dependent. Under this situation, there is limited freedom or space for parents to be involved in their children’s education. At the same time, parents and children have been used to seeing the school and its teachers as authorities who should be obeyed” (Becaj, 1994, p.11). If collaboration is not the norm among staff, then it is unlikely that the collaboration between parents and teachers will be possible (Hornby, 2000).

School Culture

School culture also plays an important role in parents’ attitudes and their involvement in children’s education. The culture of a school has a lose link with the societal culture. As stated earlier, Chinese culture is group-oriented, collective benefits are more important than personal needs (Bush & Qiang, 2000). Being influenced by the societal culture, the school culture in Chinese schools is also power concentrated and group-oriented. In this way, the idea of corporation is not shared between schools and families.
In addition, urban public schools which do enroll migrant children have to deal with non-dominant cultures, so there are always cultural conflicts in urban public schools. Cultural conflicts mainly include conflicts between urban children and migrant children, between migrant children and teachers, and between migrant parents and teachers (Tang, 2009). Conflicts between migrant parents and teachers mainly result from their different attitudes towards education, different teaching methods, and different living habits and so on (ibid.). Teachers in urban public schools have been used to working with urban parents, and they have already developed their own ways or styles of dealing with parent-teacher relationships. After migrant children are enrolled, there is a need for teachers to search for new ways in order to meet migrant children and their families’ needs. As a result, teachers are unlikely to do so with enthusiasm, which may lead to more conflicts with migrant parents and becomes another barrier to parental involvement.

**Teachers’ Attitudes towards Parental Involvement**

There is a tendency in China that to evaluate school quality according only by the rate at which graduates enter a higher level of education (Zhao, 1993). Although it is misleading, urban public schools still pay much attention to students’ results in examinations, and aim to enhance students’ average academic achievement in order to receive a good reputation. As mentioned in the literature section, there are inequalities in compulsory education from area to area in contemporary Chinese society. As a result, generally speaking, migrant children’s school performances are poorer than urban children due to low-quality education in rural areas. In order to help migrant children to catch up with other students in the class, teachers have to contribute more time and effort in addition to their daily routine work. In addition, due to migrant parents’ low educational levels, improving parental involvement in migrant children’s education requires more time, passion and communication skills from teachers. Hence, teachers might regard it as a “burden” when they work with migrant parents and their children. Sometimes teachers feel reluctant to make contacts with migrant parents and work with them. According to the national survey in 2006, more than half of teachers in urban public schools stated that they have never paid a visit to migrant children’s families before. The situation in migrant schools is much worse than that in urban public schools due to teachers’ poor qualifications (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006).
**Teachers’ Training**

Teachers in elementary and secondary schools do not receive special trainings on parental involvement. Teachers’ lack of professional skills may have a negative impact on the type, level and frequency of parental involvement.

### 6.3.4 Barriers at the Family Level

According to Epstein’s studies, almost all parents with various background care about their children’s education. So it is not a lack of interest from parents which leads to low levels of parental involvement. Though a majority of peasant workers have low educational levels, they always have high expectations for their children. The table below presents detailed information about migrant parents’ expectations for their children in different types of cities.

#### Table 6.2

**Migrant Parents’ Expectations for Children in Different Types of Cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic literacy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary or vocational</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


From the table above, it is clear that around half of migrant parents hope that their children will receive higher education in the future, and even nearly 25% of parents expect their children to get master degrees. So we can see that migrant parents value children’s education very much. They might place more hope on education because they believe education is one of the tools that will change their whole lives. However, it is a fact that parents know little about what schools expect from them or how they can contribute to their children’s education, and this leads to problems in parental involvement (Epstein, 1990).

In the following section, factors at the family level which might influence parental involvement will be discussed from home global characteristics and dynamic process variables respectively by using Feinstein’s model which has been explained in the literature.
section. Home global characteristics include family’s socioeconomic status, family mobility and family size. Dynamic process variables include parents’ attitudes towards parental involvement, parents’ understanding or cognition of education and parenting styles.

**Family’s Socioeconomic Status**

From the model, it is clear that distal family factors are determinants of all other characteristics of the family. And among distal family factors listed in the model, migrant families’ socioeconomic status (SES) could be the most important and fundamental factor. As explained in the literature section, a family’s SES mainly includes parents’ occupation, family income and parents’ educational levels. The tables below show detailed information of these three factors respectively. Table 6.3 shows migrant parents’ occupations in the first place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3</th>
<th>Occupations of Both Head of Household and Spouse in Migrant Families (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head of Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property management</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering service</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small trade</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise employee</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table above, it can be seen that most jobs belong to the category of low-paying manual work.

