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Modernization and Post-1978 Chinese Educational Reform:

Impact on a Migrating Population

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Education

by

Weiling Deng

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Modernization and Post-1978 Chinese Educational Reform:
Impact on a Migrating Population

by

Weiling Deng

Master of Arts in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Douglas M. Kellner, Chair

China's post-1978 educational reform was born by and into an era of transformation. Given a historical background where modernization leads the principle of all kinds of reform, the Chinese educational system is found to be problematic in the country's struggle of a balance between economic growth and social equality. Upon using basic a historical methodology of Change over Time, the thesis examines the dilemma "between a socialist egalitarian model and a liberal competitive model" from a perspective that takes chronological and spatial transition into consideration. By placing the ongoing educational reform into two theoretical frameworks, namely isomorphism and modernization, the research tries to demonstrate the inevitability of a series of institutional changes that

provide both opportunities and threats to the limited social mobility of the world's largest migrating population. The thesis concludes by assuming that although it undergoes many controversies and disputes, the educational reform is exploring a way to satisfy migrants in a particular Chinese manner.

Key words: post-1978, educational reform, urban-rural differentiation, migrants, isomorphism, modernization, change

The thesis of Weiling Deng is approved.

Val D. Rust

Daniel G. Solorzano

Douglas M. Kellner, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

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1. Introduction

In the modern history of China, the time the word “reform” first appeared in official documents was April, 1979, three years after the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Liu, 2005). Struggling to climb out of the “muddy water” of a series of wars and social disturbance, the tired China, dragging her wounded and aged body, started to look ahead with the idea of readjustment and reform. The rekindled enthusiasm among millions of Chinese people spread to education not long after the birth of the Reform and Opening up Policy, put forth by political leaders to foster an economic transformation.

Generally speaking, since 1978, the reform of China’s education has undergone four major phases: the recovery and reconstruction in the late 1970s including the revival of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), the integrated development and reform of education in 1980s, the massive expansion of general education in the last decade of the twentieth century, and the thorough application of the Scientific Outlook on Development, beginning in 2003 (Sun, 2008). Achievements in the last three and a half decades are very encouraging, yet they are undoubtedly accompanied with lessons and failures profoundly concerning educational scholars and policy makers. The focus of this paper, thus, falls upon the impact this educational reform has on China’s massive migrating population and the obstacles amidst their urbanization process. The research finding speculates that without drawing enough attention to this problem and substituting vertical mobility (i.e. rise in consumption standard and social status) for horizontal mobility (i.e. physical movement from rural to urban area), the migration issue will continue to haunt and deteriorate a healthy economic development in China.

Unlike what public urban schooling is understood to be in the US, this phrase is interpreted in China as the education young middle-class city dwellers must receive and as a means to urban socialization that further provides connections and networks necessary to lead a better life. Debates have been held around the merits and harms that China's nine-year compulsory education has made to economically and geographically disadvantaged students. Is it a new way of social stratification or a powerful means to equalizing social wealth? By no means can a political party or a nation avoid unjust phenomena at the beginning of any reform. Yet an optimistic view can help us foresee a brighter outlook of more equally redistributed resources and opportunities to different professions, communities, and bureaucratic layers, and look at current injustice as an inevitable painful pilgrimage to that future.

The thesis is constructed on the ground of a literature review that takes a retrospective look of the past thirty-five years of educational reform. I am employing a basic historical methodology – commonly described as Change over Time. This concept attaches to the study of history “additional chronological and spatial dimensions” that make the methodology a perfect choice when a longer time period and larger area of land are to be dealt with (Cohen, 2009). In contemporary China, a most widely acknowledged interpretation of the relation between the past and the present is known to be a product of a rational paradox and emotional strain that, on the one hand, demonstrates and celebrates the splendor of Chinese civilization, and on the other, exposes a raped history that suffered under Western Imperialism, war with Japan, and civil wars (Ma, 2011). The exhibition of grandeur and concealment of weakness is plainly imprinted with the sense of time and

space, in which the current educational reform also finds itself following the rule of development and imbalance. Ma therefore argued that it was in this logic and habitude of narration that people involved in the alternation of temporal and spatial opportunities found it possible to recognize but hard to understand the situation, easy to participate but difficult to integrate into the reform, and effortless to obtain self-knowledge but demanding to fulfill self-consciousness. Hence, in order to create an articulation of the institutional change in progress, the building of a historical context that provides an insight as panoramic as possible is of great need.

So far as theories are concerned, the study will be using isomorphism as a framework that elaborates the process of institutional changes as well as modernization theory to name and analyze the current embodiment of educational inequality of young migrants who are stuck on the road to a higher socio-economic status. This research particularly chooses migrant children and youths as subjects in that they, unlike ethnic minorities and women, are usually ignored when the central government tries to improve social justice by law. Lastly, the conclusion drawn by this paper is that contemporary educational reform technically plays the role of a lever, utilized by the government to balance and readjust the inevitable conflict between economic and social development in the course of finding a Chinese way to modernization.

2. Modernization as Background

The Chinese context of the post-1978 era is labeled as modernization. It is under this fundamental frame that this paper unfolds. The contradiction between social and economic goals “has been particularly acute among socialist nations such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) that must balance the need for economic development against an inherent political agenda of reducing class inequities” (Hannum, 1999:193). Some recent data show that social class inequities are worse now than in the 1950’s and 1960’s, so one might question whether since Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 political and economic reform there in fact has been an inherent political agenda of reducing class inequities. Even though China’s GDP is soaring high and is announced to beat the US in the year of 2050, a more blatant speaker of social justice, income per capita, always overshadows the glory of China’s fast growing national economy. Hannum (1999:193) continues to elaborate that “economic scarcity has dictated that policies designed to promote rapid economic development compete directly for resources with policies designed to expand social opportunities to traditionally disadvantaged groups.” This competition also lurks in curriculum that will be discussed later. Therefore, Chinese political elites are still having a difficult time defining the role that education plays in the progress of China’s modernization. To put it more specifically, education functions in the dilemma “between a socialist egalitarian model and a liberal competitive model” (Hannum, 1999). Education in the early years after the establishment of the New China regime (1949-1976) strictly reflected the socialist proclamation of class struggle and class conflict; while the political monsoon changed its agenda after the 1978 Reform and Opening Policy to follow the lead of a somewhat contradictory socialist market economy.

When educational reform was projected right before the turning point of a new millennium to be one of the major determinants of the future of China's modernization movement, it is not unwise to historically examine how modernization is perceived and interpreted within a Chinese context. The term "modernization" has usually been mistakenly decoded and/or narrowly understood "as a single-tracked movement towards economic development, urbanization, bureaucratic sophistication, and technological and scientific advancement" (Rong, 1996:246). In conceptualizing the modernization experienced by China, Chan Hoiman (1992) proposes a two-fold interpretation that is portrayed as a dichotomy between materialist modernism and utopian socialism. The first is reached by and displayed in the form of the advancement of science and technology as well as "humanistic or liberal education" in the service of a "systematic, objective, and pragmatic" educational mechanism (Hoiman, 1992:77). However, Hoiman failed to put forward a means by which the country and its people are to achieve the ideational goal of utopian socialism except by clarifying the goal's characteristic as "anti-institutional" "societal mobilization."

However, Lee (1991) suggests the understanding of modernization to be completed in three inter-related dimensions that externally and internally feature upward social changes: technological and economic, socio-political, and value system. He continued to elaborate the socio-political dimension by measurements of changes in the number and proportion of urban and rural population, literacy rates, mass communication devices and implementation, and bureaucratization process. In terms of the value system, the author gave very detailed classification and analysis of its various perspectives, such as achievement-orientation and

universalism, consumerism, and self-orientation, all of which denotes the dichotomy between the East and the West. However, as mainland China has a much larger population and much more complicated demographic distribution than do societies like Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, which were analyzed by Lee in 1991, the collision threatens to be more evident and to exacerbate inequality between different subgroups, if the West is to be blindly followed.

The post-1978 era was a time when science and technology were suddenly regarded as the most stable and correct path to strengthening national power, when scientists, technicians, scholars, and teachers were rehabilitated and highly praised from the nightmare of the ten-year Cultural Revolution, and when NCEE became the fairest platform on which common people may compete to verify their academic capability and reach higher social and political status by the access to and success in higher education.

In only a short period of time, it seemed that everyone, regardless of his or her background, was so close to the bridge leading to material and mental prosperity as long as he or she could perform well in the exam because both government statements and national curricula announced that class struggle was to be tuned down.

3. Educational Policy Reform in 1980s

“People come first” is accepted as a basic principle in the post-1978 educational reform (Henze, 1992). This indicates a shift of policy emphasis onto socialist construction

that leans toward the elevation of material well being. Concrete manifestations may be found in schools. “Classrooms moved away from a focus on egalitarianism and class struggle, instead emphasizing quality, competition, individual talents, and the mastery of concepts and skills important in the development of science and technology” (Hannum, 1999:200).