Secondly, Table 6.4 shows the distribution of migrant parents’ educational levels in different types of cities.
Table 6.4
Educational Levels of Both Head of Household and Spouse in Migrant Families in Different Types of Cities (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor and above</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Head refers to Head of the Household

From the table above, it is evident that around half of migrant parents have accomplished lower secondary education. In other words, they merely finished nine-year compulsory education.

Finally, Table 6.5 shows migrant families’ monthly income in different types of cities.

Table 6.5
Monthly Income (RMB) of Migrant Families in Different Types of Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;500</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-1500</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500-2000</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2000</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1282</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It can be seen from the table that the monthly income of migrant families is relatively low, especially for those who live in large cities where the living expenditure is high. The tables above show migrant families’ SES from three measurements. To a large extent, these three aspects have connections with each other. For example, parents’ low educational levels lead to low-paying occupations. Here, it needs to be mentioned that Table 6.5 shows the monthly income of the head of the household and that of the spouse in total. However in reality, there is a possibility that only males are employed. In rural areas in China, most of the heads of the household are males. They are more likely to receive longer years of education and find better jobs in cities than females. If we look at migrant parents’ occupations and their educational levels once again, it is easy to find out that more females (the spouse) are
unemployed and their educational levels are normally lower than males. Therefore, it is not difficult to explain why most migrant families’ living conditions are poor: they are not well-educated; they perform low-paying jobs and these jobs are mostly manual work; and in some families, there are only males who are employed. Many peasant workers, in order to earn more money, have to do several jobs during one day or work more extra hours.

Migrant families’ low socioeconomic status leads to many problems in their involvement in children’s education. First of all, many migrant parents are not able to make as much monetary investment in their children’s schooling as urban parents do. They could not provide a nice physical environment for their children to live and study. And according to previous studies on migrant children’s home education, migrant families prefer to live in suburban areas because the rent is much cheaper. The surroundings of their living places are not pleasant in general. It is usually unsafe, and it is quite difficult to find bookstores and libraries nearby. Hence, migrant parents are not able to make use of educational resources in their communities to create a pleasant learning environment for their children.

Secondly, according to the national survey in 2006, most migrant parents stated that their families’ monthly income can only meet basic needs of life. In addition to providing food, clothes and basic school necessities to their children, some parents are not able to buy more books or send children to interest classes as urban parents do (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006).

Thirdly, though it is found out that there is no significant difference between migrant parents and urban parents in the aspect of checking or helping with their children’s homework, previous studies on migrant children’s home education suggested that migrant children are more likely to get support and help from their parents during the early school years. While children study in upper grades, the gap between migrant parents and urban parents becomes larger due to migrant parents’ lower educational levels. And according to the national survey in 2006, compared with urban children, more migrant children stated that they prefer to turn to teachers for help when they encounter difficulties in their studies (ibid.).

Finally, migrant parents often work long hours everyday. As a result, it might be very difficult for migrant children to have long and casual conversations about schools and personal lives with their parents. And it could also be a reason that leads to migrant parents’ fewer contacts with teachers and fewer visits to schools.

*Family Mobility*
Some migrant families, in order to improve their living condition, move from one job to another or move one place to another frequently. In this case, migrant children have to transfer to new schools more often than local children. According to the national survey, most of migrant children have experienced school transfer before. The table below shows the distribution of the frequency of migrant children’s school transfer in different types of cities.

### Table 6.6
**Frequency of Migrant Children’s School Transfer in Different Types of Cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Times</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Three Times</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1373</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It can be seen that more than 60% of migrant children have experienced school transfer before. Frequent school transfer has a negative impact on the continuity of children’s education. It then might be difficult for teachers and migrant parents to establish and develop an effective and stable network.

**Family Size**

According the data from the national survey in 2006, nearly half of migrant families have two children, which, to a large extent, make migrant families’ living conditions much worse and also make migrant children’s education more complicated (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). The table below shows the number of children in migrant families in different types of cities.
Table 6.7
Number of Children in Migrant Families in Different Types of Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large Cities</th>
<th>Medium Cities</th>
<th>Small Cities</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Five</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Total</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Many migrant families carry heavy financial burdens because of the situation of more than one child. Poor economic conditions, as mentioned earlier, have a negative impact on parental involvement in children’s education. The number of children in a family also has a close relationship with the family’s social capital. As mentioned in the literature section, the more siblings and the fewer adults in the house, the less social capital is available to children. In such a situation, the number of children directly influences the parent-child relationship. In addition, some people treat their daughters as inferior to sons. Gender inequality can still be found in some of migrant families. There is a possibility that parents’ involvement in sons’ education and in daughters’ education are very different. That might be another reason that causes limited parental involvement in migrant children’s education.

Parents’ Attitude towards Parental Involvement

Families’ distal factors, according to Feinstein’s conceptual model, directly influence parents’ cognitions or attitudes. First of all, many migrant parents believe that it is the school’s responsibility to educate their children. For these parents, parental involvement in education is a radically new cultural concept (Simich, 1986). Teachers in urban public schools expect migrant parents to have frequent contacts with them; while migrant parents believe that they do not need to contact with teachers or visit schools except when their children have serious schools problems (Tang, 2009). Therefore, parents’ passive attitudes towards parental involvement directly influence their participation in children’s education.

Parents’ Understanding or Cognition of Education
Due to migrant parents’ low educational levels, there is a possibility that they do not have a good understanding of education. For instance, compared with urban children, migrant children have fewer books at home. As mentioned in the literature section, one of the key features of cultural capital in a family is the number of books. However, migrant parents might not understand that knowledge not merely comes from textbooks. As a result, their focus is mainly on the school’s education and neglect the importance of education from somewhere outside classrooms.

“Parent education is considered to be an especially important factor in the educational environment for children. Many studies show that children of poorly educated parents are lower achievers in school than those of better educated parents. One explanation of this might be that better educated parents have more knowledge of their children’s schooling, are more likely to be involved in the instructional process in school, and have higher academic expectations for their children” (Baker & Stevenson, 1986, p.50).

In addition, migrant families have more focus on children’s academic achievement but often neglect their psychological development. Migrant parents mostly focus on homework or results of examinations which they can “see” and “check”. However, education is much more than that. It is important for parents to create a learning environment for their children. This kind of environment is not only to help children to acquire more knowledge, but also to enhance children’s positive attitudes and influence their norms, values and behaviors. Migrant children, after they settle down in cities, face a completely new environment. They may feel afraid, confused, nervous, upset, or uncomfortable. In addition, migrant families’ poor economic conditions might lead to tensions between couples (Jiang et al., 2008), which has a negative impact on children’s psychological development. In this case, it is important to pay more attention to migrant children’s feelings in their deep hearts in order to avoid potential psychological problems.

**Parenting Style**

Previous studies on migrant children’s home education suggested that migrant parents often educate their children in an oversimplified and crude way. Due to migrant parents’ low educational levels, many of them have little knowledge of how to educate their children. The
authoritarian style is employed in most of migrant families. Parents establish and implement all household rules with little or no discussion with children. Under such a situation, migrant children often feel that they could not get enough support and love from their parents (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). Migrant children may get pressure from both schools and families, which will result in their lack of a sense of social identity and a sense of belonging.

6.4 Equality of Education and Parental Involvement in Education

6.4.1 Introduction

Issues on migrant children’s compulsory education, basically speaking, originated from inequality of education in various aspects in contemporary China. From discussions in the previous section, it can be seen that differences between migrant parents and urban parents, conflicts between teachers in urban public schools and migrant parents, disparities between migrant children and urban children in all reflect the problem of inequality of education in migrant children’s schooling. The inequality of education exists in various aspects such as disparities between urban and rural areas, between different urban regions, between different social classes, between males and females, and between different minority groups and so on. In respect of parental involvement in education, urban-rural disparity, disparity within the school and disparity between different social classes are clearly revealed. These disparities then have a great impact on migrant children’s school performances and individual development. This section intends to discuss urban-rural disparity, disparity within school and disparity between different social classes and reasons that lead to these disparities.

6.4.2 Urban-Rural Disparity

Urban-rural disparity could be regarded as the most serious educational problem in Chinese society, and directly leads to the large gap between migrant children and urban children in their academic performances.

As mentioned earlier, in China, the Household Registration System divides people into two categories: agricultural and nonagricultural. This system was founded on the basis of the Urban-Rural Dual Structure in Chinese society. The Urban-Rural Dual Structure can be further divided into Economic Dual Structure and Social Dual Structure (Gao, 2009). The Urban-Rural Dual Structure, like a wall, makes urban and rural regions separated. It has a
great impact on the social and economic development in different regions, and on people’s daily lives in a variety of aspects, such as housing, social security, and of course, education as well. The Economic Dual Structure is one of the factors that lead to the regional inequality in compulsory education in China (ibid.). Urban-rural disparities, during the stage of compulsory education, are mainly reflected in three aspects: expenditure on education per student, distribution of educational resources and quality of teaching (ibid.).

With regard to the expenditure on education per student, according to the Law of Compulsory Education in China, the expenditure is shouldered by the Central Government and local governments together (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2006). In this way, the economic disparities between urban and rural areas directly lead to the imbalanced development of compulsory education. According to China Educational Finance Yearbook 2003-2005, the expenditure for each student in rural areas is much lower than the national average expenditure (Ministry of Education of the People Republic of China, 2005).

There is also a large gap between urban and rural areas in school facilities. According to the data from China Education Yearbook in 2005, there are no significant differences between urban schools and rural schools in several aspects such as the area of classroom and the area of library. However, compared with urban children, rural children have fewer opportunities to get access to new technologies such as computers and e-books (ibid.).