However, by forcefully pulling up the demand for qualified education, the authority can hardly escape from seeing a new dilemma between socialist construction and socialist revolution. Specifically, socialist construction resembles somewhat the Protestant ethic that praises individual struggle and material enrichment and thus characterizes capitalism; while the socialist revolution is too conflict ridden and unstable to support scientific endeavors and continual economic growth, as is the harsh lesson learned from the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. But the irreversibility of the issue of the Compulsory Education Law and the decision to release more opportunities to higher education will only allow the government to readjust the tension between the meritocratic reality and the egalitarian ideal.

“The directive on educational work” finds its origin in a “developmental framework” named as “three integrations and six concurrent promotions,” noted Hoiman (1992:83), who continued to summarize the framework as follow:

Within this framework, educational work in the new era would involve the integration of unity and diversity, popularization and advancement, comprehensive planning and local decentralization (p. 83).

The unified poles in each pair, however, are not as harmonized as they are polarized

under a meritocratic structure that makes opportunity in a great variety of forms more precious and conspicuous than ever. In other words, there is worry that the endeavor to achieve both simultaneously threatens to be gradually and incessantly weakened in the evolution of a marketized educational system that makes one institute increasingly resemble another, popularization an impediment of advancement, and local decentralization a counterforce against universalizing opportunities.

“Political priorities underlying education policy have shifted dramatically over the history of the People’s Republic of China and have exerted a direct impact on the extent to which opportunity structures have differed for urban and rural children” (Hannum, 1999:194). Years starting from the establishment of the New China in 1949 have been demonstrating the extraordinary changes of the relationship between power and knowledge. Documented in educational policies, the country’s institutional reforms look more imperative than spontaneous.

3.1. Isomorphism Framework

Discussing two extremely important policies issued in the mid 1980s by the Chinese government, this section looks up to Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell’s (1983) framework of isomorphism to analyze the causes of a series educational reforms that drive the nation towards modernization. By the use of this framework, the following analysis tries to reason that in spite of a surprising appearance and outlook, the post-1978 educational reform in China is barely an “isolated or unexpected event in the scheme of

history and context” (Wiseman and Huang, 2011). Furthermore, contributors to the suddenly transformed educational-political rationality in great multitude and variety continue to interact with each other to sustain gradual changes in the long run. Upon this is based the longitudinal conflict and harmonization of economic growth and social equalization levered by the power of education.

DiMaggio and Powell explain against the background of modernization the development of bureaucracy resulted from the establishment and modification of organizational structures. Synthetically speaking, the building of “collective rationality in organizational fields” can be coercive, mimetic, and normative according to the motivation and forces that amalgamate various organizations by shared adoption of working strategies. The theoretical perspective of isomorphism used here aligns with the study’s purpose of interpreting the institutional changes captured in the process of the post-1978 Chinese educational reform. In general, the following part will be discussing the coercive force that gave birth to the 1986 Compulsory Educational Law, the mimetic force that had the country model itself after the marketized and decentralized educational system of developed countries, and the normative force that responds to the professional need to make Chinese education more managerially oriented than collegially oriented. However, these three forces do not exclusively exist; instead, they are found intertwining and overlapping in each of the following institutional changes analyzed below.

3.2. Compulsory Education

In order to satisfy the need of agricultural industrialization and industrial intensification as part of the modernization mission, the country calls for more labor force with higher literacy level, which helps both agricultural and technical workers and constructors to better follow instruction and understand the role they are playing in the construction process. The realization that blind exploitation of manual labor would not be a useful strategy for a developing country like China with respect to international competition with developed countries became the leading principle that drove this nation to a brand new era.

It is a new page on which “institutional process of change” is written and rewritten. “Coercive forces frequently are accompanied by regulations or laws that carry some weight of accountability (as well as punishment) related to compliance” (Wiseman and Huang, 2011:12).

On April 12th, 1986, the well-known Compulsory Education Law was issued and enacted to protect children’s civil rights to receive a nine-year education and preventing employers from hiring school-age children as cheap labor. Even though the law went into effect on July 1st in the same year, “provinces were allowed to have different effective dates for implementing the law” as the National People’s Congress realized that “not all provinces would be ready to enforce the law immediately” (Fang, et al., 2012).

The central government then made it mandatory thus universalizing the nine-year compulsory education to the entire nation, in which primary education was ultimately to eliminate illiteracy from this nation, but allowed different time-lines in completing this goal.

Hawkins (1983) noted that for the urban and economically advantaged region along the east coast, the expected date for this accomplishment was 1990. Apart from the fact that the richest one quarter of population residing on or near the coastline, half of the whole population was living in the middle part of China and was expected to benefit from the 1986 Compulsory Education Law by 1995. The remaining twenty-five percent of the population was the least fortunate in enjoying such a benefit because no exact date was set for them to receive basic education that aims to eradicate illiteracy. Recognizing the benefits of high level education, decent jobs, and admirable income while suffering a vicious circle themselves, people from poorer areas would not want to stay in their impoverished hometowns and suffer a destiny of lack of opportunity. Hence their decision to migrate to richer places formulates the most remarkable self-motivated migrating population that this country has ever witnessed.

In the meantime while the discussion concentrated on the mandate of the generalization of primary and lower secondary education, it should not be ignored that a mimetic force coexists with the coercive force. The need to universalize basic education is inborn to “those indigenous developers” (Lee, 1991: 41) because bourgeois industrialization demands for and further stimulates the specialization and professionalization of a great variety of fields. The natural process had taken a relatively long period of time to reach the maturity of development and modernization, but this is not the history of late comers, almost all of which had more or less an unhappy memory of being colonized or invaded. What is then natural to these late comers after a remarkable cultural and value collision is to borrow and imitate their colonizers and invaders, and at

the same time reflecting and contemplating their own weaknesses. The political and economic disadvantages in an international atmosphere also produce a historical hotbed for mimetic force to be born, because the power environment would not allow any attempt of survival and competition to take so long a time period to learn and develop national strength. The uncertain fate and the “unclear solutions” together make a “problemistic search” a credible source to answer this dilemma (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 151). Thus, under such multi-faceted pressures, China decided to eliminate illiteracy and improve its professional and industrial quality and competitiveness around the globe by using the power of law, an action learned from its happy and unhappy dialogues with the West.

3.3. The Changed Funding Pattern

Historically, Chinese educational authority and funding resource alike were highly centralized in the control of central government for two thousand years until there came the requirement of economic development in the late 1970s. Days prior to the 1980s, the highly centralized financing plan dominated the entire country by collecting and reallocating “revenue from lower levels of government” and successfully manipulated the equalized distribution of public educational expenditure to each province (Gong & Tsang, 2011). But an expanded social complexity made the “inherent deficiencies” of the state-manipulated system even more apparent (Qi, 2011). As the social structure is varied to a greater extent by factors more of occupational and economic index than of political orientation, the mechanism of opportunity speaks louder than ever and consequently brings about the

concern of equality.

If specified, educational equality can be divided into three phases in the duration of an individual's schooling experience: the starting point (or enrollment), inputs (or financing), and learning outcome (or student achievement) (Gong & Tsang, 2011: 45). This section uses spending disparity in compulsory education to demonstrate educational inequity in that the student's retention at school has become a more testing problem than enrollment.

The decentralized funding pattern may find its origin in the Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Reform of the Educational System issued by CCP in 1985 calling for "major changes in the structure, financing, and administration of education" (Gong & Tsang, 2011: 46). It decentralized the central government's responsibility on national education to lower level of governments (i.e., county, township, and village governments) and their corresponding educational institutes, and tried to involve non-educational agencies to contribute to the financial needs of education (Lan, Zhu, and Lan, 1995; Fang, et al., 2012). The Decision with its intention to echo with the transformation in the economy attempted to invigorate the vitality in education by allowing institutes themselves to attract funds. Hence, Chinese education beheld landmark changes taking place almost overnight in the form of "a diversified revenue base," which made individuals and households become "subject to paying tuition and miscellaneous fees" (Gong & Tsang, 2011).

However, once the responsibility was moved from government to societal forces as a form of decentralization, educational operations would inevitably follow the market's rules, whose emphasis falls always on economic growth instead of the maintenance of social

justice. This exacerbates all levels of inequality from township to interprovincial disparities. In the 1990s, having found the situation going in the opposite direction of egalitarian goal much more than expected, the central government acknowledged the importance and urgency of “reversing the trend of widening disparities” and restart a more powerful macro control mechanism to have the fiscal system tilted toward underdeveloped regions (Li, Park, & Wang, 2007). Unfortunately, market forces refused to be weakened in front of the recentralized funding plan.

In the mutual confrontation between governmental and market forces of public education financing, the former started to pay more attention to rural basic education directed to financially support poorer students. The dichotomy between rural and urban education has drawn many revisionist proposals from the State Council and ultimately observes gradual changes in the financial pattern, structure, administration, and function of rural education. For instance, the “three exemptions and one subsidy” policy particularly targeted at rural areas eliminates the charge of a textbook fee, stationery fee, and miscellaneous fees, and simultaneously subsidizes the living expenditure of semi-boarded pupils and economically depressed lower-secondary school children, although different regions are allowed to execute the decision at different times according to their own economic condition. However, the area in-between the bipolar attraction of governmental attention is often a place that is more likely to be ignored. Population positioned in this grey area are labeled as migrants, who are neither protected by the household registration policy, or *hukou* limitation, as discussed below, nor able to benefit from the new focus on rural and minority education.

Yet, upon facing the shortage of migrant children's education, migrant schools were created as "a product of market demand" ("Zhenhua Migrant Children's School," 2011). However, the market shows little sympathy concerning equally distributing the already scarce educational resources to subsidize this type of school, since investment in them barely returns to donors as competitive a reward as first class public schools do. How this type of school and its students are to struggle in their urban dream is worth a reexamination of the historical context of Chinese educational system's decentralization and a re-contemplation on the definition of modernization.

3.4. Historical Explanation of the Decentralization of Education

"Strategies that are rational for individual organizations may not be rational if adopted by large numbers. Yet the very fact that they are normatively sanctioned increases the likelihood of their adoption" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Two inferences may be drawn from this statement. (1) There is need to weaken the command of adopting highly centralized or regionally rational strategies to solve dissimilar problems. (2) Coercively sanctioned strategies are less likely to improve performance than enhancing the legitimacy of the adoption. Thus there is more arbitrarily defined value than technical efficiency infused in the task to aggregately manipulate different organizations for structural purposes.

As Wiseman and Huang (2011) have noted:

Perhaps the most radical change in the Chinese educational system as a result of educational policy reform and implementation of these reforms is through the

decentralization of educational responsibility, decision-making, and resource allocation to local agencies within China (p. 5).

On a land of more than 3.7 million square miles, China embraces numerous and greatly varied regional contexts consisting of complicated economic, geographic, cultural, and folk elements that are of intensive interrelation and interplay. This very fact, heavily colored by history's continuum and fault line, catalyzes the inevitability of the quantitative and qualitative changes found in today's educational reform, one that remodels natural man, state institutions, and the game rules in the market (Ma, 2011). "The logic of space and time" having brought tremendous disparities to the civilizations packed within one nation state, profoundly rooted regional characteristics have been producing difficulties to any national plans in which educational reform is no exception. Even a powerful political mechanism will have to concede to the hardship in policy implementation when confronted with the great variation of cultures where it should function. The cultural distinction among the subjects of execution and reception is so enormous that political agendas, such as a nationwide educational reform, can hardly escape from being deconstructed and reconstructed differently when promulgated, filtered, and implemented (Ma, 2011).

Historically contextualized, therefore, decentralization in the authority and funding responsibility of national education is originally neither demanded nor necessary. Rather, the birth of this idea is unavoidable as it is a reflection of progressive history that gradually invites more international communication, pressure, and challenges. When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, the country realized that a large bulk of its middle-level workers were not well-trained to fulfill world class demands of a work force. It then looked

for possible sources of labor power and preferred less developed regions where the cost to educate a child is much lower than developed areas. In addition, it is geographically and economically distressed places that are more likely to provide society with the needed worker population because families in there usually experience a long period of migration and would like to settle down in cities where they hope to gain employment. Of the same importance is the fact that China's educational reform exists in the form of the state's needs and develops on the basis of local collective knowledge (Ma, 2009). Thus, it is predictable that the herd mentality is a very powerful catalyst in bringing about private vocational and technical schools in underdeveloped areas to recruit local students.

3.5. Decentralized Education as a Classed Game

Educational reform, a game between the central government, local government, enterprises, and citizens, can hardly see progress as long as the interrelationships among these entities still heavily benefit some and subordinate the rest. Despite the decentralization of the sanction and sponsorship of providing education to school-aged children, the structure of educational administration continues to follow the political agenda of CCP. At the same time, a paradox can be recognized that to take the autonomy of sponsoring education at local government level is compulsory, similar to a recentralized process of following the central lead. Hence, every lower level of government politically responds to the demand from its immediate upper level's mandate, which is thereof categorized as caused by a formal force in coercive isomorphism.

But coercive force does not direct the institutional change alone. It complicatedly intertwines with a normative pressure that transforms educational institutions and organizations from being collegially oriented to managerially oriented. The reason to explain this phenomenon is that employees have been trained to become much more professionalized than before, thus a remarkably narrowed gap “between organizational commitment and professional allegiance” stimulates the leading group to develop a new rationality to better “control the production of producers” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Lee (1991) contends that it is this gradual change of industrial and business requirement that contributes to an important manifestation of modernization – bureaucratization. The clear hierarchy of authority, rewarding seniority and merit, has grown to be another profession, in which the rewarded feel the desire to be as privileged as possible. To sum up, the profession of teaching is now becoming more subject to that of management as the latter has professionally developed a greater controlling power over the subdivisions within an organization and to make them coherent to political guidance.

So far, Pfeffer and Salancik (in DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 150) “observe that politically constructed environments have two characteristic features: political decision makers often do not experience directly the consequences of their actions; and political decisions are applied across the board to entire classes of organizations, thus making such decisions less adaptive and less flexible.” If contextualized in China, these two traits may possibly be comprehended as observation that finds an apparently hierarchical and patriarchal way of resource selection and distribution from the top to the bottom, or from decision makers to clients. It is especially true in poorer areas, where clients are the last to

benefit. Therefore, it is worth risking arguing that political decision makers in China do not favor the idea of equally distributing educational resources and making schools equally exceptional in academics, otherwise they will be faced with the loss of a privileged feeling and huge interests (Yu, 2013). They not only have the consequence experienced by other people, who are usually economically lower, than themselves, but also create and enjoy another set of rules different from what the grassroots level has been struggling with. I am not denying the enlarged population of Chinese middle class who are capable of purchasing private tutoring and international education that signal the best education today's children can get. What I am concerned with, however, is those who are living at the disadvantaged end of wealth gap.

Speaking of the urban-rural differentiation as a result of such a social class mediated situation, one thing should be highlighted. Although the compromise of professional operation with nonprofessional clients is almost ubiquitous, history has relentlessly decided the educational and modernization level of urban, migrant, and rural clients of the reformed educational policy. Hence, the abrasion or sacrifice of professional operation surely is much bigger in less developed areas if the same formal education system is to be mandatorily modeled. The difference thus formulates boundaries that confine within the same layer the interchangeability of "individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organizations" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 152), and consequently contribute to the limited opportunities of social mobility. In this logic, it is perceivable that the classed game accelerates and perpetuates the inequity of opportunity in the starting, proceeding, and ending points of a person's educational experience.

4. Education's Image

The fact that schools, private or public, have constantly been under the requirements from top political leaders and reformers to produce expert human capital has decided education's wide coverage over a large number of social fields. In response to this characteristic, I propose to examine the phenomenal change in the relation between power and knowledge that clearly reveals how a new hierarchy was rapidly formulated and spread to overturn the pre-1978 proletarian egalitarianism that previously dominated each classroom.

4.1. Knowledge Hierarchy

“[T]he treatment of knowledge and expertise” is a key point in understanding the commercialization of knowledge that characterizes the contemporary Chinese educational reform (Henze, 1992). This denotes the boundary between those who are to be privileged and those who are to be marginalized. Also the top-down alteration of such an intellectual and political keystone refers to the conversion of social status between peasants/workers and scholars/scientists.

The fact that scientific knowledge is treated anew also determines a new logic between productivity and production relation. As the means by which people conquer and

transform nature was remarkably shifted from manual to mental labor, it is those mastering effectiveness and efficiency who contribute more to the economy and in the meantime are more respected and wanted.

What was inherited from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century nation-wide movement was “Mr. Science,” while the government had “Mr. Democracy” expelled from mainland China. To put it in another way, it is wise and necessary to retain the idea of “revitalizing China through industry” and unwaveringly develop an economy that benefits every citizen, but political needs require that Marxism and Leninism be kept as an ideological guidance that acts as partisan underpinnings – people’s democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thus, in order to beat the UK and the US in industry, the time between the 1950s and 1970s, the new Chinese regime led by the CCP saw a tremendous growth in the country’s heavy industry, while peoples’ livelihood was something insignificant. But one must acknowledge that living conditions for the majority of Chinese improved greatly after 1949 compared to the previous two decades, basically solving the food problem, something that India still has not accomplished. As peasants and workers were the easiest to be converted to Communism and they accounted for the largest proportion of the Chinese population, the Party, following Marxist-Leninist theory, granted them the highest social status to consolidate their political authority by winning over the largest number of supporters. Hence, it is not hard to imagine that schooling before 1978 simply mirrored the social class theories of the CCP and its Marxist-Leninist and later Mao Zedong theories. The course of eliminating illiteracy, however, has never stopped since 1949.