Urban-Rural disparity can also be found in the qualifications of teachers. According to the China Education Yearbook in 2005, there is no significant difference between urban schools and rural schools in the number of teachers. However, the qualifications of teachers vary greatly (ibid.). To be more specific, only 24% of teachers working for lower secondary schools in rural areas completed higher education. However the percentage in urban areas was 62.4%, 2.6 times more than that in rural areas (ibid.).

It can be seen that nowadays, disparities in education between rural and urban areas are mostly shown in the “quality” instead of “quantity”. On the surface, the gap between rural and urban areas has narrowed. However in reality, hidden inequalities in education are increasing (Gao, 2009).

The regional inequality becomes one of the most important reasons why peasant workers bring their children to cities. According to the national survey, nearly half of migrant parents stated that they bring their children to cities for better education (China National Institute for Educational Research, 2006). From their point of view, education might be the only way to change their hukou status, and in further change their whole lives.
6.4.3 Disparity within School

In addition to the disparity between urban and rural areas, educational inequality can also be found within the school. After students’ enrollment, it is important to ensure that every student can get equal access to school facilities and receive quality education at school. As mentioned earlier, migrant children often suffer from misunderstandings and discriminations in urban public schools. What is worse is that some teachers in urban public schools treat migrant children and urban children differently. There might be many reasons that lead to teachers’ different attitudes towards urban children and migrant children. For example, migrant children’s academic performances are generally poorer than urban children and teachers feel reluctant to devote more time and effort to help migrant children with their studies. For migrant children, the concept of equality in education not only indicates that migrant children have to be treated equally in schools, but also requires teachers to educate them in accordance with individuals’ backgrounds and aptitudes.

6.4.4 Disparity between Social Classes

In addition to urban-rural disparity and within school disparity, inequality of education in China is also reflected in social class differences.

Previous studies suggested that social class differences do not have a great impact on children’s elementary schooling. However, the gap becomes larger as children enter secondary schools. Children from high-class families have more opportunities to enter key schools or high-quality secondary schools compared with children from lower classes (Gao, 2009). And it is obvious that children of manual workers are not competitive in the current examination system (ibid.).

As mentioned in the literature section, the capitals of the family, including economic capital, cultural capital and social capital, vary dramatically by class. And these differences have a direct and great impact on children’s education.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

The aim of the thesis is to explore parental involvement in migrant children’s education in contemporary Chinese society.

The first objective is to examine the necessity of parental involvement in migrant children’s compulsory education. Migrant children, around the age between six and fifteen,
are experiencing rapid physical and psychological changes; meanwhile, they are trying to adjust themselves to new urban lives, which for them is more challenging. In such a situation, parents play an important role and they are able to bridge the gap between migrant children and urban public schools. Parental involvement in migrant children’s education brings benefits to individuals, urban public schools and Chinese society as a whole in the context of rural-urban migration.

The second objective is to examine the differences between urban parents and migrant parents in various aspects of parental involvement. It is found out that there are gaps between urban parents and rural parents in most aspects of both home-centered involvement and school-centered involvement.

The third objective is to examine differences in parental involvement in migrant children’s education among different types of cities. It is found out that the situation in medium or small cities is better than that in large cities.

The last objective is to explore barriers to parental involvement in migrant children’s education. Barriers have been discussed from three aspects: the societal level, the school level and the family level.

In order to improve parental involvement and to further improve migrant children’s education, it is important to involve stakeholders at different levels to work together. Nowadays, the Central Government has launched several relevant polices regarding migrant children’s education. Though there is no national policy concerning parental involvement, more and more people begin to realize the importance of parental involvement, and schools encourage parents to participate in their children’s schooling by involving parents in different types of activities. Secondly, nowadays, in China, there is a trend of setting up “School of Parents”, which intends to provide professional programs on home education and parental involvement. It is necessary to encourage migrant workers to attend such programs to get a better understanding of the importance of parental involvement and what they can do to improve their children’s achievement. Finally, in public schools, it is vital to include parents from marginalized groups by making them feel welcome with a plan to communicate with them about their children (Whitney & Glasgow, 2009). And it is very important to “listen” to migrant workers’ opinions: what difficulties migrant children encounter in their studies and what they expect from schools.

In conclusion, to improve the situation, cooperation from society, schools and parents is needed in order to build the effective partnership, but definitely, has a long way to go.
6.6 Further Research

It would be of interest to do a follow up study and to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data which could be used to explore barriers to parental involvement in different types of migrant families, and migrant families in different types of cities. Another aspect of interest for further studies is to conduct a research particularly on differences between migrant parents whose children study in migrant schools and migrant parents whose children study in urban public schools. As migrant schools are developing and making improvement gradually in China, it is important to pay more attention to children who study in migrant schools and find better ways to work with their parents more effectively.
List of References