4.2. School-Society Relation

Chinese educational reform in the 1980s gradually rejected education's function as "a direct descendent" of the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR)." Divorced from the old image as "an extension and reflection of the political-economic superstructure and instrument of class struggle," education is now involved in both "ideological factors and material outcomes" in a more intellectual manner that satisfies "socialist modernization" (Hawkins, 1983). In comparing the school's role between the pre and post-1978 period, Hawkins further notes that the distinction appearing in the guiding principles released by Chinese educational and political leaders tends to be a shift of focus from sacrificing "growth for advances in equity" to an emphasis of balancing the two factors.

Featured by a strong sense of class orientation and differentiation, education in capitalist societies is often criticized by orthodox Marxism in that schools under capitalist ideology are exploited to harden social divisions "by perpetuating them in the young" (Guttek, 1988). Nonetheless, this critique cannot prevent schools anywhere from being political. It is undeniable that the Chinese government's endeavor in tuning down the volume of class conflict is obviously successful, yet school's variety in function, reputation, and academic level never stops inserting social values to whoever participates in the educational system. Modernized social change efforts work to diversify the economy and let each segment develop its own expertise. Together with the vindication of scholarship,

social division of labor inevitably underplays the importance of “industrial workers and rural farmers,” who once were praised as the most pious followers of the Party. Consequently, as the enthusiastic call for political loyalty was tuned to a lower volume, the notion that “science and technology is the first and foremost productivity” supplanted the previous message and took over the leadership of running schools. Although school does not defile the image of the latter and advocates hard work as deliberately as before, the institution does stress the importance of choosing an academic route that leads to individual prosperity and national economic growth.

However, as educational power designates individuals or sectors of population into different industries, it seems unavoidable to perceive a sense of arbitrariness in this designation. Although it did not completely originate from human force, the newly formed social stratification is to a large extent made possible by family background, including wealth, residential place, educational history, and inherited working history. As policies no longer divide people by their political preference and mistaken language, every respect that characterizes a person identifies his or her properties and aligns these properties with new demands of the country’s development.

5. An Unprecedented Mass of Migrants

“The largest flow of migration in human history is currently taking place before our eyes in China, and along with it come the complex issues and challenges associated with

any migrant community of the world.”

--- Jonathan Hursh, President of NGO “Included”

5.1. Economic Motivation behind the Migrating Population

Despite its winding, complicated history, China had never seen such a massive moving population from rural to urban areas until the calendar turned to the early 1980s. This most recent migration is unprecedented in number and has characteristics that differ from previous ones. Historically, population shifts tended to be more passive largely because people were forced to leave their homeland by natural disasters, inter-racial and international wars, military requirements, imperialist needs, political chaos, and government’s macro-control (Li & Li, 1997). But this time, the country is observing a much more active movement among her citizens.

Among all reasons that explain the unprecedented mass of migrants in China, economic motivation is considered to be the most outstanding. The economic modernization of China is characterized with “late emergence from without,” which indicates that it is foreign challenges, instead of the accumulation of internal demands, that spark modernization. Such a mode requires a top-down centralized power from state government apparatus, because the civil population is too powerless to initiate and propel this procedure (Sun, 1991). In the area of education, countries whose industrialization and urbanization are labeled as “early emergence from within” are advantaged from the synchronized occurrence of social transformation, the public school movement, and the

formation of compulsory education (Du, Wang, Zhou, 2004; Hua, 2007).

But China was not as lucky as the above description might indicate. Its migrating population participates in urbanization not only by soaring numbers, but also by “breaking the Sino-characterized urban-rural structure and the established dual urban-rural educational system” (Hua, 2007). Such duality was founded in late 1950s in order to mitigate the city’s pressure to absorb rural immigrants by setting up household registration classification to prevent them from flooding into urban areas for resources, yet the state retained the requirement that the countryside should serve cities. In January, 1958, the central government issued the “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Administration” that divides the entire population into agricultural and non-agricultural registered permanent residence. This differentiation set up an obstacle to those agricultural-registered residents that the only legal way to move to and settle down in a city is to switch their registered identity. In the meantime as cities closed the door on the face of rural residents, they also shut down the access to miscellaneous social security benefits, including educational resources.

Against the background of a gradually removed residential limitation, the early 1980s envisioned a huge “surplus labor force” moving from the countryside to the city motivated by comparative urban-rural profits (Hua, 2007). “Impregnated” with the constantly incoming flood of people, the economically and politically privileged places then categorized those new comers as “new citizens,” a group that belongs “to neither urban nor rural classifications” (Hursh, 2008). “Demarcated laws” that group Chinese citizens into two major categories “have now become ‘grey’ laws, and so it is often the personalities of

local officials, rather than legislation, that determine outcomes for the migrants,” observed Hursh (2008). Nevertheless, they leave for cities in hopes of earning a better future in as many ways as possible.

5.2. The Dichotomy of Urban-Rural Education

This economic stimulation is so strong that it turns temporary migration to a permanent one and shifts the migrating unit from young individuals to the entire family, in which adults are struggling not only for their own fortune, but also for the fate of the next generation (Hursh, 2008; Cheng, 2011). The only and surest way to make a remarkable difference is education is when the whole nation returns to meritocracy (Connelly and Zheng, 2005).

The most telling differentiation between urban and rural areas in terms of education is shown in investment. In November, 2003, the All-China Women’s Federation anticipated according to the fifth population census in 2000 that the number of China’s domestic migrants had exceeded 100 million, among which 19.82 million had not reached 18 years old. Around the same time, of all educational investment that totaled over 580 billion Yuan in 2002, 77 percent went to urban-resided students who accounted for only 30 percent of the entire student population eligible for receiving compulsory education (Jiao, 2005; Hua, 2007). The dichotomized investment environment further differentiates the urban-rural comparison in the software and hardware conditions for teaching and learning.

Besides being financially disadvantaged, rural education lacks the administrative force

and teaching professionalism to maintain academic strength. One of the major distinctions between urban and rural academia is that the former emphasizes symbolic knowledge while the latter concrete knowledge. Due to the shortage of qualified teachers who are capable of completing the syllabus designed for urban students, many rural schools originally following the urban path, where students have either dropped out or transferred to vocational and technical schools (Lin, 1993).

Criticism to the urban-styled, textbook-centered, and unitary curriculum of rural education is no longer rare. It has been a long time since the biggest, if not the only, purpose of sending rural children to school is to help them “jump out of rurality,” a reality that is always in relation with poverty. Limited under the urban model and dreaming of “higher graduation rates and training elites,” rural education has relied too heavily on examination-oriented disciplines that disintegrate theory from praxis, prefers obligatory courses to electives, and results in many students’ academic failure. Finding its orientation to urban success, a terminal evaluation of learning effects even makes it worse if it is the only opportunity given to testify poorer students’ capability (Li & Dong, 2001). It is very common to criticize rural education as a ticket of a van towards city life paid by rural family’s painstaking perseverance. The winner had better take advantage of this to bid farewell to the impoverished countryside; while the loser can either carry on the pain or surrender to the *status quo*. Critics then propose that reformed curricula and syllabi should be multi-intellectual and multi-faceted, directed to agricultural life, information intensive, and interdisciplinary, all on the basis of universalizing basic literacy.

However, at the same time when we appreciate their redirecting the concentration to

the egalitarian dream, it is also wise to question and challenge the urban-rural binary that somehow overlooks the in-between area where migrants dwell. Analogous to what critical race theorists argue for readdressing the analytical emphasis on race and identity that has given the black-white contradiction a high profile in the US, controversies in class conflict should also put a question mark behind the “unstated binary paradigm or mindset” of urban-rural disparity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012:75). Today is no longer the era when rural problems solely constitute the prototypical argumentation of educational and other social inequities. Migrant children are the disadvantaged only insofar as their family background (mainly the household registration information), socio-economic status, and possible outcomes after receiving basic schooling are similar to those born and living in the countryside. But empirical information has told practitioners that migrant communities located at the joint area between city and countryside are very different from rural communities, and that even migrant communities vary greatly from place to place in that their individual members carry with them considerably different personal and geographical backgrounds (Hursh, 2008). The danger of overlooking the differential factors that attribute to marginalization is to prescribe a panacea that treats a very limited part of the entire illness while leaving the rest untreated and deteriorating. It should also be noted that increased economic opportunities for rural residents has resulted in a new class of rural-rich, and although this group remains small in number their families enjoy many of the educationally related advantages of being able to attend cram schools, easy access to learning materials, private tutors, and so on enabling them to often gain high scores on the NCEE and thus access to the best urban universities.

The unfortunate thing is that a good intent usually works poorly without public awareness of changes. Not excluding urban registered dwellers, the public will want to expect from the government and other forms of authority the readjustment of universal attitudes toward manual labor and skill-based occupations.

6. Private Schools for Migrant Children

Two major camps of thought that try to find solutions for the educational dilemma of migrant children are idealists and materialists. They vary fundamentally in their strategies to develop social welfare, including the educational agenda. The major difference is shown by how and where they invest their energy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Idealists believe that social inequality is a matter of thinking. The reduction of the wealth gap and class difference is made possible by speeches and media portrayals that shift people's attitude, by teachers who implant in their children the value of equality, by increasing positive representation of underserved communities, and by promoting diversity in as many fields as possible. Thus, from this angle, it is assumed that if migrant schools teach children to build up self-confidence regardless of external disputes and if urban residents are taught to respect their rural or migrant compatriots, a more equal society of mutually respected members will be in sight before long. But neither a curriculum for migrant schools nor the efforts to raise public consciousness have done sufficiently in quantity and quality in dealing with this problem.

However, materialists oppose the above strategies by arguing that the development of social equality is far beyond resisting hostile attitudes. Instead, they focus on changing physical conditions for the disfavored because they hold that social hierarchy determines who is privileged and rewarded, and who is marginalized and punished. Tangible benefit is the most basic motivation that impels or impedes the promotion of social welfare. If problems of housing, education, health care, food, and employment are not well solved, social instability cannot be rooted out from daily life.

To put it more clearly, idealism advocates a top-down democratic method that tries to improve the existing mechanism, while materialism struggles for a bottom-up revolutionary method that works to transform the social structure. Below, I describe the miserable condition that environs migrant children and attach importance to the need of improving the legislation and execution of laws that protect their civil rights.

6.1. The Definition of Migrant Children

As is mentioned above, the change of migration pattern from individual to family simultaneously brings about more problems to both immigrants and their. Issued by the State Education Committee in 1998, the “Interim Measure of School Education for Temporary Migrant Children” defined “migrant children” as “children aged 6-14 years (or 7-15) who have temporarily lived as migrants for more than half a year with their parents or guardians” (Yuan et al., 2013). The number of migrant children has grown too rapidly and constantly to be ignored. Seeing the number soar from 66,932 in 1997 to 240,000 by

2003, and further hit 418,000 in 2009, Beijing was casting a worrisome look to these young immigrants whose household registration was somewhere else as they accounted for 43 percent of all students enrolled in Beijing's primary schools. Generally speaking, migrant children who are lucky enough to be sent to urban or semi-urban schools either go to public ones where they are accepted as "transient students" and can temporarily share with local urban students a well-funded and well-equipped formal education, or to migrant schools that are privately sponsored and largely invisible in the government's policy.

According to the 1986 Compulsory Education Law, the payment for compulsory education is assumed by local governments, and each student is assigned with a certain amount of money to support his or her educational expenditure in their neighborhood schools only. However, what troubles the absolute majority of migrant children is that such financial support is impossible to follow as they move with their parents from one region to another (Huang, 2012). This is to say that immigrants who have decided to give up the opportunity to be educated in their registered neighborhood are not eligible to have their rights transferred and fulfilled in another locale as local government is not responsible to cover the new citizens' expenses in schooling. But administrative obstacles can be broken down as long as there is enough money submitted from students' families. Extra payment includes sponsorship and temporary schooling fee that make the cost of struggling for equal educational quality and opportunity higher than students born and legally registered as urban dwellers.

Despite all the difficulties, the demand for access to primary and secondary education from immigrants never ceases to increase. Now that local public school is unwilling to

accept this kind of new comers into the already overcrowded classrooms, they must find an alternative that is affordable and tolerant. Under such circumstance, societal forces, domestic or international, began to offer help by creating migrant schools that can shelter these young “new citizens” while their parents spend a long day at work. Jonathan Hursh is the President of “Included” (originally named “Compassions for Migrant Children”), a non-government organization that sponsors numerous migrant schools in China’s big cities. After his visit to a poverty-stricken community at the outer rim of Shanghai Municipality, Hursh (2008) observed:

Inevitably, children pay the highest price and are at risk of falling through the cracks of the Chinese system, as they have limited access to education, no support network in the new city, and parents working long hours every day. Unlicensed schools are the only option for the majority of migrant children and many of these buildings are dilapidated, overcrowded, and lack clean drinking water and proper lavatories. (para. 4).

6.2. Regulations of the Management of Private School

Although the Chinese government has made efforts in solving the problem of young migrants’ education by legislation, there are still many unclear details remaining to be dealt with in the execution procedure of relevant laws.

The “Regulations of the Management of Private School” (later referred to as the Regulations) issued by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in the

end of 2002 was put into effect on October 1, 2003, with the purpose of legally supporting private schools that provide migrant children and others whose education the government has not yet taken care of.

Although the state has been explicitly adding weight to the accountability of regulations that encourages the proliferation and development of migrant schools, recessive agents can be determining regarding the prospect of these private entities. Coercive isomorphism “may be more subtle and less explicit” than in the form of directly responding to central rulers or decision makers’ requirements. Some social entities are believed to develop organizational hierarchies in conformity to those of potential donors, from whom the institutes in need may get support (Milofsky, 1980; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This is verified, according to Zhang Minhang (2013), in the case of Chinese migrant schools, whose survival and maintenance is to a great extent dependent on its principal’s socio-political status. The ability of negotiating with potential sponsors and of attracting monetary and legal support is considerably crucial in running a privately subsidized school for the young moving population in that both the educational institute and its students are not so legally safe and economically competitive compared to their urban counterpart.

Deloitte’s “2010 Report of the Investment Research of Chinese Educational Industry” articulates that while it has won encouragement from the law and the central government, the private educational sector is still haunted by its embarrassing position as well as by the equivocation in law enforcement. According to Deloitte’s Report, for instance, the obscure balance between the charitable nature of private educational institute and the socially acceptable extent to which it gets monetary reward usually puzzles sponsors when they

plan to invest. Their investment passion is highly likely to be put on a wet blanket if there is no clear guarantee of a certain proportion of remuneration or if society denies the reasonability of such proportion. The diversification of funding sources has been encouraged immediately after the central government made the decision of decentralizing financial assistance and sponsorship responsibility. The possibility of winning the competition of grasping funding sources and positively advertising sponsors become two of the determinants of a school's ability of attracting more concern and money.

Another factor that concerns educational scholars and social activists is the unwarranted legal position compared with formal public schools sponsored by the government, even though the early years of the twenty-first century found legal support to private schools in the Regulations (Deloitte, 2010). This is particularly apparent at the administrative level, such as the evaluation and sanction of the teacher's professional title, the faculty's welfare after retirement, as well as the underestimated effectiveness of the accreditation or diploma students gain from such institutes. The logic here is that without the endowment of a legal recognition, migrant schools can hardly break through the public stereotype of a low socio-political position, which subsequently decreases the opportunity of getting private funds and attracting teacher's preference, and reduces the possibility of student's transferability to widely recognized public formal education. It of course also greatly reduces these students' abilities to gain high scores on the high stakes examinations thus creating a kind of glass ceiling with respect to further advancement to higher education. All these interrelated factors will ultimately determine these children's low mobility in a vertically built society that generally rewards seniority and merits.

7. Modernization to Walk from Background to Foreground

Even though the Four Modernizations concerns agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology, it should not be misunderstood as omitting the significance of education, which supports these fields by creating and distributing human capital to different occupations. As is discussed earlier in this paper, the meaning of modernization goes beyond the range of economic growth and touches on social equity as well. The reformed urban curriculum, especially in the most advanced and internationalized places like Beijing and Shanghai, has had modernization permeate classroom activities and evaluation with sufficient financial assistance that funds the use of high technology for students. Compared with other regions where direct funding and concerns from the central government is less satisfactory, teaching and examination in these metropolitan areas intend to emphasize a problem-identifying and problem-solving model of learning in which applied questions appear much more frequently in textbooks and exams; whereas other provinces still more or less rely on a standardized and stylized template in training students to be test-taking machines. As laboratory, library, and multi-media are adopted in contemporary urban education, the severe inadequacy of these facilities has not stopped obstructing the implementation of the indexes of the modernization process to be discussed later. Therefore, modernization is still lurking deep beneath the syllabi designed for rural and migrant children and remains to be an illusory promise far in the future. But it is likely

that rural, lower income people may also reveal their eagerness and sincere belief in an education that helps them get rid of impoverishment as soon as possible. The future can sometimes be a time point too far to reach, and promise a concept too abstract to realize.

It is asserted that migrants and the local government of their destination are making joint efforts in drawing near to the promise. In the eyes of the former, the fundamental and ultimate reason for pursuing literacy and higher levels of education is nothing but economic prosperity. Unlike their neighbors or relatives who are willing to stay in the countryside and want little change, migrants mostly have high motivation to make a difference to their *status quo*. Unfortunately, they are hindered by either exterior obstacles or interior blocks, or both. Authority's side may contend that they have tried hard in eliminating illiteracy among peasants and building up vocational and technical schools that offer migrants skills to work and feed their family. Nevertheless, both sides have possibly forgotten that urbanization is more of a national action and that an individual's vertical mobility has more to do with internal and psychological modernization. Therefore, this paper would argue that literacy and basic working skills are indispensable components necessary to survive in a developing context, while to be fully incorporated in urban life entails more efforts that bring the topic of modernization to the foreground, where daily classroom exercise in migrant schools takes place.

The rest of this section tries to explain the ingredients of an individual's modernization process selected from Everett Rogers' *Modernization among Peasants* (1969). The selection is made in accordance with the particularities of Chinese migrants: (1) they have left rural areas and are having intensive contact with more developed region and more

complicated situation than they were in rural area; (2) their pursuit of educational degree reveals an essential part of traditional, agricultural Chinese philosophy – pragmatism – that heavily leans toward socio-economic promotion rather than toward political knowledge; (3) they are very different from peasants who are mostly “characterized by extremely low achievement motivation;” (4) they have broken the barrier of fatalism that used to dominant Chinese illiterates’ life; and (5) aspiration is in this migrating population, yet it needs better protection and guidance to last long enough for vertical mobility to be realized, yet innovativeness is probably seen as a threat to a smooth development because “common fame is seldom to blame.” Taking these factors into consideration, the following part takes only four variables from Rogers’ explanation: literacy, empathy, mass media exposure, and cosmopolitanism.

7.1. What Replaces What?

A Basuto tribal proverb goes like this: “If a man does away with his traditional way of living and throws away his good customs, he had better first make certain that he has something of value to replace them” (Rogers, 1969:16). As peasants abandon their countryside home, sometimes after their farmland is taken over for governmental or business use, to seek for job opportunity and monetary fortune in urban areas, they might not have been well-prepared in facing a new, fast-paced city life that replaces their old traditions in many respects. In general, they are given “a more complex, technologically advanced, and rapidly changing style of life” (Rogers, 1969:292). To put it in another way,

written and graphic information and cultural consumption will become the substitute of the direct contact and consumption of nature that barely needs letters. However, the question remained is who will take the responsibility to help the “new citizens” prepare for the completion of modernization process in various respects.

7.2. Literacy

The knowledge is ubiquitous that literacy is regarded as “a prerequisite for success” throughout a person’s lifetime and that the insufficiency of this profound skill compromises one’s “ability to function fully in society” (Trend, 2007). Speaking of the importance of literacy, numerous social scientists have been very generous in giving their positive comments. For instance, Lerner (1958:64) regards literacy as a major force in unlocking this empathic process: “With literacy people acquire more than the simple skill of reading... [It] trains them to use the complicated mechanism of empathy which is needed to cope with this world.” Hortense Powdermaker (1962) stated that “Literacy is not just learning how to read but is concerned with comprehending a form of reality beyond immediate experience.” Later, there were Alfredo Mendez and Frederick Waisanen (1964) who confirmed this by saying that “mastery of symbols” established on the learning of literacy extends human’s view and experience beyond individual limitation in the sense of social mobility. Literacy’s function may therefore be summarized as “widening experience via print media” (Rogers, 1969:70)

We can be affirmative in stating that literacy is not only about the skill of reading and

writing. It makes experiences and persons jump out of the paper. Functional literacy works to navigate literates in self-directed, lifelong learning at the absence of instructors as they are capable of storing and retrieving “print information for delayed use” (Rogers, 1969). This temporally and spatially extended way of message storage frees humans from the painstaking endeavors of memorization in which details are usually missing as time passes by. As the dependence upon memory is replaced by the unlocking of “more complex mental abilities,” it is “the ability to generalize through symbolization” that fosters the ongoing development of “the faculty of restructuring reality via the manipulation of symbols” (Rogers, 1969:71).

Moreover, by the accumulation of others’ experiences gained through written information, one can be more successful in decoding, understanding, and predicting people’s thoughts in the process of verbal and physical communication, as well as in getting a global vision. In short, literacy is the “antecedent” factor that contributes to the possibility and development of other modernization ingredients.

7.3. Empathy

Closely related to the effectiveness of literacy building, empathy is synthetically defined as an individual’s ability to project himself into the role of another person and take the latter’s feelings into account to facilitate communication and understanding when interacting (Rogers, 1969). Earlier in 1963, Daniel Lerner, in his comment on empathy, wrote: “The acquisition and diffusion of psychic mobility may well be the greatest

characterological transformation in modern history.... It is in any case the most fundamental human factor that must be comprehended by all those who plan rapid economic growth by means of rapid social change.”

Empathetic ability is particularly crucial in integrating oneself into a highly complicated social environment where one person may be acting different roles at the same time or within a short period of time. The differences between the roles have high expectation of the role taker’s inference capability, a psychological interpretation of what others feel, think, and want in order to keep the pace of a high-speed lifestyle. An important factor that has been vehemently encouraged in metropolitan rhythm is effectiveness, which, according to Rogers’ (1969) research and literature review, is closely related to and positively corresponsive to empathy. Requirement of effectiveness takes place when there is need to encode and decode symbols in the communication between different social roles and the implementation of instructions. As Lerner (1958) “featured empathy as central in the process of modernization,” Rogers (1969) asserted the reliability of believing this specific ability that helps mankind envision ourselves in someone else’s role as “an important step to peasant modernity.” He further contended that traditional peoples having been living in isolated villages do possess empathic ability, a “horizontal” one that limits their empathizing antenna in touching only a small range of “role-differentiation.” In contrast to such an enclosed space, relationships in urban area are made vertical – contacting individuals whose roles are dissimilar and unfamiliar – as people’s interacting environment is of great openness, flexibility, and complication.

7.4. Mass Media Exposure

The teaching of mass media usage has been very cautiously done since its start in China in the 1990s. Even today, multi-media is largely considered as a carrier of a virtue virus in that there is high likeliness among children and adolescents to be infected of “filthy information.” The computer was not introduced to primary school classrooms in Beijing, Shanghai, and a few other metropolises until the late 1990s, a time when the Internet was still a luxurious yet suspected application in China’s top universities and research institutes. Nevertheless, the information age dawned on this country at the turn of the twenty-first century and undoubtedly became a thematic slogan that permeated every aspect of society, not excluding education.

Seeing the growing power and attraction of mass media, national planners decided to reform the national curriculum by distributing more attention to the importance of media that used to be insignificant compared to other fields in the process of socialist modernization, i.e. steel production, power dams, agricultural earning, and national defense, etc.

Even though, again, governmental funding fails to equalize the pace by which urban and rural schools receive technological help, recent years find a rapidly growing population of migrants – adults and adolescents – that has had access to possessing at least one form of mass media. This phenomenon then fundamentally challenges teachers working in migrant schools to be experienced in guiding students to properly take advantage of new technology.

As technology is now embodied by multi-media and is honored as fashion, the largest

population that enthusiastically and closely follows it is the young. By purchasing technology-based products to enrich their spare time, this group is consuming culture in a way that their supervisors should pay as much respect and attention to. Cultural consumption is characterized by its nonpolitical, recreational, and humanistic ideas. This process reflects a prejudice-free supply to the demand of common people's needs. Elitism is rarely seen in the use of the Internet (including social networks), the reading of print media, and the enjoyment of television and radio programs. Yet, on the one hand, mass media congregates young brains together, while on the other, it differentiates them into contrasting castes by naming some as fashion leaders and creators, and others as followers and imitators, or even left-behinds. Therefore, cultural consumption generalizes and legitimizes social differentiation (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984).

In the meantime, migrant children are being socialized and modernized within an urban context where either their custody or they themselves are more or less involved in cultural consumption, they can hardly escape from a self-identification that pulls them back to the consciousness of wealth gap. Subsequently, the responsibility of properly navigating these young students to utilize mass media is placed on teacher's shoulders. Such pedagogy, no matter exercised in class or out of class, energizes schooling activities and coordinates with the demand of an inclusive modernization that satisfies Lee's (1991) three dimension interpretation of this process.

7.5. Cosmopolitaness

Rogers (1969) defined cosmopolitaness as “the degree to which an individual is oriented outside his immediate social system.” According to this definition, cosmopolitaness is something about perspective, awareness, and interest. From this angle, it is safe to assume that being exposed in an urban environment does not necessarily contribute to enlarging a migrant’s vision unless he or she constantly receives urbanite mental training.

Due to socio-economic confinement, a considerable number of migrant children living at the rim of urban areas have never been to downtown, the center of a metropolis that assembles the all prosperous phenomena that can be found within the economic coverage of the city. Thus, their connection with, or imagination of downtown either comes from their parents’ storytelling, mass media exposure, or visiting urban dwellers to their poverty-stricken community. But these experiences do not promise to be pleasant every time. Indeed, social discrimination and the negligence of urban volunteer teachers are highly likely to convey to these innocent children a message that almost all of their struggle of staying in a city will eventually prove the inalterability of their identity – servants to city construction, or second class citizens.

As their textbooks hardly look at such issues and it is dangerous to leave these children exposed to the more hectic city life without protection, we could propose that national education administrators should re-examine the pragmatism of the curriculum and that teachers in migrant schools should be trained to be more expert in protecting children from being harmed by socio-economic gap. Additionally, critical cosmopolitaness does not

always concern urbanization and industrialization. A global vision cares not only about the development of cities, but also about the quality progress in agricultural area. Otherwise, the former will be overcrowded and the latter underdeveloped, leaving the gap between the two to be infinitely enlarged. Thus, cosmopolitanism is more about social value and comprehensive understanding of the world than urbanization.

To conclude this section, I would emphasize a little bit more the improvement of social values than on progress in science and technology and the socio-economy in the phase of migrant children's modernization.

If we behold the development of urban areas in a vertical or chronological perspective, its modernization must have gone through a series of evolutionary states from primary to advanced levels. As Rogers suggested, the modernization of a villager is made possible by the interaction of a variety of variables that bring him or her from social and technological insulation to multi-faceted communication. From this point of view, the extent to which a region is modernized in China is well related to geopolitical division. When the most developed urban area is hypothesized to score 100 in terms of the degree of modernization and the most remote and isolated rural area to score 0, there will be a declination of scores radiating from the center to the rim, and migrant schools are usually located in-between.

Although it is hard to give this kind of institute a certain score because migrant schools vary dramatically in their hardware and software equipment, one thing is for sure. In spite of the fact that migrant schools and public urban schools are positioned at the same spot of "natural time," it is doubtless that the former is standing in very different "social

times” in purpose of enhancing in the analysis the political logic, relevance, and coherence within history’s evolution (Ma, 2011). Resembling the position of “second class citizens” who belong neither to urban nor to rural areas, the migrant school is neither capable of grasping market advantages and absorbing societal funding like urban public school is, nor is it subsidized by the government to minimize tuition, fees, and extra costs. Sitting at a forgotten corner, schools for migrant children play a role more similar to that of an asylum than of an educational institute (“Zhenhua Migrant Children’s School,” 2011). It has set its foot on the road toward modernization, but without more social and human capital, it will stand still in the primary state and remain low in the effectiveness of educating young migrants.

For the sake of the development of migrant school, bringing modernization from background to foreground is not to replicate urban public school’s management pattern. Even if the urban model can be copied, it can hardly be pasted in another setting without problems. As a result, a better idea of reforming migrant children’s education is possibly to transform their particularities into an advantage that modernizes their rural hometown by their critically established cosmopolitaness. It should be a way different from the modernization of industrial places, a way that fulfills the three demands of modernization via harmonizing man and nature, and academia and idyll.

8. Potential Problems and Democratic Proposals

Among China's 264 million domestic migrants, the number of those holding a rural *hukou* is six times of those with urban *hukou*. Recently, investigation discovers that household registration limitation is no longer as powerful as before as long as urban education and other promises for a better future are affordable (Zhang, D., 2013). However, what might be detrimental is to accelerate the speed of producing, if not nurturing, new urban intellectual power on the foundation of rural-based intelligentsia. This section will be disclosing potential problems if new migrants are to technically replace the position urbanites were assigned to.

8.1. Potential Problems of Educational Inequity

Due to the mechanism of market competition, enterprises that act as educational agencies are more willing to have their money invested in richer areas, in which families show the willingness and affordability to pay more in exchange with their children's higher educational level and with certificates of greater authority. By doing so, capital requitals are direct and fast. It is now pretty evident that a dramatically increasing population of students are either sent by their parents or self-determined to study abroad, and this group is usually categorized into middle, upper-middle, or upper class. Students overseas pick the same reason for not going back to their homeland with those who have walked out of China's rural areas and do not plan to return to their family's farmland. This brain drain taking place in urban areas does not necessarily lead to a reduced tension in domestic market competition. The vacancy they have left at home will probably be filled up by immigrants from poorer areas.

There are three problems to be considered with these “new citizens.” One is that they are not educationally and economically competitive with their urban counterparts, if they have not been privileged in getting access to schooling and if they fail to survive the multiple layers of selection in pursuing a higher level of education in post-compulsory education years. Their socio-economic position would therefore remain low, their living condition not as good as expected, and they can hardly make ends meet when the next generation asks for formal schooling.

A second problem is addressed to large cities: What should they do with the less educated new comers? Is it fair and feasible to train and assimilate them to fill up the intellectual, cultural, and economic blank left by the high-aspiration students who “fled” to developed countries? Or should the city government find out new space and order for the immigrants so that they can contribute what they have to the city’s diversity building?

Third, poverty will keep tormenting rural areas and things may even get worse for those remaining in the countryside when labor power escapes to urban areas and refuses to return. Statistics from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) show that the majority of migrants have a higher level of education than does their hometown’s population (Zhang, D., 2013). In 2012, CASS found that more than 50 percent of migrants who held a rural household registration have completed at least lower-secondary education, a proportion far beyond the educational achievement of the out-flux place while constituting 70.17 percent of the entire in-flux population. Unfortunately, better education than before does not guarantee migrant youths an improved socio-economic status in their destination.

Jean Anyon (2011) asserts that education is not culpable of the problem of pandemic poverty and the cheapness of labor force, and education does not have the determinant power to reverse the trend and eradicate the problem. Additionally, a better educated yet underemployed population will do little good to strengthen national soft power, one of the most recent political agenda proposed by the Party.

Therefore, from the above deduction we may conclude that the expectation of an internal transformation and transfiguration of migrant's education will be in vain, if the "market economy" is allowed to naturally expand and deepen its interests in schools in urban China. Essentially capitalist or ultimately socialist, the idea of introducing a "market economy" to a communist China should be taken with great caution because it not only brings in general growth of educational and occupational opportunities, but inherently takes with it a new disputable topic – how will democracy function in a culture so accustomed to collectivity? Derived from the accumulation of material property and closely linked to the increased desire to the understanding and usage of opportunity and rights, democracy has been praised by many as one of the most delicate ways to proving modernization. The next section provides both appreciation and critique to the proposal of a democratized educational model across the country.

8.2. Democracy and Education

In the past 35 years after the issue of Reform and Opening Policy, contemporary Chinese educational structure has been increasingly permeated with themes like science

and technology, proactive participation, material outcomes, market competition, etc. Characterizing a gradually settled “socialist market economy,” these “big words” represent a growing accent on individualism that supplants collectively assigned occupations used to be a guarantee of employment for college graduates. Criticism also falls to post ninth grade schooling that fails to clarify training objectives and functional positioning. An examining eye that looks up to higher education may as well give a warning to the over-emphasis of disciplinary cultivating model and the understatement of technical and applied training model, which leads to large vacancy of skilled worker in high-tech industries.

Upon seeing the aforementioned and other shortcomings of compulsory education, many researchers suggest that China adopt a democratic system in order to walk out of its dilemma between economic growth and social justice building, yet I cannot help casting doubt on this assumption while at the same time agreeing with it. It is undeniable that the current domestic and international situations have been driving China toward “extreme meritocracy, a system that usually leads to social inequality” and toward highly restricted vertical mobility. As some scholars have observed:

Chinese people are now entrapped into a modernized predicament that is too overwhelming to get rid of. When the entire society is imbedded into a market most eminently featured by the vehement competition between men, it does not take long for education to shift from the old principle of being a process in which every individual’s internal talents are fully developed under the guidance of a set of core values, to a new law of being a process in which each person is endowed certain external characteristics that are fittest in the participation of social competition (Wang,

2007).

Self-directed participatory behavior is theoretically more democratic than authority-designated action. It is especially a good fit to the fierce competition for natural and social resources that well represents market vitality. Yet, active participation is neither common in the classroom as should be displayed in the form of echoing and challenging instructors, nor in public affairs as if they are the business of government only. What is noticeable is that a large proportion in the composition of a typical Chinese personality is seen as “other-controlled and other-disciplined,” while there is a conspicuous shortage of “self-organization.” Culturally speaking, Chinese people are both accustomed to being oppressed and lacking self-discipline (Ma, 2009).

Based on the implication of personality development and culture’s continuum, I try to analyze the difficulty of implementing curricular reform into three levels.

The lowest and most basic level is teacher-student relationship that is mostly displayed in the classroom. Chinese students are well-known for their seeking “standard answers” to any question they are confronted with in textbooks and assignments. The ubiquity of this phenomenon traverses all class boundaries and reaches a philosophical height. It is not uncommon to see students correct their “mistakes” word by word according to a reference book or a teacher’s remark. Such rigidity is the product of the sense of uncertainty, which resulted from the pressure that the most important tests take into account only a limited range of answers. Outlier answers are threatening to discount test taker’s scores. Hence, “footlog” is not only a metaphor of NCEE, but also an analogy of the manner of seeking truth and self-development.

The middle level accounts for the relation between teachers and school administration, where the former always receive highly recommended requests from the latter. “New shoes on an old path” is frequently quoted to rhetorically criticize the failure in the unsatisfactory result of curricular reform (Sargent et al., 2011). It is claimed that teacher’s lack of innovative spirit and implementation capability contributes negatively to the realization of the educational reformer’s ideal. In the new round of curricular reform starting from 2001, teacher’s fallacies in understanding and following the reform’s principle are summarized as “holding indefinite target,” “teaching over-generalized content,” “losing professional mission,” and “having teaching procedure formalized,” etc. (Yu, 2005:6). It might be reasonable to critique teacher’s stagnation in old pedagogy and resistance to a new one. But as today’s major teaching force was neither educated to be innovative and critical in their childhood, nor was it taught to use critical and open pedagogy in teacher training program, it can be imagined that they are now forced to wear “new shoes” but do not fit into them. A sudden freedom in conducting a class thus makes teachers reminiscent of the old days when they were assigned with definite workload and mission and when no extra effort is to be made to interpret tons of new tenets.

The tertiary level is the knowledge-power relation demonstrated by the interaction between school and community. In the eyes of parents who impose community pressure on schools, democracy is still not the priority. Their theory holds that they work very hard to pay for the pavement of their children’s socio-economic success and this work should be done by the paid institute. Payers would always want the most direct way, i.e., exam-oriented method, to reach effectiveness so that any detour is unwelcomed. Under

such pressure, the first wave of student's workload reduction beginning in the first years of the twenty-first century went abortive when parents were unhappy about school's giving more lectures on dancing, music, morality, independent thinking, etc. Afterwards, cram school and private tutoring flourished. Once again, the demand-supply relation overturns the dream of a democratic classroom.

It seems that no matter what theoretical perspective is introduced, adopted, or interpreted into this piece of land in the course of educational reform, the theory is often assimilated by the embedded Chinese philosophy of living and is informed in the deeply rooted Chinese epistemology that knowledge is granted to students from authority. Thus, the relationship between knowledge and power is still one in which the former is subject to the latter. Although in recent years this situation is gradually ameliorated by the encouraged yet limited teaching of critical thinking in metropolitan areas, regions that are economically, geographically, and intellectually depressed still remain backward in intriguing students' independent thinking and being conscious of social welfare. However, it is worth noting that student's dependence upon authoritarian knowledge has existed far before this educational reform wave ever came into being.

Moreover, because cultural transformation takes a much longer time than does economic and political reform, it should be anticipated that a considerable part in the whole procedure of educational reform is to conform to this particular Chinese personality. Therefore, it is possible to proclaim that the well-known disconnection between authority and grassroots in whatever context prevents Chinese culture from fully accepting and adopting Western democracy that finds its basis on participatory citizenship.

“What holds a democratic society together is not forced political-ideological homogeneity, but the strength of the nation’s political institutions and the durable framework that they offer for individual-right reaffirmation and social mobility” (Rong, 1996: 249). It is very true in building and consolidating social democracy particularly in Western societies where individualism was born by nature. However, I would question the feasibility of this notion in a nation like China where the aggregating power is not politics and the public good, but familial ties and the sense of belonging to a relatively small but tightly linked group. In other words, China is a country whose resided individuals are loosely bound in an empathetic sense and a place where more extra effort is needed for the learning and internalization of interpersonal collaboration than do Western cultures. This proves that caution is indispensable when emphasizing and universalizing political and socioeconomic democracy in this country.

9. Conclusion

The post-1978 educational reform in China has been one of the most eminent and influential transformations that responds to the government’s call for modernization and the introduction of a socialist market economy. After the New China regime was established in 1949, years prior to 1978 were familiar with the Communist Party’s total egalitarianism, but not long after the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the political agenda turned its face to socialist construction rather than socialist revolution. But the country is

too large to equalize the pace toward the modernization originally defined as development in science and technology, economy, industrialization, and urbanization. Prioritizing the development in urban area seems to be the best choice to invigorate the Chinese economy.

As for education, it on the one hand reflects the political plan and creates human capital to feed market's need, while on the other, is expected to play the role of a lever balancing the inequity between the socialist egalitarian ideal and the liberal competitive dream (Hannum, 1999). The duality of roles puts education into a dilemma where it now faces an unprecedentedly huge number of migrants from rural to urban areas in seeking for better fortune starting from the younger generation's schooling. Unfortunately, walking out of rurality does not necessarily guarantee them to become urbanites (Zhang, D., 2013). In other words, they are now trapped in a situation where only geographical or horizontal mobility is achieved, half way to a complete modernization process featured by social or vertical mobility. Consequently, they are named or labeled as "new citizens," belong to neither rural nor urban area (Hursh, 2008). They turn for help to an education that can hardly promise them an urban job or household registration, and that does not prepare them the needed skills or willingness to go back to their countryside hometowns. In order to interpret the paradoxical phenomenon of migrant students as well as of national education, I look to two representative educational policies, namely the 1986 Compulsory Education Law and the 1985 Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Reform of the Educational System, that initiated and fostered the transitional era.

Before proceeding to analyze the decentralization of the educational system, I find it necessary to re-examine and re-define the implication of modernization. It should be noted

that among the three interrelated dimensions of a complete modernization procedure proposed by Lee Wing On (1991), the social political dimension was not fully demonstrated, while the value system dimension was almost ignored until recent years. This background indicates the certainty that the decentralized responsibility and sponsorship of general education will rapidly and irreversibly enlarge regional disparities regarding various kinds of social welfare.

Changes taking place in and after the 1980s grow to be more complicated than the government's intended effects. The reason for the perplexity is that institutional changes do not solely result from coercive pressure exerted by the authority. It is, according to DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) isomorphism theory, the collaborated, coexisting, and intertwining force of coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures that determines the pursuit of the balancing goal to be a very difficult and abiding procedure.

As a result, classroom teaching and learning begins to mirror the newly formulated meritocratic knowledge hierarchy that rewards mental instead of manual labor. Thus, having taken the advantage of developing scientific and technological education, urban area naturally becomes the destination of hundreds of millions of Chinese migrants who are desperate to get rid of poverty. As wealth gap and social inequality increasingly concern social scholars and decision makers, policy starts to show inclination to rural education in purpose of attenuating the urban-rural dichotomy. However, the urban-rural binary has done very little in directing sufficient attention and investment to those in-between, i.e. migrant children. This group of youths has embarked on the pilgrimage toward modernization with willingness or with no choice. Yet, the evaluation of a group of

modernization indexes reveal their inadequacy in literacy rates, empathy, cosmopolitanism, and mass media exposure, all critically contributing to a learner's internal as well as external development. However, at the absence of further help from their urban counterparts and the government, their individual effort is too insignificant to fulfill core values, enhance social competitiveness, and make a difference to their destiny.

Their individual hardship will no longer remain trivial when their numbers are collected to form over half of the entire Chinese population. What tops their dream list may not be democratic participation to any activity that is beyond their basic need of material richness. A democratized curricular reform is highly likely to meet with psychological resistance from students, teachers, and communities, because the pragmatism of the Chinese philosophy of survival appreciates the most direct path to socio-economic prosperity granted and warranted by the authority. To simplify, it is better to be given than to take. After the failure of quality education about a decade ago, it is sound to presume that decentralization and recentralization might form a circle and take turns to periodically dominate the trend and principle of policy reforms. In the spiral-shaped route where history evolves, decentralization can be considered as a means to building a new evaluation method of multi-intelligences that merits versatility, while recentralization may possibly be an anti-corruption weapon that facilitates correct understanding and effective implementation of the central government's policies for public good. So far, it is now a time when collective rationality speaks, which infers a future grounded upon the transparency of policy making and execution. Apart from the idealist and materialist strategies of transforming the educational equality issue, there is of course a third view that

seeks radical social change with a mixture of top down affirmative action and bottom up social activism. From this viewpoint, I would recommend a positive expectation regarding the growth of balance between economic progress and social justice achieved by the joint effort of strong power from central government and rational public opinion.

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